



MONMOUTHSHIRE AND BRECON CANAL – CRUMLIN ARM WORKING GROUP

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT DUFFRYN HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH
ON WEDNESDAY, 10TH OCTOBER 2007 AT 2.00 P.M.**

PRESENT:

Councillor E.K. Griffiths - Chairman

Councillors:

K. James, S. Jenkins, M.H. Newman, Mrs. B.M. Toomer, D.T. Wiltshire

Together with:

D. Whetter (Senior Engineer), R. Davies (European Officer), W. Birrell (Senior Engineer), S. Trew (Senior Horticultural Officer), G. Gordon (Senior Assistant Solicitor), H. C. Morgan (Senior Committee Services Officer).

Mr. R.J. Dommett - Monmouthshire, Brecon and Abergavenny Canals Trust
Mr. V. Huskings - Groundwork

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Miss L. Ackerman and D.M. Gray, N. Liversuch (Principal Planner, Countryside and Landscape Services) and D. Price (Principal Parks and Open Spaces Officer).

1. BULB PLANNING SCHEME

The Chairman announced that on 12th October 2007 pupils from the local school had been invited to participate in the planting of bulbs/trees within privately owned land overlooking the canal at Risca. He reminded those present that the Spalding Bulb Company had kindly donated 300 hundred daffodils and 25 shrubs/trees which will be planted on the private embankment. He indicated that a letter has been sent to the Company thanking them for the contribution, which will assist in enhancing the canal corridor for its users.

2. MINUTES - 4TH JUNE 2007

The minutes of the meeting held on 4th June 2007 were approved as a correct record.

Matters Arising

3. Cwmcarn Flannel Factory - Memorial (minute no. 9)

Members were pleased to note that the bespoke seat that acts as a monument to those who lost their lives in the 1875 tragedy associated with the Canal feeder reservoir has been installed.

4. Canal Awareness Day (minute no. 8)

It was noted that the Islwyn Canal Association/Monmouthshire, Brecon and Abergavenny Canals Trust Canal Awareness Day scheduled for 13th October 2007 has been postponed. Members will be notified of an alternative date in due course.

5. Licensing and Control - Use of the Canal by Whysom's Wharf Limited (minute no. 13)

In noting that it has been agreed that the licence is to run from 1st April and 30th September (both dates inclusive), a query was raised as to whether, as Easter occasionally falls in March, it would be possible to vary those dates to accommodate the Easter holiday period and Autumn school half-term period. It was noted that no such application to vary the licence has been received to date but in the event that it is submitted, it would need to be considered by appropriate Officers prior to being referred to Council for determination.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following reports.

6. Big Lottery - Living Landmarks Stage 2 Submission

Consideration was given to the report and the supplementary information circulated at the meeting, which provided an update of the Lottery approval timetable. Members noted that the Living Landmarks Committee will make a decision on a short list of projects and by 18th October the county borough will be advised confidentially if the project has been shortlisted.

As part of the process, it was noted that Big Lottery's local project review visit for the Living Links Stage 2 project took place over two days on 17th and 18th July 2007. The project review comprised a detailed inspection and assessment of the proposals. As part of the assessment Big Lottery assisted each of the 23 projects across the UK to produce a project overview short film. The project overview films have been posted on the Big Lottery website for those who wish to view them.

Should Living Links be one of the projects Big Lottery approve to progress, a final project presentation will be required to the Lottery Board on 6th November 2007. Big Lottery advises that they will announce award of funds to successful projects on 7th November 2007.

Members were advised that they would be notified once the final shortlist for the Living Landmarks programme is available.

7. Big Lottery - Living Landmarks Match Funding

Members were reminded that 25% of the overall project cost will be required as match funding to complement any Big Lottery award for the Living Links project and that since 2006/07 the

county borough has set aside a £250,000 annual canal capital budget allocation as the match funding towards the bid.

Mr. Whetter reported that other options for potential match funding continue to be explored with Torfaen County Borough Council (as project lead partner) and the Monmouthshire Brecon and Abergavenny Canals Trust taking the lead in seeking out potential sources of alternate match funding.

Members noted that preliminary discussions with the Welsh Assembly Government Department for Economy and Transport on their ability to provide a source of match funding resulted in award of an 80% Environmental Improvement Programme Grant to Torfaen County Borough Council towards the cost of regional ecological study and minor improvement works.

8. Welsh Assembly Government Department for Economy and Transport Environmental Grant

It was noted that the Welsh Assembly Government have awarded Torfaen County Borough Council (on behalf of the Regional Canal Partnership) £83,328 towards a £104,160 project comprising ecological studies and minor environmental improvements. Within the county borough it is proposed that there will be an update on past ecological study work to assess the ecological importance of the canal across the three Council areas. It will also allow Countryside Services to progress delivery of the Crumlin Arm Interpretation Strategy through installation of £35,000 of signage, information boards and furniture at key locations along the Canal.

9. Big Lottery - Living Landmarks Stage 2 - Community Consultation

The regional proposals for the Big Lottery Living Links submission were placed on public display at the Crosskeys Green Park festival held on 4th August 2007 where representatives of Monmouthshire Brecon and Abergavenny Canals Trust were in attendance to advise on progress to date and the remaining stages in the Big Lottery approval procedure.

