



MONMOUTHSHIRE AND BRECON CANAL - CRUMLIN ARM WORKING GROUP

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT COUNCIL OFFICES, TREDOMEN
ON TUESDAY, 20TH SEPTEMBER 2005 AT 10.30 A.M.**

PRESENT:

Councillors:

Miss L. Ackerman, D.M. Gray, E.K. Griffiths, S. Jenkins, M.H. Newman, M.G. Parker,
Mrs. R. Passmore, Mrs. B.M. Toomer, D.T. Wiltshire.

Monmouthshire Brecon and Abergavenny Canals Trust - Mr. R.J. Dommett

Together with:

R. Webb (Director of the Environment), R. Davies (), K. Kinsey (Senior Engineer, Consultancy), N. Liversuch (Countryside and Landscape Officer), R. Morgan (), D. Nutt (Tourism Officer), J. Ridgewell (Parks Business Development Manager), D. Whetter (Senior Engineer), H. Morgan (Senior Committee Services Officer).

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor K. Etheridge, Mr. P. Jayne and Mr. M. Rees-Williams.

1. CHAIRMAN

It was agreed that Councillor E.K. Griffiths be appointed Chairman of the Working Group.

Councillor Griffiths gave a brief resume of the history of the Council and confirmed the aims, in common with canal restorations nationwide, to provide facilities to attract tourists, to the benefit of the county borough. He referred briefly to the existing consortium of local authorities and to proposals to seek grant aid to restore the canal within the county borough area. It was noted that the bid would be deposited with the funding bodies in January 2006.

2. PROPOSED TERMS OF REFERENCE

Consideration was given to the proposed terms of reference and following discussion on the content of the report it was agreed that the following be approved:-

- (i) To oversee the ongoing management and maintenance of the Crumlin Arm of the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal as it currently exists and to put in place measures to licence and control activities on the canal and in its environs.

- (ii) To take forward any proposals, measures and conclusions, set out within the Corridor Study, which are, in the future, adopted as policy by the Council with the aim of facilitating the development of the canal and the restoration of the canal to navigable standards.
- (iii) To support and participate in the council's involvement with external partners having the aim of restoring the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal network by the year 2020 in accordance with council policy.
- (iv) To take account of the response received from the public to the proposals and recommendations set out in the Canal Corridor Study.
- (v) To ensure that the conclusions and recommendations of the Corridor Study are taken into account during the preparation and development of the Local Development Plan.
- (vi) To take account of the actions of Newport City Council in the restoration of that length of the Crumlin Arm that lies outside the Caerphilly County Borough area.

Arising from the discussions therein it was also agreed that:-

- (i) Subject to the clarification with the Legal Department on existing agreements, any boats, which are not licensed/insured, be removed from the canal.
- (ii) In view of the amount of correspondence being received and dealt with on a day to day basis, the Chairman and Mr. R. Dommatt be authorised to consider those which are most searching and determine which items should be referred to the Working Group for consideration.
- (iii) Meetings be held on a monthly basis until the submission of the bed and quarterly thereafter.

3. CORRIDOR STUDY CURRENT STATUS

The content of the report which gave an update on the current status of the corridor study was noted. Mr. D. Whetter referred to the three-stage enhancement and restoration strategy of the canal and referred specifically to stage 1 which will complete safety, flood control and environmental works.

It was noted that the finance used to date had been used for this purpose and that any future funding proposals would be considered by Cabinet in the near future.

Reference was made to the presentations to be made to the Waterways of Wales Group on 11th October 2005 in respect of the study and to the brief to be presented to the Director General of British Waterways and it was agreed that details of both be presented at the next meeting. It was noted that the latter would also give an overview of potential economic and regeneration benefits of the proposals.

Members then discussed stage 2 which would result in full restoration to navigable standards of the canal between Cwmcarn and Fourteen Locks Visitor Centre. It was agreed that this stage should commence in the Darran area and be extended to the remainder of the canal in due course.

It was also agreed that in order to attract tourists into the area accommodation/mooring facilities are required and proposed. During the presentation to the Director General of British Waterways this subject be raised.

It was reiterated that the financial aspects of the study would require consideration by Cabinet and Council and that a report is in the process of being prepared for consideration.

4. CANAL WORKS CURRENT STATUS

Members were advised that unforeseen ground conditions discovered during the latest phase of canal channel de-silting and relining works resulted in the need to undertake significant additional emergency works. As such, the funding of this cost has absorbed the majority of the 2005/2006 capital allocation for council improvement works.

