

MONMOUTHSHIRE AND BRECON CANAL – CRUMLIN ARM WORKING GROUP – 10TH OCTOBER 2007

REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF THE ENVIRONMENT

2.1 Big Lottery - Living Landmarks Stage 2 Submission

1. Big Lottery's local project review visit for the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canals Regeneration Partnership's (MBCRP) "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.
2. Big Lottery's statement on the final shortlist of projects that will progress beyond the Stage 2 assessment of the 23 national projects is due to be announced on 16th October 2007.
3. Should "Living Landmarks" 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.
4. As part of the Stage 2 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 at <http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/video-2.htm?regioncode=uk&progStatus=closed>.

2.2 Big Lottery - Living Landmarks Match Funding

1. Members are aware that 25% of overall project cost will be required as match funding to complement any Big Lottery award for the Living Links project. Some £8 million needs to be secured on a proportional basis by CCBC, TCBC and NCC in order to satisfy Big Lottery's requirements.
2. Since 2006/07 Caerphilly CBC has set aside the £250,000 annual canal capital budget allocation as the Council's match funding towards the regional Big Lottery bid.
3. However, other options for potential match funding continue to be explored with Torfaen CBC (as project lead partner) and the Monmouthshire Brecon and Abergavenny Canals Trust (MBACT) taking the lead in seeking out potential sources of alternate match funding.
4. MBACT have made bids for landfill tax credit funding to mitigate the match funding requirements on CCBC, TCBC and NCC and TCBC are preparing the initial PIF notice to the Valleys Regeneration Strategic Partnership as the first step in a potential bid for EU Convergence Funding.
5. Preliminary discussions with WAG 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 TCBC towards the cost of regional ecological study and minor improvement works.

Further discussions with WAG DET officers in relation to match funding are planned during October.

2.3 WAG DET Environmental Grant

1. WAG have awarded TCBC on behalf of the regional Canal Partnership £83,328 towards a £104,160 project comprising ecological studies and minor environmental improvements.
2. Within CCBC the WAG funding will: -
 - (i) Update past ecological study work to assess the ecological importance of the canal across the three Council areas.
 - (ii) Allow CCBC 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.

2.4 Big Lottery - Living Landmarks Stage 2 - Community Consultation

1. 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 the MBACT were in attendance to advise on progress to date and the remaining stages in the Big Lottery approval procedure.
2. The Living Links proposals were also placed on informal public display at a public meeting held in Risca on 20th September 2007.

2.5 Groundwork's Canal Landscape Project

1. Works on the Canal Landscape Project at Halls Road, Crosskeys administered by Groundwork Caerphilly commenced on 18th June 2007 and nears completion. Bespoke fence panels have been fabricated and will be installed above the dwarf masonry retaining wall installed at the earliest opportunity.
2. Trees and shrubs planting to complement the hard landscape improvements will be undertaken as seasonal requirements dictate.
3. Concerns have been 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 landscape project. The residents concerns were subject to discussion at a public meeting held on 22nd August 2007. The Council's 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.

2.6 Cwmcarn Flannel Factory – Memorial

1. 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.

2.7 Crumlin Arm Interpretive Plan

1. The Crumlin Arm information booklet developed by Islwyn Canal Association and the Council's Countryside Services Section is attached for Members reference. The leaflet has been distributed at Caerphilly Big Cheese and Crosskeys Green Park Festival events. Wider distribution of the leaflet is ongoing through the Islwyn Canal Association.
2. Works resulting from the £35,000 project part funded through WAG (item 2.3.2(ii) refers) Environmental Improvement grant will complement the funds previously secured by Groundwork Caerphilly for installation of six diamond interpretive panels at appropriate locations. The combined implementation of the WAG and Groundwork funded works will make a significant impact in the delivery of the Council's Interpretive Plan for the Canal.

2.8 Capital Works For 2006/2007 and 2007/08

1. 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%.

2.9 Canal Works Current Status

1. Works have been undertaken to remove localised obstructions and localised accumulations of silt between Darren Road and Pontywaun.
2. Works have been undertaken at Manor Road, Risca to provide a temporary "bypass" channel in order to convey increased volumes of water towards Newport in order to alleviate concerns over water supply resulting from the Canal channel continuing to be dewatered at Manor Road.
3. Proposals are being developed to provide a basic arrangement to monitor water levels along the whole length of the Canal.
4. Investigation of a water issue at Wood View Road, Risca is ongoing to ascertain if the situation is associated with the Canal.
5. Instructions have been issued to repair the Pontywaun Slipway vehicle barrier.

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

1. The Head of Legal Services is drafting a 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. The draft Agreement incorporates appropriate clauses that confirm the Council is unable to guarantee continuity, quantity and quality of water within the Canal and a termination clause that the Council may initiate at any time with an appropriate period of notice.
2. Confirmation of the required £5 million third party liability insurance and appropriate current boat safety certificates for the craft will be requested from Mr Wysom in due course once drafting of the Agreement is complete.

2.11 Correspondence

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

The ICA in association with the MBACT have sought consent to hold the annual Canal Awareness Day at Halls Road, Crosskeys on 13th October 2007 to celebrate completion of the ongoing Canal Landscape Project. In their correspondence the ICA also requested that the Council make a financial contribution towards the cost of the event.

Following consultation with the Chairman it has been agreed that the Council will make a £500 contribution towards event costs subject to approval of the ICA's proposals and health and safety procedures for the event.

At the date of preparation of this report the approval of the ICA's proposal is ongoing, a verbal update will be provided at the Working Group meeting.

2. Fourteen Locks, Rogerstone Visitor Centre

The Fourteen Locks, Rogerstone Visitor Centre works to extend the existing building in readiness for its 12 months opening started on 8th October 2007 and are scheduled for completion in 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's Crumlin Arm within the County Borough.