



MONMOUTHSHIRE AND BRECON CANAL - CRUMLIN ARM WORKING GROUP

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT 14 LOCKS ROGERSTONE ON
THURSDAY, 23RD NOVEMBER 2010 AT 10.00 A.M.

PRESENT:

Councillor S. Jenkins - Chairman
Mr. R.J. Dommett - Vice Chairman

Councillors:

D.M. Gray, Mrs. B.M. Toomer

By invitation: Councillor Mrs. P. Griffiths

Together with:

K. Kinsey (Principal Engineer - Consultancy), N. Liversuch (Manager, Countryside and Landscape Services), R. Davies (Funding Officer), H. Morgan (Senior Committee Services Officer)

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

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Miss L. Ackerman, M. Davies, R. Davies, K. James, M.G. Parker and Mr. G. Gordon (Senior Assistant Solicitor)

1. MINUTES - 17TH MAY 2010

The minutes of the meeting held on 17th May 2010 were approved as a correct record.

Reference was made to minute no. 9 which recorded that there is no capital budget allocation for the 2010/2011 financial year. It was requested that this be clarified with the Head of Corporate Finance and Procurement.

REPORT OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following items.

2. MAINTENANCE UPDATE

Canal Channel - The weed cutting/channel clearance regime for the coming year will continue at the reduced frequency of two visits. Clearance will be undertaken in July and October 2011 to cause minimum disruption to the wildlife within the canal channels.

Grass Maintenance - The final cut of the season was undertaken in October. During this visit the canal verge cut was extended down to the waters edge and included the removal of all saplings and shrubs growing within this area. The first cut of next season will take place in early April 2011, although this will be reviewed nearer the date to take into account the influences of the prevailing weather conditions, which during 2010 delayed the germination of grass due to the unusually cold weather. Should there be no delay in grass germination subsequent cuts will be undertaken on 24th June, 20th July, 7th August, 11th September and 19th October 2011.

It was clarified that as previously agreed a strip will be retained alongside the waters edge to ensure a more ecologically friendly and natural environment.

3. 2010/2011 WORKS PROGRAMME

Towpath - All remaining lengths of towpath previously surfaced with a stone dust finished have now been surfaced with a tarmac finish.

Access Enhancement - Further improvement works are proposed to the access points at Pontywaun. The scope of works at this location will include the installation of vehicle and motorcycle barriers, areas of block paving, re-surfacing of the towpath from Pontywaun Feed to Pontywaun Bridge and the installation of litter and dog fouling bins.

A query was raised in relation to the motorcycle inhibitor barriers and it was confirmed that they are designed to standard dimensions to prevent the illegal use of motorcycles along the towpath. They do not prevent access by cyclists, although depending on the cycle frame, riders may be required to slow down or dismount at that point. Mobility scooters are also able to pass through the barrier.

Water Control - The installation of stank boards at Pontywaun Bridge is now complete.

Dredging - It is proposed to dredge a section of canal between the Dragon Teeth overflow and Green Meadow Bridge should sufficient budget remain available in January 2011.

Tree Maintenance - It is proposed to undertake general tree management works in January/February 2011, which will involve removal of damaged or diseased trees together with some ecological enhancement.

External Funding - The Countryside and Landscape Group secured external funding from Welsh European Funding Office in the sum of £50,000.00 for access enhancement. Elements of the works identified above have been funded from this source

4. 2011/2012 WORKS PROGRAMME

Towpath - It is proposed to investigate the use of asphalt preservation systems to treat the recently placed tarmac towpath. Such systems have the potential to increase the durability of asphalt surfacing by up to three times their normal lifespan. There are a number of systems available, some of which are coloured and could satisfy the original aspiration for the towpath in providing a more natural appearance in keeping with the aesthetics of the local environment.

Access Enhancement - All access points have now been improved in accordance the recommendations contained with the LTC Management and Enhancement Study.

Water Control - The installation of stank boards and depth gauges at Green Meadow Bridge, Penrhiw Bridge, Moriah Hill Bridge and Darran Road Bridge are programmed for this financial year.

Advanced Design - Advanced design works for relining schemes at Pontywaun Viaduct and the section of canal downstream of the viaduct, down to Pontywaun Bridge, are planned in order to have scheme cost surety and allow future funding bids.

A request was made for pointing signage to be provided at those points of the canal where there is a road break, to advise users that they need to cross the road in order to rejoin the canal.

5. FUNDING

Capital - It is understood that there will be no capital budget allocation for the 2011/2012 financial year. As discussed earlier in the meeting, clarification is to be sought from the Head of Corporate Finance and Procurement

Revenue - The 2011/2012 budget is forecast as being in the region of £150, 000. Expenditure under this heading is allocated to cover the cost of grass and channel maintenance, tree maintenance, general cleansing, towpath repair, management cost and emergency response.

6. BOATS

It was noted that all boats were removed form the canal by their owners last year and there have not yet been any applications received from owners to replace their boats. It was confirmed that should an application for a licence be received it must be accompanied by the appropriate liability insurance and boat safety scheme certificate.

7. MONMOUTHSHIRE, BRECON AND ABERGAVENNY CANALS TRUST REGENERATION MANAGERS REPORT

Mr. Dommett advised that since the last report, the Trusts Restoration Team, supported by the Waterway Recovery Groups summer camp, have been clearing years of tree and scrub growth from the walls, spillway and ground around Tredegar, Ty Cock Bottom, Lower Brake and Shop Locks in preparation for structural surveys and restoration in the near future. Silt and debris has also been cleared from Tredegar Lock chamber.