It was confirmed that over the past four years £250k has been allocated to carry out safety, flood control and environmental works and the report to Cabinet/Council would address future funding. It was indicated that the major risk elements have been addressed but recognised that in certain areas additional works may be required.

5. PARTNERSHIPS / CONSORTIUM

Details of the report which highlighted current partnership arrangements were noted.

Specific reference was made to the role of the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canals Regeneration Partnership and its objectives to protect, maintain, improve, restore and develop the 80km regional canal network.

Mr. Dommert referred to the actions of its Members Steering Group in instigating measures to implement the agreement of a formal Memorandum of Understanding for the Partnership to which all would be required to adhere.

He referred to the integral works of volunteers throughout the county and to proposals to concentrate efforts in the Fourteen Locks area over a weekend period in November.

Reference was then made to the Islwyn Council Association and to the relationship between the county borough and its volunteers. It was reported that the association intend to arrange another Canal Awareness Day in May 2006 (in the Manor Road section of the canal) to support the event by publicising details with Newslines.

It was noted that the association are seeking a grant of £600 to assist with the costs and agreed that officers seek to determine a source of funding which could be made available for this purpose.

(During discussion on this item Councillors S. Jenkins, Mrs. B.M. Toomer and Mrs. Passmore declared an interest as members of the association and took no part in the decision to support the event both in publicity and financially).

6. NETWORKING

It was noted that the authority actively supports and participates in the quarterly meetings of the WAG Members' All Party Group on Waterways.

The Inland Waterways Association (IWA) campaigns throughout the UK to ensure that existing waterways and their surroundings are conserved and maintained in the best possible conditions and developed sensibly to suit future needs. In June 2005 Cabinet Members and Officers met with the Chairman of the Inland Waterways Association (IWA) to discuss the Council's proposals for the Crumlin Arm and pass on the benefit of the IWA's significant

experience and advice on potential sources of funding for canal restoration.

A similar meeting between Cabinet Members and senior with executives of British Waterways will be held in the near future.

7. EXTERNAL GRANTS

Reference was made to the two bid categories under the Living Landmarks Portfolio of projects and to the bid, which has been submitted within the £10.25m categories. It was confirmed that the deadline for the initial round of bidding is 6th January 2006 and that Torfaen County Borough Council will act as lead bid partner in developing the submission for funding.

It was pointed out that the overall cost of the combination of works proposed by Caerphilly, Torfaen and Newport will exceed the grant money available and as such, there may be a need to prioritise the content of the borough's portion of the bid.

Members were pleased to note that the Islwyn Canal Association have been successful in obtaining £1,400 from the Environment Trust to provide additional seating along the canal towpath and are currently awaiting confirmation on progress and success of an application to the Big Lottery Fund for funding up to £20,000 for interpretation of heritage and then minor improvements along the canal corridor. It was pointed out that this bid will be the subject of a television poll and proposed that every effort be made to publicise the programme to ensure that the subsequent phone in vote is effective.

Reference was then made to the award of ERDF funding to Groundwork Trust for its environmental strategy and it was noted that a number of its proposals incorporate works on and leading to the canal. Ongoing discussions are progressing to ensure the strategy compliments the canal corridor study's action plan.

It was agreed that representatives of Groundwork Trust be invited to a future meeting to present their proposals.

A query was raised as to whether any of these grants would affect the bid to be submitted and Members were reassured that any applications made by any other bodies would not affect the bid to be submitted under the Living Landmarks Portfolio.

8. LICENSING AND CONTROL

Clarification was sought as to whether the county borough should formulate licensing conditions and utilise the existing British Waterways rules and regulations in line with the National Network.

It was pointed out that the regional network has a number of owners and concluded that a consistent approach should be adopted in order that users of the canal would not be required to comply with different rules/regulations depending on which part of the waterways they were using. As such it was agreed that the existing British Waterways rules and regulations should be adopted.

With regards to insurance it was noted that the level of cover is the subject of discussions with the Insurance Officer and that further information should be presented to the next meeting.

With regards to policing of the Waterways, it was noted that Wardens will be appointed for this purpose and confirmed that there are a number of issues, which need to be addressed with both the Legal and Licensing Department, which will also be the subject of reports to future

meetings.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Crosskeys and Pontywaun Residents Association

Consideration was given to the concerns expressed by the Association over the condition of the canal and to the request for a meeting to discuss the issues raised.

In noting that there is a report to be presented to Cabinet in the near future which will address future funding issues and the concerns raised, it was felt that it would be premature to meet the Association at this stage.

The meeting closed at 11.50 a.m.