



## **MONMOUTHSHIRE AND BRECON CANAL – CRUMLIN ARM WORKING GROUP**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT DUFFRYN HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH  
ON TUESDAY 26TH FEBRUARY 2008 AT 10.00 AM**

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### **PRESENT:**

Mr. R.J. Dommett - Vice Chairman - Presiding

### **Councillors:**

Miss. L. Ackerman, D.M. Gray, S. Jenkins, M.H. Newman, Mrs. B.M. Toomer, D.T. Wiltshire

### **Together with:**

D. Whetter (Senior Engineer), N. Liversuch (Principal Planner, Countryside & Landscape Services), G. Gordon (Senior Assistant Solicitor), D. Rees (Senior Engineer), G. Evans (Senior Planner), H.C. Morgan (Senior Committee Services Officer)

### **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors E.K. Griffiths and K. James, R. Davies (European Officer) and P. Jayne (Manager - Countryside and Landscape Services)

### **1. COUNCILLOR KEITH GRIFFITHS**

It was noted that Councillor E.K. Griffiths was not able to be present due to ill health and those present wished him a speedy and full recovery.

### **2. MINUTES - 10TH OCTOBER 2007**

The minutes of the meeting held on 10th October 2007 were approved as a correct record.

### **MATTERS ARISING**

### **3. Bulb Planting Scheme (minute no. 1)**

It was noted that the bulb planting scheme had taken place on 12th October 2007 and pupils from the local school had participated in the planting of bulbs/trees within privately owned land overlooking the canal at Risca.

#### **4. Canal Awareness Day (minute no. 4)**

It was anticipated that the Islwyn Canal Association/Monmouthshire, Brecon and Abergavenny Canals Trust Canal Awareness Day would be held in conjunction with the official launch of the Crosskeys/ Pontywaun Ground Work project.

#### **REPORTS OF OFFICERS**

Consideration was given to the following reports

#### **5. LOTTERY - LIVING LANDMARKS STAGE 2 SUBMISSION**

It was reported that on 19th October 2007 Members had been notified that Big Lottery had advised Torfaen County Borough Council that the Regional Canal Partnership's "Living Links" canal project had failed to reach the final shortlist of Big Lottery's Living Landmarks programme.

The Big Lottery's report of the findings and conclusions arising from the July 2007 Stage Two Project Review Assessment was circulated to the Regional Canal Partnership. The report provided an independent assessment of the key project risks identified during the July 2007 review. The key risks were allocated a red, amber or green status and the assessment was provided to the Living Landmarks Committee for consideration as part of the overall approval process. In making their decision on award of implementation grants the Living Landmarks Committee also considered how well each project addressed the priorities of the Living Landmarks programme.

Mr. Whetter highlighted the detailed summary of the output of Big Lottery's review of the Regional Canal's Partnerships Living Links project as appended to the report and referred specifically to governance and management, technical feasibility, design assessment and ownership of risks, planning considerations and site ownership, the business case, financial sustainability, procurement strategy, strategic fit and stakeholders, project cost and funding, lessons learned, best practice and readiness for the next phase and detailed the colours associated with each part of the assessment. He indicated that the overall assessment of the project risks considered the overall status as red due to the potential for unclear scope (removal of elements to contain cost over-run without full understanding of consequences to benefits).

Members were disappointed to note that the scheme had not been selected but wished to place on record their appreciation to Mr. David Whetter for his time and efforts in preparing the scheme for presentation.

#### **6. WELSH ASSEMBLY GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT FOR ECONOMY AND TRANSPORT ENVIRONMENTAL GRANT**

Members were pleased to note that Welsh Assembly Government grant of 80% match funding to the regional Canal Partnership has allowed the councils Countryside Services to progress delivery of the Crumlin Arm Interpretation Strategy. The grant has been utilised to supply and install eight additional diamond interpretation signs to provide coverage at key locations between Cwmcarn and Harry Roberts Bridge, Pontymister. It is intended to provide fourteen interpretive signs over the entire length of canal within the County Borough. Mr. Dommett indicated that the Trust were also looking to adopt the shaped signs as their logo to ensure there is continuity of signage along the canal.

Mr. Liversuch reported that it is intended to provide further interpretation and artwork through the fixing of bespoke 'interpretive' backrests to the three existing seats in rural areas along

the canal and by replacing the damaged timber fence near Crosskeys Deeps Overflow with bespoke sculptural fencing similar to that used in completing the landscape works at Halls Road Terrace, Crosskeys.

## **7. GROUNDWORK'S CANAL LANDSCAPE PROJECT**

An appendix to the report showed prestart and post work photographs of the works undertaken as part of the Canal Landscape Project at Halls Road, Crosskeys administered by Groundwork Caerphilly. Trees and shrubs have been planted and a litterbin provided to complement the hard landscape improvements.

Members commended the works undertaken and referred to comments made by the public on the enhancement to the area.

## **8. CANAL WORKS CURRENT STATUS**

Mr. Whetter detailed the planned and reactive works undertaken over the winter months and referred specifically to the progress on tree management within the priority one area between Navigation Road and Manor Road that was identified in the LTC Landscape Report, works to address high water levels by revision of and reactive maintenance to the temporary bunds at Manor Road, pumping out of enclosed section of canal channel and removing excessive water via the Strathaven overflow near Thistleway, Risca, the repair of the leak within the canal channel at Temperance Hill, Risca and the removal of litter and other debris that has accumulated within the canal channel.

