



# **THE BARR BEACON TRUST MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**



## **Annual Report May 2022– April 2023**

### **Council – 17 April 2023**

#### **1.0 Purpose of report**

To present the work of the Management Committee for the period May 2022 to April 2023.

#### **2.0 Recommendation**

That the work of the Management Committee be noted.

#### **3.0 Background**

- 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 A Management Committee was established in February 2007 to deal with the regular administration of the Trusts affairs subject to the Trust being kept informed of the work of the committee by way of an annual report.
- 3.3 The Committee comprises the local ward councillors and relevant cabinet members. Meetings take place virtually (as agreed by Council as Trustee) except that the Annual meeting is held in person. During the year, 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.

#### **4.0 Site Management**

- 4.1 **Site maintenance:** The Council's Healthy Spaces and Countryside operations teams continue to focus resources on essential maintenance to ensure that the Council as Trustee fulfils its purposes and its obligations for the site as a Local Nature Reserve.

- 4.2 **Site Security:** Work has started as part of the major investment by the Trust and the Council to implement measures to prevent unauthorised access to the site. This includes providing power feeds to both sides of the site to enable CCTV and electronic gates to be installed. Site meetings have taken place with the power company and works will commence as soon as the relevant Wayleaves and Exemption Regulation certificates are complete.

There has again recently been damage to the war memorial topography disc. It appears that it has been used to set alight fireworks as there is also marking of the roof. This has happened a few times before so all spare discs have now been used. The committee has asked officers to source alternative more durable materials for the disc.

#### 4.3 **Other Site Improvement Initiatives:**

The committee has supported the council's Healthy Spaces team to introduce a number of significant and exciting initiatives and opportunities for the development and promotion of the site for the benefit of local residents and as a wider visitor attraction, these include:

**Green Flag Status:** Barr Beacon has been awarded Green Flag Status which is an accreditation given to publicly accessible parks and open spaces by Keep Britain Tidy on behalf of the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, to recognise well managed parks and green spaces across the UK thereby promoting standards of good management and best practice amongst the green space sector.

**Purple Horizons** This is a significant long term project which, working with Natural England, has restored heathland on the site and will enable more habitat creation and restoration work to be carried out to create regional stepping stones of property habitat between Sutton Park and Cannock Chase. Barr Beacon acts as a stepping stone for species to move between these two larger areas of heathland. This is a 20 year project which is nationally recognised and is one of only five in the country. The project has been given the Public Sector Award at the West Midlands Combined Authority Natural Environment Awards in March this year. The regional awards recognise excellence within organisations in the West Midlands for protecting, restoring and enhancing the natural environment.

**Tree Survey:** As part of the associated traffic management work for the site security improvements, the tree teams will use the opportunity to undertake a survey of tree work on the highway at the same time.

**Additional bins:** The committee has funded the installation of a number of additional large capacity bins to cater for litter over the busy summer months.

## 5.0 **Events and Activities:**

- 5.1 The annual Wreath Laying Remembrance Ceremony this year took place on 11 November 2022. The event was well attended as usual by Committee members, the Mayor, local veterans and local school children.
- 5.2 The Committee has considered potential income generation initiatives such as wedding ceremonies and or photography on the site however, the licence requirements are resource intensive and therefore the committee decided not to pursue this.

## 6.0 **The Lodge**

The Lodge is used regularly by an adult learning organisation whose students and staff have been participating in horticultural activities based at the Lodge. The arrangement continues to work well for both the organisation and the Trust. The committee authorised essential interior refurbishment to be carried out to ensure that the building remained fit for purpose and this has been completed.

## 7.0 **Accounts**

- 7.1 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. The accounts are independently examined.
- 7.2 The Trust currently holds COIF income shares (a specialist charity Common Investment Fund) with a current market value of around £425,000 which are held as a long term investment. COIF charities investment fund has a highly diversified and well-balanced portfolio of investments designed to help meet growth and income requirements of charities. The council's finance officers periodically review this investment and report to the committee.
- 7.3 The level of investments helps to attract significant external funding for major projects on the Beacon. Having this healthy investment balance also provides an annual return, ordinarily around £12,000, which is used to fund day to day maintenance and activities on the site. The Trust is holding around £35,000 available cash which is carefully managed by the committee to be used for Trust purposes including maintenance of the lodge and various community and commemorative events this year.
- 7.4 The committee has authorised expenditure for specialist insurance cover which includes public liability, property damage and trustee indemnity, to ensure that the Trust is adequately protected. This has been arranged through the Councils Risk and Insurance Team on behalf of the Trust.

## 8.0 Annual Return

The annual returns required by the Charity Commission for the period of this report have been completed.

## 9.0 Conclusion

The committee continues to work 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 so that the site remains an asset for the community to enjoy.

The activities on the site not only further the Trusts purposes but are also consistent with the Council's priorities to encourage people to lead active lives to maintain or improve their health and wellbeing; and to build a strong sense of community.



Councillor A. Andrew  
Chair, Barr Beacon Trust Management Committee  
5 April 2023

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