



THE BARR BEACON TRUST MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE



Annual Report - 2015/16

Council – 11 April 2016

1.0 Summary of report

- 1.1 This report sets out the work of the management committee for 2015/16. The committee has met on 5 occasions and apart from general site maintenance matters, has overseen a number of projects on the site, particularly the ongoing Heritage Lottery Funded “Raising the Barr” project.
- 1.2 The committee has ensured that all activities on Trust land have been provided in accordance with the purposes of the Trust and have fulfilled Charity Commission Public Benefit requirements.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 That the report be noted.
- 2.2 That the Trust recognises the work of officers from the Council’s Clean and Green Services, Finance Services, the Wildlife Trust and the Friends Group to support the Trust and extends its thanks accordingly.

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 Councillors for the Pheasey Park Farm, Streetly and Aldridge Central and South Wards, being the areas where the site is located together with the Cabinet members whose portfolio includes Leisure and Regeneration. A representative of the Wildlife Trust has been

appointed as a co-opted member. Councillor Adrian Andrew is Chairman and Councillor Christopher Towe is Vice Chair of the Committee.

4.0 **The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) project – “Raising the Barr”**

- 4.1 The committee has overseen the implementation of the three year project and the majority of the objectives have now been delivered, primarily the refurbishment of the War Memorial which has been re-dedicated; and provision of weekly community activities, resulting in increased and regular community use of the site.
- 4.2 Following the departure of the Community Liaison Officer, the community involvement aspect of the project has continued to be delivered largely through activities led by the Wildlife Trust, health walk leaders and support from Friends of Barr Beacon however, reduced capacity within the Council's Clean and Green Services has resulted in a reduction in the amount of time being dedicated to the other elements of the project such as community development, promotion and marketing. The HLF has been extremely sympathetic to the situation and offered a further extension to the project to December 2016.
- 4.3 The offer to further extend the project has been taken, with the remaining works focussing on interpretation provision and marketing of the site. Items to be produced include guided walks leaflets, site information panels and a dedicated website. HLF has asked for the Scott plantation to be opened up which the committee is looking into; and also for a panel to be produced for the war memorial central plinth indicating HLF's contribution to the restoration. This will feature the delivery partnership of the Trust, the Council and the Wildlife Trust. The panel will be revealed at the remembrance service on 11 November 2016 which will mark the end of the project.
- 4.4 ***Website and Barr Beacon App***; The Committee has been kept informed of work to develop a dedicated website and has supported the introduction of an app developed by Treehouse Media as part of the HLF project which provides a virtual tour guide around Barr Beacon. It offers visitors information about things to see and do, including quiz trails highlighting the site's wildlife and history and also features a specially designed guide to Barr Beacon's panoramic views.

5.0 **New Grant Funding Proposal**

The Committee has supported a new joint initiative with the Wildlife Trust to bid for funding from the Big Lottery Fund Reaching Communities Grant in the region of £300,000 which would build on the HLF project but also to bring in a wider range of elements and opportunities focussing on health and well-being and skills and learning which accords with the Trust's purposes. The bid is currently being developed and is likely to take about 12 months, bearing in mind the need for matching bids to be sourced and consultation requirements.