## **9. CAPITAL WORKS FOR 2008/2009**

It was noted that works estimated at £650,000 are programmed to reline 600m of the canal channel south of Manor Road (installation of a synthetic liner, 600m of towpath resurfacing and vegetation management and minor landscape improvements in the vicinity of Masala Junction takeaway). Advance vegetation clearance and dewatering of 600m of the channel to mitigate potential ecological constraints on the implementation of the relining works are due to commence during week commencing 3rd March 2008.

Mr. Whetter reported that in addition to the major works and subject to availability of funding it is also intended to progress minor works in the area. Advance publicity of the works to be undertaken will be notified in local newspapers and there will be liaison with the users of the canal.

Mr. Rees reported that a survey of vulnerable structures along the whole length of the canal is being carried out with the use of a form produced to record and prioritise regeneration infrastructures and details from the various authorities will be reported to the Officer Group.

## **10. WELSH ASSEMBLY GOVERNMENT AGGREGATES LEVY SUSTAINABILITY FUND FOR WALES**

Mr. Rees detailed the proposed submission to the Welsh Assembly Government for appropriate canal improvement and enhancement works and indicated that if successful the finance will be used to enhance the works on the Manor Road channel relining works.

## **11. LICENSING AND CONTROL - USE OF THE CANAL BY WHYSOM'S WHARF LIMITED**

It was noted that the revised draft 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 (between 21st March and 5th November to reflect the inclusion of Easter and autumn half-term school holiday periods) has been issued and confirmation of the terms contained therein are awaited as is submission of the required £5 million third party liability insurance and appropriate current boat safety certificates for the craft.

The 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.

## **12. LICENSING AND CONTROL - USE OF THE CANAL FOR PRIVATE BOAT USE**

Following receipt and confirmation of £3 million third party liability insurance, the "Seaquest", "Rhayader" and the "Jemima Morris" have been granted consent for individual private boat use of the length of the Crumlin Arm in the Council's ownership for the period of 1st April 2008 to 30th September 2008.

Members were advised that the insurance cover for the "Wendy E" expired on 3rd January 2008 and despite several reminders and a final warning letter issued by the Head of Legal Services the owner of this craft has failed to confirm that the craft is insured or advise of his intention to remove the craft from the canal. The instigation of procedures to remove the "Wendy E" from the canal and dispose of the craft were supported.

## **13. FOURTEEN LOCKS, ROGERSTONE VISITOR CENTRE - MONMOUTHSHIRE BRECON AND ABERGAVENNY CANAL TRUST UPDATE**

Consideration was given to the report present by Mr. R. Dommett (Regeneration Manager) which gave an update on the Cefn Flight of Fourteen Locks Visitor Centre extension, Government New Deal Training Scheme, three year programme of regeneration works, Community Landscape Skill Qualification Training Module (Transnational), Monmouthshire and Brecon Canals Regeneration Partnership Scheme and the Christmas Grotto

It was noted that the prolonged adverse weather during January has delayed the construction of the extension to the Visitor Centre by approximately 4 weeks. It is now anticipated that the official opening of the enhanced facility will take place towards the end of April or in early May 2008.

Members were pleased to note that as part of the Government New Deal Training Scheme, eight trainees have been working on the spillway stonework of Waen Lock 3, hedge cutting and clearing vegetation growth from the spillway of Gwasted Lock 2.

Mr. Dommett made specific reference to the three-year programme of regeneration works and reported that the majority of work will involve offside cutting, inspecting and making good defects to the four locks within this section which was restored through a previous New Deal Training Scheme from 1999 to 2003. There are other restoration works within the scheme which will involve leak stopping and cleaning foliage from bridges and the head walls of culverts. Two important projects involve the raising of Malpas pedestrian footbridge and reconstruction of the slipway at Bettws Bridge. An integral part of this project is training trainees from the Government New Deal Training Scheme and the community volunteers in heritage and environmental skills.

The project is planned to take over three years, some works will be completed to coincide with the Ryder Cup and National Trailboat Festival (Kimberley Park) arranged through the Inland Waterways Association, both of which are being held in 2010. Visiting craft will then be able to navigate the canal from Barrack Hill to Pentre Lane and to Waen Lock 3 on the Crumlin Arm.

It is intended to develop and establish a practical 'water and land' based skills qualification programme to enable members of the community who either wish to volunteer or follow a pathway to employment with credited skills, to participate in providing improved water quality, protection, maintenance and enjoyment of a safe historic waterway environment.

Mr. Dommett reported that British Waterways have put forward the idea of establishing a Regeneration Strategy Group which could be part of or report to the existing partnership. In noting that discussions will initially take place between the existing local authority owners of the canal and the Trust, it was agreed that representatives of British Waterways be invited to a future meeting.

#### **14. CORRESPONDENCE**

There had been no correspondence received.

#### **15. MR. DAVID WHETTER - SENIOR ENGINEER**

Mr. Whetter announced that his role within the Directorate of Environmental Services would be changing and as such he would no longer be dealing with issues relating to the Canal. He introduced his colleague, Mr Derek Rees, who would now fulfil that function.

Members wished to place on record their appreciation for the valued advise and guidance he has given to the Working Group over the years and for always dealing with matters in a professional and helpful way. Councillor S. Jenkins, on behalf of Islwyn Canal Association, awarded Mr. Whetter an Honorary Membership of the Association which he accepted.

The meeting closed at 11.00 am.