Projects have also continued to maintain open access along the towing, bridal way and footpaths at the Cefn Flight of Fourteen Locks outside of the sites restoration scheme.

He advised that the funding of these and future projects is important in order to keep the partnerships objectives of a fully navigable canal from Brecon to Newport and Cwmcarn including access to the Bristol Channel and beyond a reality.

Through the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canals Regeneration Partnership the Trust has also been engaged in preparing funding applications.

European Convergence Funding - the European Officer advised that as part of the wider Monmouthshire and Brecon Regeneration Partnership, a joint bid led by Torfaen County Borough Council has been submitted to the Welsh European Funding Office to fund a project

of approximately £10m. This has been collated and developed through a Funding Group of Officers across the Partnership. He advised that the estimated cost summary gives an indicative breakdown of the total project proposal and asked Members to note the potential spend of £2.5m in respect of the Caerphilly Arm. This element is primarily engineering, improving the Canal's condition and infrastructure, but importantly, providing an additional 2km stretch of navigable water. While the application remains as a reserve bid, and places no commitment on the Partnership, there has been continued feedback and support from the Welsh European Funding Office to progress its development to a full application.

The bid has been submitted under a Priority that is fully committed, and its future progress is governed by monies returned or unspent. Consequently, the Welsh European Funding Office is anxious not to raise expectations too high, but in its feedback, advised the Partnership's Funding Group that monies are expected to become available, and this project is one it would wish to support. The latest expression of interest, which provides an outline of proposed activities and costs, has been appraised by the Welsh European Funding Office, and the Funding Team have been encouraged to progress to the next application stage and submit a detailed business plan which is in the process of being progressed.

Mr. Davies explained the funding split required should the scheme progress and reported that as the project is still in its development stage, it is difficult to predict exactly what costs would fall onto the Council. However, submitted as a joint project, this requirement falls across the Partnership, and funding pooled, rather than apportioned against partner spend.

Members were reminded that a move towards a business plan application and potential funding will require a commitment from the Council towards the wider project and developing the project detail. While funding is key, there will be similar capacity issues, in terms of input, delivery and managing any resultant project. An Officers meeting has been arranged later in November to consider these implications.

It was noted that the next meeting of the Monmouthshire and Brecon Steering Group is scheduled for 15th December 2010 and a request was made for Mr. Kinsey to be present.

During the course of the debate, it was reported that Islwyn Canal Association have written to Sir Terry Mathews seeking a donation towards the canal restoration, particularly in relation to the aqueduct.

Heritage Lottery Fund - an application has been submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund to restore Tredegar, Ty Coch (Bottom), Lower Brake, Shop Brake, Rachel's, Cabin and Ty Coch (Top) Locks -value £500,000.00. The outcome is awaited.

Trusthouse Charitable Trust - the Trust, with support from Torfaen County Borough Council submitted an application which has been successful - value £25,000.00. The £25,000.00 received by the Monmouthshire, Brecon and Abergavenny Canals Trust was matched funded by a contribution of £25,000.00 from Torfaen County Borough Council. Total project cost £50,000.00.

Landfill Credit Fund -the Trust has made an application to be considered for future funding from Newport Waste Ltd.

Mr. Dommett advised that whilst the above projects have been progressed, trials of a new Stop Plank material (a combination of recycled plastic product and metal) took place at Gwasted Lock. It was successful but some modifications are required to improve the water seal between each plank. The manufacturer has agreed to make the improvements before undertaking further trials.

Cefn Flight of Fourteen Locks Restoration (Phase 1) - although restoration of the lock chambers is now complete, stop plank recesses and planks are being installed above locks 20 and 18. Included in these works is the replacement of a timber boat fender above lock 20.

Evidence indicated that the approach wing walls to the lock chamber have been rebuilt a number of times probably due to the impact of passing boats making it necessary for the timber fender. The contractors are aware of some other structural works still to be completed. The earth required to bund the pond below lock 17 is too wet to complete at the moment, so will be completed sometime next year.

Mr. Dommett was pleased to announce that CADW have given permission to the Trusts Restoration Team to paint the lock gates and metal work with a weather protected coat of paint.

Phase 2 Cefn Flight of Fourteen Locks - Funding - In that four locks (two pairs) have now been completed it was noted that it has been agreed that any further finance which is made available would be used as match funding for other schemes.

Drapers Lock Restoration Programme - funding had been secured and work will commence in the New Year.

Waterways Recovery Group 2011 July 2 Week Summer Work Camp - the bid to the Waterways Recovery Group has been successful and as such volunteers will work on the Pentre lane/Lower Cwmbran section of the canal for two weeks in July 2011.

Waterways Recovery Group 2011 November Bonfire Bash Work Camp - a bid has been submitted to the Waterways Recovery Group for the bonfire bash work camp in November 2011.

'Ringing of Bells' 2012 Celebrations - details of proposals to commemorate the bicentenary of the opening of the Monmouthshire and Brecknock and Abergavenny Canals to navigation on 17th February 1812 were outlined and it was noted that British Waterways are taking the lead. Numerous organisations/community groups have been contacted and requested to participate and it is anticipated that a programme will be prepared detailing all the events that will be taking place during the course of the year as part of the celebrations.

The meeting closed at 11.45 a.m.