6.0 Events and Activities

- 6.1 ***“Bands on the Beacon” 27 & 28 June 2015:*** In view of the significance of the event in showcasing Barr Beacon to the community, the Committee on behalf of the Trust gave permission for the land to be used for the event. This was the first year that the event has been organised without the benefit of HLF funding and unfortunately made a small loss for a number of reasons (such as officer capacity, adverse weather and that it was held over two days). The committee considered however that notwithstanding this, the event itself was a success with over 2,500 attendees, of which 60% were new to the site. In view of this success and that the event accorded with the Trusts purposes, the committee agreed to the small loss being covered by the Trust on this occasion. The Committee also recognised the significant contribution made by a local businessman, Mr Wayne Moseley, both financial and in kind, acting as fundraiser, stage programmer and manager. Mr Lee O’Hanlon of tinyCOW events management also provided branding, artwork and media liaison. Both Mr Moseley and Mr O’Hanlon and officers from the Council’s Clean and Green services went far and above expectations in terms of volunteer support which helped to make the event a success.
- 6.2 ***“Bands on the Beacon” 3 July 2016:*** The Committee has again approved the use of Trust land for this year’s live music festival and preparations are being made by the Council’s Clean and Green staff for a one day event. HLF has agreed that some of the project underspend can be used this year. The Council is planning to deliver other live music events throughout the summer at other locations in the borough and so publicity for the Bands on the Beacon event will be co-ordinated with these and presented as a package.
- 6.3 ***Community Activities:*** The Trust permits the use of its land by Council officers and the Wildlife Trust to provide an extensive range of community activities aimed at encouraging the proactive use of the site.
- 6.3.1 In addition to these activities and weekly health walks, the Wildlife Trust has continued to deliver a monthly programme of events and activities. These have included bird box making, apple pressing, heath land management work, various family activities, practical conservation sessions, stargazing events, wildlife walks and Christmas wreath making. A group of adult learners from a local organisation which specialises in care and training for adult learners and which are based at the nearby Collingwood Centre, participated in some of these events and this has led to initial discussions around providing further opportunities for the group to be involved with the Beacon.
- 6.3.2 Following approaches from the local regimental associations, another Remembrance Service was organised albeit in a simpler format to that of the previous year’s rededication ceremony and involved a short wreath laying ceremony. The assistance of Amey to resolve a problem with the flagpole free of charge and in time for the ceremony was very much appreciated

7.0 The Lodge

- 7.1 The Committee has considered at length, a number of options for the use and refurbishment of the lodge by way of a variety of funding methods however, in the meantime, because of concerns about the extent of vandalism whilst the building was unoccupied, the Council's Clean and Green Services funded the refurbishment of the Lodge to bring it into use quickly. As a result, the lodge is now in use regularly as a base for events and activities, a meeting place for the Friends Group and accommodation for staff working on the site.
- 7.2 The lodge also now has the potential to provide for programmes of activities for adult learners focussing on general site maintenance, habitat management and developing conservation skills. This is potentially a very exciting development for the long term sustainability of the site and those students participating will not only receive a recognised qualification but will also gain from healthy lifestyle opportunities and advice.

8.0 Site Management

- 8.1 **General:** The committee has recognised the work of the Council's Clean and Green services in the general management of the site including habitat management programmes.
- 8.2 **Site Security:** Site security is an ongoing issue particularly with vehicles accessing the site 'out of hours' via the Beacon Lodge exit, irresponsible dog owners, off-road vehicles and in recent months, safety issues with horses being ridden recklessly causing safety issues and damage to pathways. The committee is considering a number of ways in which to address these issues enabling the site to be enjoyed by everyone. A number of prosecutions are pending for fly-tipping and other anti-social behaviour incidents. Covert Cameras have also been installed on the site.
- 8.3 **Friends Group:** The committee has supported the work of the "Friends Group" which has met on a number of occasions and is proving successful with valuable input from local residents and businesses. Members of the group have volunteered to take responsibility for locking the site, enabling vehicle access up to 6pm rather than 4.30pm and have accordingly signed a key holder agreement. This arrangement appears to be operating successfully.

9.0 Accounts

- 9.1 The committee continues to be content for the Council's Finance officers to manage the accounts on behalf of the Trust and accordingly, a finance report has been received at each meeting.
- 9.2 The Trust currently holds 22,496.15 COIF income shares (a specialist charity

Common Investment Fund) with a current market value of around £271,750 which are held as a long term investment. COIF charities investment fund has a highly diversified and well-balanced spread of investment designed to help meet growth and income requirements of charities.

- 9.3 Having a healthy investment balance provides an annual return of approximately £9,000 based on current dividends being paid. This income is used to fund day to day maintenance of the site. The level of investments also helps to attract significant external funding for major projects on the Beacon such as the Heritage Lottery fund and Big Lottery Fund.
- 9.4 The committee requested and authorised expenditure for specialist insurance cover which includes public and products liability, including the lodge, to ensure that the Trust is adequately protected. This has been arranged through the Councils Risk and Insurance Team on behalf of the Trust.

10.0 Annual Return

The annual return required by the Charity Commission has been completed.

11.0 Charity Commission

- 11.1 The committee is kept informed of developments in Charity administration through news letters from the Charity Commission.
- 11.2 The committee seeks advice from the Charity Commission on plans involving the Trust's land and buildings.

10.0 Conclusion


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 contribution of the Wildlife Trust and the members of the Friends Group is also appreciated and the committee looks forward to continuing these partnerships in the coming year to ensure that the site remains an asset for the community to enjoy.

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