



MONMOUTHSHIRE AND BRECON CANAL - CRUMLIN ARM WORKING GROUP

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH ON
THURSDAY 8TH FEBRUARY 2018 AT 5.00 P.M.**

PRESENT:

Councillor A. Whitcombe - Chair

Mr R. Dommett (Monmouthshire, Brecon and Abergavenny Canals Trust) - Vice Chair

Councillors:

L. Jeremiah, G. Johnston, B. Owen, J. Simmonds, R. Whiting

Together with:

K. Kinsey (Acting Engineering Projects Group Manager), R. Barrett (Committee Services Officer)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M. Davies, N. George, A. Hussey, Mrs A. Leonard, Ms P. Leonard, D.W.R. Preece and C. Thomas, together with Cabinet Member S. Morgan (Economy, Infrastructure, Sustainability and Wellbeing of Future Generations Champion) and B. Illman (Monmouthshire, Brecon and Abergavenny Canals Trust).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received at the commencement or during the course of the meeting.

3. MINUTES – 19TH OCTOBER 2017

The minutes of the meeting held on 19th October 2017 were approved as a correct record.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following reports.

4. MAINTENANCE UPDATE

Kevin Kinsey (Acting Engineering Projects Group Manager) presented an update on matters relating to the Canal and responded to queries from the Group in turn.

Canal Channel – efforts were made to undertake weed cutting/channel maintenance in December 2017 but due to difficulties in securing availability with the specialist contractor this was not possible. It has now been decided to put back planned weed cutting until the autumn.

Grass Maintenance - the first cut of the season will be undertaken in March 2018. The cutting will progress to the agreed regime and include the amended cutting patterns along the Manor Road section.

5. 2017/2018 WORKS PROGRAMME

Towpath - General maintenance will be carried out.

Access Enhancement - general maintenance to paved surfaced areas in the form of weed clearance and power washing will be undertaken shortly, together with the painting of all street furniture and fencing. Existing hoop barriers where damaged or missing will be replaced, as will all of the locks on the various gate access points. In response to a Member's query, Mr Kinsey confirmed that the Council is exploring the cost of carrying out works to the car park at Pontywaun Spiritual Church on Halls Road (adjacent to the Canal), although this may fall into the next financial year.

Water Control - No works are planned for the remainder of this financial year.

Dredging – No works are planned for the remainder of this year.

Tree Maintenance - Tree maintenance commenced on Monday 29th January 2018 and will deal with low lying branches that currently obstruct passage along the canal channel, and any trees requiring trimming back as identified in the February 2017 survey. In response to a Member's query, it was confirmed that the Council is using a combination of in-house staff and sub-contractors to carry out the works, which should result in some savings in this area.

External Funding - Officers within the Regeneration and Planning Division are currently working with neighbouring authorities to compile bids in an attempt to secure funding for further improvements at key areas along the Canal. It is understood that this is progressing well and in this respect the use of the Canal capital funding as match funding is being considered

Channel Leak Repair - The second phase of works has been completed, and Phase 3 relining works are being designed at present and will be tendered in May of this year. The length of Canal to be addressed in this phase will extend from the downstream terminus of Phase 1 down to the Pontywaun overbridge.

Emergency Works - There have been no defects requiring emergency action identified during this period.

6. FUNDING

Capital - A capital budget allocation for 2018/19 is anticipated to be confirmed as £212k plus the £149k carry over from 2017/18, giving a total budget of £361k. This funding will be used to complete the Phase 3 channel lining works at Pontywaun.

Revenue - The budget for 2017/18 was £105k and current spend commitments should see this spent in full. The anticipated budget for 2018/19 currently stands at £105k.

7. BOATS

There was no update to report in this respect. A Member queried the mechanisms in place in order to encourage use of the canal for boating purposes, and Mr Kinsey confirmed that he could write out to those organisations who may be interested. He explained that all the necessary functions in order to use the Canal are in place (such as licensing processes and slipways). Mr Richard Dommett (Monmouthshire, Brecon and Abergavenny Canals Trust) added that MBACT are looking into the possibility of arranging a fun day along the Manor Road section of the Canal in the near future.

Mr Kinsey was thanked for his update.

8. UPDATE FROM MR RICHARD DOMMETT - MBACT

Mr Dommett referred to the National Assembly Cross-Party Group on Waterways, which meets on a regular basis and discusses various issues relating to the waterways in Wales. He highlighted the discussions and presentations that take place, which occasionally relate to the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal, and explained that the meetings are open to all representatives of the Crumlin Arm Working Group. It was confirmed that details of the next meeting will be circulated in due course, with all Canal Group Members encouraged to attend.

Mr Dommett also highlighted the work of the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal Joint Steering Group and reported on a number of items discussed at their February 2018 meeting. He explained that a survey on the Canal is being drafted, which will be offered to all Canal local authorities in order to gauge their perceptions on their stretch of the Canal. At the Steering Group meeting, an update was also given on the Regional Development Programme Water Management Strategy. It was noted that although the bid from the Canal and River Trust submitted in late 2017 to Welsh Government's Rural Development Programme (RDP) was unsuccessful, WG provided useful feedback in this regard, and the Canal and River Trust have been invited to reapply in Spring 2018.

Reference was made to a recent press article outlining plans for a significant restoration project to restore abandoned sections of the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal. Mr Dommett explained that the details of the scheme had been taken out of context and were less ambitious than what had been reported.

In closing, Mr Dommett delivered a slideshow presentation to the Canal Group, which he had previously given to the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal Joint Steering Group. The presentation outlined the many regeneration challenges facing the Canal and of the plans for future projects, including the Ty Coch Waterway Park Feasibility study. The presentation also highlighted the significant work carried out by dedicated volunteers in order to complete a number of restoration schemes. It was agreed that a copy of the presentation would be circulated to the Canal Group following the meeting.

Mr Dommett was thanked for his update and the meeting closed at 5.49 p.m.