



THE BARR BEACON TRUST MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE



ANNUAL REPORT 2008/09

Council – 20 April 2008

1.0 Summary of report

- 1.1 This report sets out the work of the management committee for 2008/09 and includes details of significant external funding bids and improvement works to date.

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1 That the report be noted.

3.0 Background information

- 3.1 Barr Beacon is an easily recognised and well used landmark in Walsall and the Black Country, has strong local heritage significance and is a site of ecological importance for nature conservation due to its range of habitats and the wide variety of species that it supports. The land was conveyed to trustees in 1918 essentially to provide and maintain open space for the benefit of the local community and to keep in repair the War memorial. Walsall Council became trustee following Local Government reorganisation in 1972.
- 3.2 The Council, as trustee, has established a Management Committee in order to deal with the regular administration of the Trusts affairs subject to the Trust being kept informed of the work of the management committee by way of an annual report.
- 3.3 The Management Committee comprises the Ward Councillors for the Pheasey Park Farm and Streetly Wards, being the Wards where the site is located; and Cabinet Members whose portfolio includes Leisure and Regeneration. Local interest groups were invited to be co-opted onto the committee in a non-voting capacity and a representative of the Walsall Civic Society has so far been co-opted.

4.0 The work of the Management Committee

4.1 *Heritage Lottery Fund Application*

Last year, the Trust supported an application being made to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) Heritage grants programme.

During this year, the preparation of the application has formed the significant work of the management committee. If successful, the application will result in a programme of about £750,900 to restore the war memorial, historic flagpole

and scott plantation fencing. The restoration of these valued heritage features is seen as a priority for the Council and the Trust.

The HLF requires the visible commitment of both the Council and the Trust and therefore, a detailed report will be presented to the Cabinet on 22 April recommending that the submission of the stage 1 application be supported.

It is anticipated that the project will include the following elements:-

- Project Manager (one year)
- Fulltime Community Liaison Officer (three years)
- Restoration of the War memorial
- Restoration of the historic flagpole
- Scott plantation fencing - Repair / replace damaged railings
- Archaeological exaction and community dig
- Community development, including events and interpretation

The anticipated timescale for the project is:

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|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| • Submission of Stage 1 application | 15 June 2009 |
| • Decision by HLF at Stage 1 | September 2009 |
| • Development of Stage 2 application | October 2009 to March 2011 |
| • Submission of Stage 2 application | March 2011 |
| • Decision by HLF at Stage 2 | September 2011 |
| • Project delivery | October 2011 to September 2014 |

HLF advisors have strongly urged that through the project, links are developed to local plans and other heritage sites. Opportunities, for example, to replicate activities undertaken through the Bentley Cairn restoration project and to develop footpath/bridlepath links and wildlife corridors to the Arboretum have been welcomed by the advisors.

In March 2009, a creative thinking workshop was co-ordinated by the Community Arts Team for members of the committee and officers, the results of which will contribute to the Stage 1 application.

4.2 Other Work

The committee has supported countryside services in the management of the site and has approved funding to replace the flowplates, tarmac repatching and gully replacement. The Trust has also paid for a condition survey of the War Memorial to support the HLF bid.

5.0 Declaration of Local Nature Reserve

- 5.1 In September 2008, Barr Beacon and Pinfold Lane Quarry Local Nature Reserve was declared Walsall's eleventh LNR and saw Walsall reach the 1 hectare per 1000 of population national indicator set by the Government. A conservation management plan has been agreed by the committee.

6.0 Accounts

- 6.1 The Trust currently holds 24,251.44 COIF income shares with a current market value of around £200,000. The shares are held as a long term investment and with the current market conditions prices have fallen in value but are expected over a longer period of time to rise and increase the value of capital held. The investment provides an annual income of approximately £10,000 based on current dividends being paid.
- 6.2 COIF charities investment fund has a highly diversified and well-balanced spread of investment designed to help meet growth and income requirements of charities. A look at the funds current portfolio shows no investment in Iceland. The dividends paid for year ending 31.12.08 showed an increase of 11.06% over the previous year.
- 6.3 Whilst retaining a capital balance to provide an annual income, the Trust will be allocating a substantial amount of its funds to the HLF project and will be supporting bids to other external funding streams.
- 6.4 The annual income is used to support the day to day maintenance of the site.

7.0 Annual Return

- 7.1 The annual return and statement of accounts required by the Charity Commission has been completed and returned.

8.0 Revised Scheme

- 8.1 The Charity Commission has pointed out that the Trust scheme needs to be updated and has offered to produce a revised scheme. Officers will be liaising with the Charity Commission in this respect.

9.0 Conclusion

- 9.1 Over the past year, the committee has worked closely with Council officers to make and plan improvements to the site and has recognised the significant contribution that the Council makes to maintain the open space and to support its future development. The committee looks forward to continuing this partnership in the coming year to ensure that the site remains an asset for the community to enjoy.

Signed: Councillor Gary Clarke
Vice-Chairman

On behalf of the committee:
Councillors Andrew; Bird; Clarke; Douglas-Maul; Harrison; Hughes; Towe

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