The Living Links proposals were also placed on informal public display at a public meeting held in Risca on 20th September 2007.

10. Groundwork's Canal Landscape Project

It was noted that works on the Canal Landscape Project at Halls Road, Crosskeys administered by Groundwork are nearing completion. Mr. Huskings indicated that there has been a delay in completing the project, although feedback on the landscape project and its associated artwork has shown that it has been well received by the community. He confirmed that trees and shrubs would be planted to complement the hard landscape improvements and be undertaken as seasonal requirements dictate.

It was noted that the concerns expressed by residents of Halls Road Terrace on the need to reduce the width of the highway junction at High Street and Halls Road to accommodate a new length of footway linking High Street to the Canal as part of this project were subject to discussion at a public meeting held on 22nd August 2007. The Engineering Division have agreed to review the junction arrangement upon completion of the ongoing Landscape Project works in order to assess if there is potential for localised improvement to the junction arrangement.

11. Cwmcarn Flannel Factory - Memorial

Members were pleased to note that the bespoke seat that acts as a monument to those who lost their lives in the 1875 tragedy associated with the Canal feeder reservoir has been installed.

12. Crumlin Arm Interpretive Plan

It was noted that the Crumlin Arm Information Booklet developed by Islwyn Canal Association and the Council's Countryside Services Section (as appended to the report and circulated at the meeting) had been distributed at Caerphilly Big Cheese and Crosskeys Green Park Festival events. Wider distribution of the leaflet is ongoing through the Islwyn Canal Association.

It was noted that works resulting from the £35,000 project part funded through the WAG Environmental Improvement grant would complement the funds previously secured by Groundwork Caerphilly for the installation of six diamond interpretive panels at appropriate locations. It was agreed that the combined implementation of the Welsh Assembly Government and Groundwork funded works would make a significant impact in the delivery of the Council's Interpretive Plan for the Canal.

13. Capital Works For 2006/2007 and 2007/08

Members were reminded that the capital works allocations for 2006/07 and 2007/08 have been set-aside as match funding to the potential Big Lottery grant to which the Authority is required to commit 25%.

14. Canal Works Current Status

Mr. Whetter advised that since the last meeting works have been undertaken to remove localised obstructions and localised accumulations of silt between Darren Road and Pontywaun. Works have also been undertaken at Manor Road, Risca to provide a temporary "bypass" channel in order to convey increased volumes of water towards Newport to alleviate concerns over water supply resulting from the Canal channel continuing to be dewatered at Manor Road.

It was noted that proposals are being developed to provide a basic arrangement to monitor water levels along the whole length of the Canal and an investigation of a water issue at Wood View Road, Risca is ongoing to ascertain if the situation is associated with the Canal.

15. Licensing and Control - Use of the Canal by Whysom's Wharf Ltd

It was noted that the formal Agreement between the Council and Mr. Wysom to allow Whysom's Wharf to operate up to six rowing boats on the canal for business use between Darren Road Bridge and Pontywaun Slipway has been prepared. However, in view of the comments made earlier in the meeting, it was anticipated that a request to vary the licence may be received and noted that it would be dealt with in accordance with agreed procedures.

Correspondence

16. Islwyn Canal Association Proposed Canal Awareness Day at Halls Road, Crosskeys

As indicated earlier the meeting, the Awareness Day scheduled for 13th October 2007 has been postponed. Members will be notified of an alternative date in due course.

17. Fourteen Locks, Rogerstone Visitor Centre

Mr. R. Dommett reported that the Fourteen Locks, Rogerstone Visitor Centre works to extend the existing building and are scheduled for completion in February/March 2008. The building works will provide improved exhibition space along with formal rest facility with associated catering training and provision. Whilst outside the County Borough the Visitor Centre is a key location for many visitors who explore the southern section of the Canal within the County Borough.

In relation to the extension to the visitors centre, Mr. Dommett explained that Newport City Council would undertake the build and the Trust would be granted a lease on the completed building. Works commenced on site on 1st October 2007 and it is anticipated that they will be completed by the end of February/March 2008. He confirmed however that the Father Christmas weekends scheduled for the beginning of December would continue as in previous years and would not be affected by the works on site.

With regards to the Fourteen Locks restoration project, it was noted that Cadw scheduled ancient monument consent is awaited. The approval of Cadw is dependent upon the provision of an outline method statement linking the archaeological management with the engineering works and Newport City Council are currently seeking an appropriate archaeologist to undertake this work. Davies Langdon have been appointed Project Managers and the invitation to tender for the post of Education and Access Officer have been published.

19. Big Lottery - Living Landmarks Stage 2 Submission

At the conclusion of the meeting members commended the quality of the project overview film as posted on the website. It was confirmed that the £33 million bid included an allocation of £1 million towards the establishment of a regional "Community Fund" that would be available to supply up to 50% of the cost of local community projects that would deliver outputs that matched the aims of the Lottery's Living Landmarks fund and the Living Links project. Mr. Whetter confirmed that, should the application be successful, the mechanics of how the Living Links Community Fund is to be administered and how match-funding contributions are determined will need to be addressed.

The meeting closed at 2.25 p.m.