



# **THE BARR BEACON TRUST MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**



## **REPORT TO COUNCIL 2011/12**

**Council – 16 April 2012**

### **1.0 Summary of report**

This report sets out the work of the management committee for 2011/12 and includes details of significant external funding bids and improvement works to date.

### **2.0 Recommendation**

- 2.1 That the report and successful Heritage Lottery Fund bid be noted
- 2.2 That the Trust extends their thanks to everyone involved in the project for their hard work, particularly the project officer, and officers in the Council's Countryside Services and Property Services.

### **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 Trust's 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.

### **4.0 The work of the Management Committee**

#### **4.1 *The Heritage Lottery Fund Application – “Raising the Barr”***

Notification was received from the Heritage Lottery Fund on 21 March that the bid for a grant of £440,000 for the restoration of historic features on the Beacon had been successful. The memorial will be restored and re-dedicated as a memorial to servicemen and women throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries and the Flagpole and tree plantation fencing will also be restored.

The project will also see more activities on offer for visitors, schools and colleges including wildlife walks and fun days, a Time Team-style archaeological dig, astronomy events and services of Remembrance, while a Community Liaison Officer will be put in post to encourage positive use of Barr Beacon and help ensure a lasting legacy beyond the lifetime of the project.

The outcome of the bid has received significant local media coverage which has been very positive.

#### **4.2 Other Work**

Apart from supporting the maintenance of the Memorial following numerous incidents of vandalism and the theft of copper from the roof, the Committee has supported Countryside Services in the general management of the site including community involvement activities and habitat improvement works.

Activities included a number of successful astronomical events which has resulted in Dark Sky Discovery Status for Barr Beacon. This is a national award led by the Science and Technology Facilities Council and is part of Natural England's Access to Nature programme. It will also bring resources and support for future astronomical activities. A low-key ceremonial event to celebrate Accession day took place and options for celebrating the Queen's Diamond Jubilee are being discussed with the Council's Safety Advisory Group. The third annual 'Bands on the Beacon' free summer music concert has been set for 8 July 2012 and more events are planned.

Barr Beacon has now been elevated to the Higher Level Environmental Stewardship scheme with Natural England. The management items included in this scheme include the management of the heath land, meadow and hedgerows.

All activities have fulfilled Charity Commission Public Benefit requirements.

#### **5.0 Accounts**

- 5.1 The Management Committee has received a finance report at each meeting and can report as follows.
- 5.2 The Trust currently holds 24,251.44 COIF income shares (a specialist charity Common Investment Fund) with a current market value of around £244,593 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. Current market conditions have seen the value of the shares stabilise and gradually increase. The Investment provides an annual income of approximately £10,000 based on current dividends being paid.
- 5.3 As a result of the bid outcome, the Trust will not need to match fund as much as previously anticipated. Therefore, whilst retaining a capital balance to provide an annual income, the Trust is exploring the possibility of providing visitor and refreshment facilities on the Beacon and has commissioned an

initial feasibility study to this end. Other external funding streams will also be explored to support the committee's plans.

## **6.0 Annual Return**

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

## **7.0 Charity Commission**

The committee has been kept informed of developments in Charity administration through regular updates from the Charity Commission.

The committee seeks advice from the Charity Commission on plans involving the Trust's land and buildings.

## **8.0 Conclusion**

Over the past year, the committee has worked closely with Council officers from Countryside Services 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. Officers from Property Services and the Creative Development Team have also been involved in the Heritage Lottery Fund application. The committee looks forward to continuing this partnership in the coming year to take forward the restoration works, and ensure that the site remains an asset for the community to enjoy.



Signed: Councillor Adrian Andrew  
Chairman

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

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