



# **THE BARR BEACON TRUST MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**



## **Annual Report – 2018/19**

### **Council – 8 April 2019**

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

- 1.1 This report presents the work of the Management Committee for 2018/19. The Committee has formally met on 3 occasions and apart from general site maintenance matters, has overseen a number of projects on the site.
- 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 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 in order 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 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. The Committee is now in its 12<sup>th</sup> year and has met regularly during that time, being open to and supporting and overseeing many new exciting and innovative opportunities for the development and promotion of the site for the benefit of local residents and as a wider visitor attraction.

## 4.0 **Site Management**

4.1 **Site maintenance:** The Council's Clean and Green service continues to focus its resources on essential maintenance to ensure that the Council as Trustee fulfils its purposes, its obligations for the site as a Local Nature Reserve; and keeps the momentum on the conditions relating to the Heritage Lottery funding which include the promotion of the Beacon and community engagement.

Improvements funded by the Trust and the Council include:

- The installation of approximately 80 replacement wooden bollards which demarcate the boundary between the car parks and roadways.
- Repairs and reinforcement of the two vehicle entrance points to allow access onto the field which has now been identified for large scale events.
- Improvement works to the footpath network throughout Barr Beacon Quarry, between Pinfold Lane and Beacon road, which was required due to a combination of horse riding resulting in uneven ground and poor drainage.
- A programme of tree works to restore the view to the west from the war memorial. The view largely encompasses the edge of Birmingham, Walsall and the majority of the Black Country.
- Installation of visitor interpretation panels, funded through a Heritage Lottery Fund Grant.
- Replacement of the historic flagpole due to corrosion.
- Further works to increase heathland cover which has enhanced the nature conservation value of the site. Barr Beacon remains one of a handful of sites in the region where this rare and valuable habitat is being managed to maintain and increase biodiversity.
- Heathland restoration which provided an opportunity to promote greater community awareness and understanding of the site through participation in some of the physical management work.

4.2 **Site Security:** Ditches and swales – earth mounds – have also been created on the site to provide a further obstacle to unauthorised vehicles. A ditch and swale is a traditional method of landscaping to reduce access and for boundary demarcation, and is, therefore, in keeping with the site's heritage value. An additional bar, welded to the War Memorial entrance height restriction barrier has been installed which has reduced the access height to 2.5m. Notwithstanding this, off-roading by quad and trail bikes is still a significant cause for concern as they cause damage not only to the site generally but also to the War Memorial itself. The Committee and the Council are working together to progress the upgrading of the current CCTV cameras which will provide extended coverage of the site.

4.3 **Friends of Barr Beacon:** A regular group of volunteers are continuing to provide valuable support to open and close the car park barriers and inform Clean and Green officers of any issues or problems.

4.4 **Other Activities:** Smaller scale events and activities continue to take place, with the Beacon being a destination for a weekly Health Walk. Again this is delivered by a core team of trained volunteers.

## 5.0 Events

### Remembrance Service 2018

5.1 The Barr Beacon War Memorial Remembrance Ceremony took place on Friday 9 November 2018. Bearing in mind that the Barr Beacon War Memorial was originally erected to commemorate “local men and women who gave their lives in the Great War 1914-18”, the service also marked the Centenary of the end of World War One. The event was a great success with over 500 pupils taking part, representing seven schools – Barr Beacon, Blackwood, Lindens Primary, Meadow View JMI, Pheasey Park Farm Primary, St. Anne’s Roman Catholic and Streetly Academy. Committee members, the Mayor, the Council’s Armed Forces Champion, faith groups, military charities and other dignitaries also attended.

5.2 The Committee gave particular recognition to Mrs Andrea Welter, Deputy Head Teacher at Pheasey Park Farm School, who co-ordinated the liaison with the other schools and the Remembrance Service. This included arrangements for the music, the participation by the Faith leaders, logistics and health and safety procedures.

5.3 Further recognition was also given to the service provided by the Lead the Way Foundation’s Mr Davie Carns and artist Mr Greg Fearon, who were able to work with the children to help inspire the individual pieces of art that were represented on a series of banners.

5.4 The project was forged over a period of six months with the team meeting on a regular basis with staff from the seven schools to plan both the production of the artwork and the format of the ceremony.

5.5 Through classroom sessions with the pupils, a number of artworks were produced on the themes of war and peace, each one headed by a portrait of an individual who was characterised as a war hero or who had a specific local connection as a result of World War One.

5.6 As well as taking pride of place during the Remembrance Service, displayed within the war memorial, the banners were then transferred to Walsall Town Hall. Here they formed part of an exhibition to commemorate the borough’s participation in the First World War.

### Barr Beacon Centenary Year 2019

5.7 Barr Beacon this year is celebrating 100 years since the site was officially opened to the public on Monday 22 April 1919. The Committee has considered a number of options for the Trust to stage celebratory events however, members were mindful that the Council has limited event

management resources to do this. The Committee has therefore agreed the following events so far:

- **Celebration Plantation:** A community event centred around the creation of a Centenary Tree Plantation with local schools, groups and members of the public being invited to take part in the tree planting. When completed the plantation will increase the tree cover on the site by approximately 9,000 square metres, around 2,000 metres more than the average size of a football pitch. The plantation will not only provide a lasting legacy to mark the centenary, but also will offer all those that participate an opportunity to have a lifetime connection with the site.
- **Rock the Beacon 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> August 2019:** The Committee has agreed to the use of the site for a Rock the Beacon live music festival. This is to be delivered by an external organiser experienced in running such events, at no cost to the Trust. The Committee is content that the objectives of the event are relative to the purposes of the Trust, and is in keeping with the legacy of the previous Bands on the Beacon events. Importantly, it will be a family event and part of the celebrations for Barr Beacon's centenary year. The event will consist of over 50 live acts, including local bands and singer songwriters with food, bars and an acoustic tent.

## **6.0 The Lodge**

- 6.1 The Lodge is now in use regularly by an adult learning organisation whose students and staff have been participating in activities based at the Lodge. The Committee is pleased with the success of the programme and the opportunities that this has provided for the students, being far beyond what was originally envisaged at the start of the initiative.
- 6.2 The project has since been evaluated by healthcare professionals. The report reveals benefits to not only the students in terms of positive outcomes regarding their physical and mental wellbeing, but also knock-on effects for the staff and the students' carers and parents.

## **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 bank mandate has been reviewed and has been updated. The accounts have also been independently examined.
- 7.2 The Trust currently holds 22,496.15 COIF income shares (a specialist charity Common Investment Fund) with a current market value of around £327,500 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.

7.3 Having a healthy investment balance provides an annual return of approximately £11,000 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. The Trust is holding around £51,500 available cash which is being used to fund repairs and prevention works to the site and an 'events' budget of around £16,000 for commemorative and celebratory events of significance as described elsewhere in the report.

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 return required by the Charity Commission has been completed.

## 9.0 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 activities on the site not only further the Trusts purposes but are also consistent with the Council's Corporate Plan priorities for Communities and for People, enabling access and use of green spaces to improve health and wellbeing and reduce social isolation, helping to ensure that all children are a healthy weight, and supporting people to have increased independence.

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



Councillor A. Andrew  
Chair, Barr Beacon Trust Management Committee  
27 March 2019

**Contact Officer:** Helen Owen, Democratic Services on behalf of the Clerk to the Trust ☎ 01922 654522 ✉ [helen.owen@walsall.gov.uk](mailto:helen.owen@walsall.gov.uk)