



MONMOUTHSHIRE AND BRECON CANAL - CRUMLIN ARM WORKING GROUP

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH ON
THURSDAY 28TH FEBRUARY 2019 AT 5.30 P.M.**

PRESENT:

Councillor A. Whitcombe - Chair

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

Councillors:

M. Davies, Mrs A. Leonard, D.W.R. Preece, J. Simmonds, R. Whiting

Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Services - Councillor N. George

Together with:

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

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor A. Hussey, L. Jeremiah, G. Johnston, Ms P. Leonard, B. Owen, C. Thomas and Mr 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 – 18TH OCTOBER 2018

The minutes of the meeting held on 18th October 2018 were approved as a correct record.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following report.

4. **UPDATE ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE CANAL**

Kevin Kinsey (Acting Engineering Projects Group Manager) presented the report, which detailed the current and planned maintenance and any capital works planned for the forthcoming year. The report set out details of current funding availability and outlined any current operational issues regarding the usage and the condition of the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal – Crumlin Arm.

Members were updated on the range of subjects relating to the Canal as set out in the report and Mr Kinsey responded to queries from the Group in turn.

Section 5.1 - Maintenance Update

Canal Channel - Weed cutting/channel maintenance for 2019 has not been planned as yet, but will be considered later in the year in consultation with all relevant stakeholders. Mr Kinsey explained that all appropriate steps will be reviewed with ecologists and other colleagues to monitor the safe and effective clearance of the channel given the accidental fish kill incident in 2015. In response to a Member's query, it was confirmed that the works would not prevent canoeists from using the Canal.

Grass Maintenance - The first cut of the season is planned for March 2019, with the exact date being weather dependent, but it could extend later into the month if the cold snap of 2018 is repeated. Mr Kinsey gave a reminder of the new cutting regime between Manor Way in Risca and the Harry/Henry Roberts Bridge in Pontymister, which allows for a strip of foliage to grow to the water's edge to provide cover for wildlife.

Members referred to the success of the new regime and suggested that consideration could be given to extending this cutting style across the Manor Road stretch and Prince of Wales/Temperance Hill area, or even extend the regime right across the entire section of the Canal. Following discussion of the matter, it was unanimously agreed that Mr Kinsey would raise the suggestions with colleagues in Parks to seek their views on the practicalities of extending the new cutting regime further across the Canal.

Section 5.2 – 2019/2020 Works Programme

Towpath - There are no planned towpath works for 2019.

Access Enhancement - There are no planned access maintenance works for 2019.

Water Control - It is proposed to undertake cleansing of all culverted sections of the canal during March/ April, which will allow for a greater ease of water flow across the Canal and down to its counterpart in Newport. There are plans to install provision for stop boards at key locations along together with depth gauges, and installation of a new control valve at the Manor Road emergency feed is currently under consideration and is likely to be in place before the summer.

It was noted that these works are being implemented to improve control measures and address the overflow at Manor Road, particularly because the Manor Road feed is the only controlled feed in the Risca area (as the Council do not have access to control the feed at Fernlea/Gelli Avenue). Works to the Nant Carn Feed are programmed for mid-summer, which will improve draw-off capability during periods of dry weather. Members discussed the history and locality of the Canal feeds and were interested to learn that there was originally one further up the valley at Penylan Pond.

Dredging - Dredging of the Green Meadows Bridge to the Drill Halls Channel is planned for

early 2020. A Member asked if there had been any increases in silt along the Pontywaun section (arising from fires in the Cwmcarn Forest Drive area). Mr Kinsey explained that there was no evidence of any issues in this area but complaints had been received regarding silt in the section down past Green Meadows Bridge.

Tree Maintenance - Extensive tree maintenance works are currently ongoing; this has been made necessary by the discovery of Ash Dieback over the full length of the canal. This is likely to have a significant impact on the wooded fringes of the canal. To date this work has been completed along the section between Halls Road Pontywaun and Navigation Road, Risca. It is anticipated that the remaining length of the canal down to Harry Roberts Bridge will be completed before the end of March.

External Funding - Officers within CCBC's Regeneration and Planning Division as part of the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal Adventure Triangle bid have successfully secured funding to the value of £678,571.00. All works associated with this funding are to be completed by December 2020 and Officers are currently looking at priorities in this respect.

Channel Leak Repair - The third phase of works is being designed at present and will be tendered in the late spring or early summer. The length of Canal to be addressed in this phase will extend from the downstream terminus of Phase 1 down to the Pontywaun overbridge. There is currently an issue with water loss at the aqueduct and Officers are reviewing options to deal with this, and as such it is planned to implement remedial works at the same time as the Phase 3 works. It was noted that care has to be taken in determining the type of remedial work and materials to be applied to the aqueduct exterior as it is a listed structure under Cadw.

Emergency Works - There have been no defects requiring emergency action identified during this period, which shows the benefit of the continuing remedial works to vulnerable sections of the Canal over the last 15 years.

Section 5.3 – Funding

Capital - A capital budget allocation for 2018/19 is £212k plus the £149k carry over from 2017/18, giving a total budget of £361k. Anticipated funding for 2019/20 is £212k which will be used to complete the Phase 3 channel lining works at Pontywaun, and applied as match funding for the Adventure Triangle. It was noted that the amount of funding combined is in the region of £1.2m which is positive news for the Canal.

Revenue - The budget for 2018/19 was £105k and current spend commitments should see this spent in full. Funding for 2019/20 forms part of the MTFP infrastructure savings for 2019/20 and as such will be reduced to £50k.

Section 5.4 – Boats

Members were advised that there was no news to report in respect of the Islwyn Lily and no recent contact had been received from the Islwyn Canal Association (ICA).

In conclusion, it was noted that a full programme of works for the coming year has been identified with funding in place to achieve these objectives. Mr Kinsey offered to circulate the 3-Year Works Programme for the Canal to Members following the meeting and this was welcomed by Members.

A Member highlighted continuing vehicle damage to the Penrhiw Bridge in Risca and Mr Kinsey confirmed he would speak to Traffic Management regarding potential preventative measures.

Mr Kinsey was thanked for his update and for responding to Members' queries during the course of his presentation.

5. UPDATE FROM MR RICHARD DOMMETT - MBACT

Mr Dommett provided a verbal update on developments in respect of the Canal, and outlined towpath resurfacing works between the Harry Roberts Bridge and Malpas in Newport, and Ty Coch to Llantarnam in Torfaen, all of which have been funded through the Adventure Triangle.

Mr Dommett updated the Group on MBACT's recent campaign opposing the implementation of car parking charges at Fourteen Locks Canal Centre in Rogerstone, and highlighted concerns surrounding the potential detrimental impact to visitor numbers (and particularly for users of the café) as a result of these charges.

The Group were also updated regarding MBACT's new Community Boat which will be sited at Goytre Wharf. The Trust have purchased an old canal boat which will be refurbished for use as a Community Boat resource. It will seat 38 passengers, be eco-friendly and operated by electric motor, and be fitted with a wheelchair lift. It is hoped that the licence for the boat will be secured following the Easter holidays. Members welcomed the news of this exciting project and were invited by Mr Dommett to visit Goytre Wharf and view the new boat in the near future.

The Chair thanked those present for their attendance and contributions and the meeting closed at 6.00 p.m.

The next meeting of the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal – Crumlin Arm Working Group will be held on Thursday 25th July 2019.