



MONMOUTHSHIRE AND BRECON CANAL - CRUMLIN ARM WORKING GROUP

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH ON
THURSDAY 7TH NOVEMBER 2019 AT 4.30 P.M.**

PRESENT:

Councillor A. Whitcombe - Chair

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

Councillors:

M. Davies, A. Hussey, L. Jeremiah, B. Owen, D.W.R. Preece, J. Simmonds, A. Whitcombe, R. Whiting

Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Services - Councillor N. George

Together with:

Mr R. Dommett (Monmouthshire, Brecon and Abergavenny Canals Trust), K. Kinsey (Principal Engineer), A. Bolter (Visitor Economy and Destinations Manager), R. Barrett (Committee Services Officer)

1. WELCOME

The Canal Group gave a warm welcome to Anthony Bolter (Visitor Economy and Destinations Manager), and it was noted that he would be attending future meetings of the Group as part of his remit, following a restructure across the Council's Regeneration & Planning division.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor G. Johnston, Mrs A. Leonard Ms P. Leonard, C. Thomas, and Mr B. Illman (Monmouthshire, Brecon and Abergavenny Canals Trust).

Mr Dommett also explained that Ms Y. Forsey, who has recently been appointed as the MBACT Vice-Chair, had planned to observe the meeting but had since given her apologies.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

4. **MINUTES – 25TH JULY 2019**

The minutes of the meeting held on 25th July 2019 were approved as a correct record.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following report.

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

Kevin Kinsey (Principal Engineer) presented a verbal update on matters relating to the Canal and responded to queries from the Group in turn.

Maintenance Update

Canal Channel - Weed cutting/channel maintenance for 2019 is not planned as yet. This will be considered later in the year in consultation with all relevant stake holders. There have been issues around the Navigation Road section whereby felled trees and other foliage from private properties have been dumped in the Canal, and the matter has been passed to the Council's Enforcement Team.

Grass Maintenance – The final cut of the season has taken place and includes the amended cutting regime across the length of the Canal, which has generally been well received by local residents.

2019/2020 Works Programme

Channel Leak Repair - the third phase of works is being designed at present and will be tendered before the end of this calendar 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. Phase 4 works planned for the upper section of the deeps are to be combined with Phase 3 and issued as one contract.

There is an ongoing issue with water loss at the Pontywaun aqueduct and Officers recently met with external consultants to discuss the problem. The Council is continuing to review the options available to address the problem, including the potential use of waterproof grouting to form an impermeable curtain around the defective sections of the aqueduct which is suffering the water loss.

Water Control – there are also some issues around water control across the Pontywaun section of the Canal. Officers are examining various options, and have recently constructed a clay bund and reactivated the temporary feed to alleviate the problem.

Access Enhancement – the Canal Group discussed access and a Member referred to recent instances of vehicles becoming lodged at Penrhiw Bridge in Risca. Officers confirmed that they are aware of the problem and that colleagues within the traffic management team have been considering options to tackle this problem.

Funding

External Funding – It was noted that the spend for Adventure Triangle funding needs to be completed by December 2020, and that further funding for the project is uncertain.

Capital - A capital budget allocation for 2019/20 is £212k plus the £361k carry over from 2018/19, giving a total budget of £573k. This funding will be used to complete the Phase 3 channel lining works at Pontywaun/Phase lining the Deeps, and match funding for the Adventure Triangle funding mentioned above.

Revenue - The budget for 2019/20 is £54.5k and current spend commitments should see this spent in full. The budget has been halved from previous years but this reduction has not caused problems to date, due in the main to a lack of major works.

Boats

Members were advised that there was no news to report in respect of the Islwyn Canal Association's leisure boat (The Islwyn Lily) and that the boat has now been stationary for some time.

A Member asked if the Council have a presence on the Islwyn Canal Association, and it was confirmed that this query would be progressed following the meeting.

It was also noted that local ward members recently made some enquiries in respect of potential funding available to enhance the area around the Flannel Factory memorial bench located at the Pontywaun aqueduct. It has been established that there is a balance of almost £7k remaining within the Cwmcarn Memorial Cottage Hospital Fund. Enquiries are being made into how this potential funding source can be accessed.

The Canal Group thanked Mr Kinsey for his presentation and noted the details of the update.

6. TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE CANAL GROUP

The Chair referred to the discussions at the previous meeting regarding the composition of the Canal Group, and proposed that the existing Terms of Reference be retained. This was seconded, and by a show of hands (and in noting there were 2 against) was agreed by the majority present.

Following the vote, two Members from the Newbridge Ward who had voted against the proposal expressed reservations over the relevance of their membership on the Canal Group, given that there is no visible or accessible Canal infrastructure in their ward and that the majority of the Canal works are undertaken in the Pontywaun and Risca areas. A Member from the Abercarn Ward stated that he would still wish to contribute to the work of the Group as there are sections of Canal infrastructure remaining across that ward.

The Chair referred the matter to the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Services, who confirmed that he would take these views and comments on board and seek advice on the matter of Canal Group membership following the meeting.

7. UPDATE FROM MR RICHARD DOMMETT - MBACT

Mr Dommett (MBACT) provided a verbal update on recent MBACT developments and

matters relating to the Canal.

The Canal Group were advised that a building clearance was recently undertaken at the the Navigation Colliery site at Crumlin as part of ongoing restoration works, which uncovered a number of historic documents at the premises. Some of these documents related to the Canal, and revealed that there was once a dry dock across the Caerphilly section of the Canal.

Mr Dommett updated the Group on the Ty Coch Waterway Park Project, which if successful, would see the restoration of 2 locks at the Llantarnam section of the Canal adjacent to the Ty Coch site, including funding the planning stage through the Heritage Lottery Fund Horizon Grant to enable the project to move forward to the construction stage.

Mr Dommett also advised the Canal Group that Newport and Torfaen Councils have been involved in discussions around setting up a joint Canal Group for their sections of the Canal. If this is successful, this will set the scene for the potential revival of the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal Joint Steering Group/ Regeneration Partnership, which has been dormant for around two years.

The Canal Group noted the verbal update from Mr Dommett.

The Chair thanked those present for their attendance and contributions and the meeting closed at 5.05 p.m.

The next meeting of the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal – Crumlin Arm Working Group will be held on Thursday 27th February 2020.