



# **THE BARR BEACON TRUST MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**



## **REPORT TO COUNCIL 2012/13**

### **Council – 6 April 2013**

#### **1.0 Summary of report**

This report sets out the work of the management committee for 2012/13 and includes details of significant external funding bids and improvement works to date.

#### **2.0 Recommendation**

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.

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

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

###### **4.1.1 *Memorial Restoration works:***

Following confirmation of the successful grant application of £440,000, “Permission to Start” was allowed for 1 June 2012. The Committee appointed Midland Conservation to carry out the restoration works, Donald Insall Associates were appointed to project manage the works and the project has been overseen by the Council’s Property Services officers on behalf of the Trust and the Council. The restoration is almost complete with minor works to be finished and a completion date has been set for 12 April subject to

an improvement in the weather. Balustrades are currently being fabricated. The work to the Memorial has also given the Trust an opportunity to provide for the installation of a pathway to the memorial and to provide a security system. This will be financed from Trust funds.

The Committee decided to use coated zinc to replace the memorial roof as it closely matched the existing colour and has a low scrap value. The use of coated zinc is relatively unique in the UK especially for its use on this type of design of roof structure.

2014 will see activities to mark the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the outbreak of World War One. Within the Heritage Lottery Fund bid, the rededication of the Memorial has been identified as one event to mark the occasion. This is in addition to the reinstatement of services of remembrance. Given the significance of both the memorial's rededication and 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary commemorations, the committee has considered a number of high profile invitations to attend the event.

4.1.2 *Community Liaison Officer:* A Community Liaison Officer for Barr Beacon has been appointed in partnership with the Wildlife Trust for Birmingham and the Black Country and will be in place for the lifetime of the project. The Officer has worked closely with Countryside Services officers to provide a number of successful community activities.

#### 4.2 **Beacon Lodge**

The Committee has given consideration to the future use of the lodge as a visitor centre also providing light refreshments. Information to establish likely take up is being collected. A number of design options have been discussed however, because of the complex nature of the site, planning and nature conservation considerations, and Charity Commission requirements; a final option has not yet been agreed. The Council's Property Services officers are working on alternative options and architectural designs for early consideration by the Committee. It is hoped that a final business plan will be produced quite soon as there will need to be a period of consultation and planning consent will need to be obtained. The Committee has made an appropriate financial allocation from Trust funds for this.

#### 4.3 **Jubilee Beacon**

The start date of the restoration works was significant in that it allowed the incorporation of the lighting of the Beacon to mark the Queens Diamond Jubilee within the Heritage Lottery Fund project and therefore covered the cost. The lighting of the beacon was a success, bearing in mind health and safety limitations, and was attended by around 400 people.

#### 4.4 **"Bands on the Beacon"**

The free summer music event on 8 July 2012 was a great success with an estimated 1,500 people attending in spite of the predicted poor weather conditions. The Committee is currently looking at the scale, preparations and required funding for this years event.

#### 4.5 **Other work**

Following a number of complaints about speeding on the North Car Park, the Committee has funded the installation of traffic calming measures.

The Committee has supported Countryside Services in the general management of the site including regular community involvement activities and habitat improvement works. Activities have included a number of successful astronomical events, school enrichment programmes and craft workshops. A community archaeological excavation "Dig the Beacon" has been scheduled for Mid July with opportunities for schools as well as the public to participate. Regular updates on the biodiversity work on the Beacon have also been received

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 £275,573.96 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. The investment is regularly monitored and the Committee has been advised that the COIF fund remains the most favourable.

5.3 As a result of the bid outcome, the Trust will not need to match fund as much as previously anticipated. The match funding element is £31, 552 which has been negotiated to be paid in 3 instalments over the lifetime of the project.

5.4 Whilst retaining a capital balance to provide an annual income, the Trust is holding its funds to provide a place for visitor and refreshment facilities on the Beacon, designs for which are currently being produced. Other external funding streams will also be explored to support the committee's plans.

5.5 As detailed elsewhere in the report, apart from match funding, the Committee has agreed to pay for a number of other activities on the site from cash funds.

#### 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, the Creative Development Team and Communications Team have also been involved in the variety of activities on the Beacon. 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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