



## MONMOUTHSHIRE AND BRECON CANAL CRUMLIN ARM SUB-GROUP

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT THE COUNCIL OFFICES, PONTLLANFRAITH  
ON WEDNESDAY, 25TH OCTOBER 2006 AT 2.30 PM

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PRESENT:

Councillor E.K. Griffiths - Chairman  
Mr. R. Dommett – Vice Chairman

Councillors:

D.M. Gray

Together with:

D. Whetter (Senior Engineer), J. Rogers (Senior Solicitor), D. Griffiths (Insurance and Risk Manager), S. Ruddock (Senior Insurance and Risk Officer), H.C. Morgan (Senior Committee Services Officer)

**Also in attendance**

Representing Pontywaun Spiritual Church  
Mr. P. Byett, Mrs. E. Hughes, Mr. D.H. Hayden and M. D. Hayden

Groundwork Caerphilly  
Mr J. Parkin

**1. CROSSKEYS & PONTYWAUN ENVIRONMENTAL REGENERATION PROGRAMME -  
CANAL LANDSCAPE PROJECT IN THE VICINITY OF PONTYWAUN SPIRITUAL  
CHURCH ADMINISTERED BY GROUNDWORK CAERPHILLY**

Further to consideration of the Pontywaun Spiritual Church's objections to the proposed canal landscape project by the Council's Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal – Crumlin Arm Working Group on 12th September 2006 the meeting was convened with representatives of the Church and Groundwork Caerphilly to clarify and address the Church's objection to the proposed works.

It was noted that land identified for enhancement is situated alongside the Canal at Hall's Road Terrace, Crosskeys and is included within the Crosskeys and Pontywaun Environmental Programme that is being administered by Groundwork Caerphilly. The proposals seek to enhance one of the few readily accessible open areas of land along the whole length of the Canal within the County Borough for the benefit of all users.

Reference was made to the Church's concerns with regard to disputed land ownership and the resulting reduction of informal car parking provision in the vicinity of the Church. It was

noted that in order to implement the proposals within the prescribed time and funding constraints it is necessary to reach a common agreement on the issues.

Mr. Parkin tabled plans of the proposals and advised that approximately £120,000 has been allocated for the proposed works. Mr Parkin highlighted that failure to spend the capital allocation by the end of this financial year would jeopardise the funding for and the ability to implement the scheme. He confirmed that the proposal seeks to regularise parking provision on land owned by the county borough that is located immediately to the north of the Church and noted that at present the proposal does not include for any work on additional land owned by the county borough located alongside and south of the Church. Mr Parkin advised that the privately owned land to the west of Halls Road Terrace lies outside the scope of the landscape enhancement project. The proposal includes provision of seating, DDA compliant access to the canal's towpath and an informal picnicking area together with a limited number of formal parking spaces on land that currently provides adhoc parking alongside the Canal for general use and not exclusively for those attending the Church.

With regards to the surface of the car park, Mr. Parkin confirmed that it was intended to utilise a specialist product "grasscrete" that combines a hardwearing concrete pocketed surface for car parking that supports grass growth through soil infill within the concrete block.

The Church representatives expressed concerns that as up to 30 car drivers regularly attend their Services the proposed arrangement would reduce the availability of parking on the area of land in question and would exacerbate the existing problem of parking on Halls Road Terrace and nearby residential streets. They requested that the proposed parking arrangement on land to the north of the Church be revisited with a view to increasing the provision and that consideration be given to incorporating the land to the south of the Church into the proposal to provide additional parking provision.

Mr. Parkin confirmed that he would revisit the proposed layout to determine whether amendments could be made and indicated that whilst the finance is allocated for this specific site he would consider whether slippage from any other schemes could be used to include works on the land to the south of the Church. Details of the revised proposals would be forwarded to all parties in due course.

Reference was then made to the ongoing dispute over land ownership and it was noted that although the Council is registered as having absolute title to the canal and the adjoining areas of land along its banks, it is accepted that as the Church has stood on the site for such a long period it could claim ownership of the area on which it sits. As such, there would be no counter claim should a statutory declaration be made to the Land Registry Office. Mr. Rogers indicated that he would provide the necessary information to Mr. Byett.

With regards to the rebuilding of the Church (which had recently been badly damaged by fire and requires reconstruction) it was suggested that a planning application be submitted as soon as possible. It was agreed that in order to identify the boundary of the site, an additional area of land up to 1.5m off the northern elevation of the building should be incorporated within the plan to facilitate the Church's intended rebuilding and extension.

Mr. Byett queried as to whether there is any financial assistance either by way of loan or contribution which may be available for the redevelopment of the Church either by way of loan or contribution to bring it in line with the proposals to enhance the Canal and its environment and was advised to submit an application under the Welsh Church Act Fund and to liaise with both GAVO and Heritage in Action who would have specialist knowledge in this area.

Mr. Parkin confirmed that the European Funding awarded for the Crosskeys and Pontywaun Environmental Programme would not allow for expenditure on the general fabric of the Church building but that it may be possible within the landscape enhancement scheme to provide assistance with improvements to the Church forecourt by inclusion of integrated paving and planting.

Reference was then made to the feasibility of connecting the new toilet facility within the Church to the public sewer. It was noted that any connection will require the consent of Welsh Water/Dwr Cymru but pointed out that as the Church is not in close proximity to a readily available public sewer that the cost of providing such a connection would be prohibitive.

In conclusion the Chairman confirmed that it had been a constructive meeting and noted that the land ownership issues can be addressed. With regards to the existing proposed parking layout, it was noted that Mr. Parkin would provide a revised plan for consultation and consider and the feasibility of incorporating the area of land to the south of the site.

It was agreed that the meeting be reconvened if necessary once the revised plans are available for consultation.