



MONMOUTHSHIRE AND BRECON CANAL - CRUMLIN ARM WORKING GROUP

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH ON
TUESDAY, 25TH NOVEMBER 2014 AT 10.00 AM**

PRESENT

Councillor D.W.R Preece – Chair
Mr R.J. Dommett – Vice-Chair

Councillors:

Ms L. Ackerman, N. George, D.M. Gray, A. Lewis, Mrs R. Passmore

Cabinet Member for Highways, Transportation and Engineering – Councillor T.J. Williams

Together with:

A. Bolter (Group Manager - Strategy Funding and Support), C. Bradley (Funding Officer),
K. Kinsey (Principal Engineer - Consultancy), R. Barrett (Committee Services Officer)

Mr B. Illman (Chairman Monmouthshire, Brecon and Abergavenny Canals Trust)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs K.R. Baker, Mrs P. Griffiths,
K. James, G. Johnston, Ms P. Leonard, K. Lloyd, and D. Rees.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

3. MINUTES – 20TH JUNE 2014

The minutes of the meeting held on 20th June 2014 were approved as a correct record.

4. MATTERS ARISING

At the previous meeting, Councillor D.W.R. Preece was appointed Chair of the
Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal – Crumlin Arm Working Group for the ensuing year.

Councillor Preece announced that unfortunately he was unable to continue in this role, and nominated Councillor N. George as his replacement. The nomination was seconded, and by a show of hands, Councillor George was unanimously appointed Chair of the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal – Crumlin Arm Working Group for the ensuing year.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following reports.

5. MAINTENANCE UPDATE

Kevin Kinsey, Principal Engineer, presented an update on matters relating to the Canal.

Canal Channel – Members were advised that weed cutting/channel clearance works were undertaken in July and August 2014 but unfortunately due to late breeding by nesting birds had to be abandoned on the Manor Road section. The weed cutting boat is due to return before the end of the calendar year.

Grass Maintenance – Members were advised that grass cutting has been undertaken through the year and the last cut of the year was undertaken in October 2014.

6. 2014/2015 WORKS PROGRAMME

Towpath - works will be undertaken shortly to raise a short length of canal bank to the rear of Brynhyfryd Terrace. There is a long-standing problem with overtopping during periods of heavy rainfall and this year there have been two requests for the provision of sandbags.

Access Enhancement - no works are planned for this year.

Water Control - initial walkover investigations have been undertaken in the locality of Cwm Byr stream with a view to developing a system to control and maintain the excessive quantities of silt that are being carried into the canal. Recent monitoring suggests that these volumes have increased, and this work is ongoing.

Dredging - it is still planned to dredge the section of canal between Green Meadow Bridge and Darran Road Bridge in order to restore a navigable route through this section. However, the disposal of the wet silt is a major issue as wet material cannot be taken to landfill. In order to overcome this issue the Engineering Projects Group have recently submitted a planning application to temporarily stockpile material at Risca quarry to enable it to dry out before being disposed of. Although the planning application was successful, there is now an issue with National Resources Wales.

NRW maintain that in order to allow CCBC to use the quarry as intended, a waste processing permit will be required, which would take up to 4 months to obtain. CCBC are currently exploring other options in this respect.

Tree Maintenance – CCBC are in the process of securing quotations for a tree survey over the full length of the canal. It is hoped to undertake all identified works during this financial year. In response to a Member's query, it was confirmed that the survey would cover both sides of the Canal bank and all tree types, including any that could be affected by larch disease and that Officers would investigate the possibility of seeking funding from WG in such an event.

External Funding - there are no external funding sources available at present.

Channel Leak Repair - works to repair the leak within the Pontywaun section of canal started the first week of February and are now complete in terms of the extent of works identified for this financial year. The second phase of works to complete the relining up to the downstream end of the aqueduct is programmed to commence in April 2015 (budget permitting). The tender process is currently ongoing in respect of this matter.

In response to a Member's query it was confirmed that all works to this section had been completed and that the towpath would be reopened shortly. Discussion also took place regarding the historical significance of the Pontywaun aqueduct and Officers confirmed that they would make enquiries as to whether any such funding could be available to assist with these works.

Reference was also made to a study of Manor Road being carried out by Torfaen Council and Mr Dommett confirmed that he would make enquiries regarding funding available in relation to this.

7. FUNDING

Capital – a capital budget allocation for 2014/15 has been fully committed. It is indicated that the budget allocation for 2015/16 will be £212,000, and this funding will be used to complete the channel leak repair at Pontywaun.

Revenue – the 2014/2015 budget allocation was £126,500, and at the time of writing, approximately £90,000 remained unspent.

Expenditure using the remaining budget is allocated to cover the cost of tree maintenance and dredging.

Discussion took place regarding sustainability measures, and Officers outlined such works carried out over the last few years. These included long-term assessments of the canal resulting in the progression of works in a number of high-risk areas including the relining of the Pontywaun and Darran Road sections of the Canal. Members suggested that low priority areas could be reassessed and Officers confirmed that this was something that could be addressed at a future point in time.

Members suggested that a site visit be arranged so that the Working Group could view the works that had been carried out along the Canal. It was agreed that this would be arranged in early 2015.

8. BOATS

There were no updates in this respect.

9. TERM SERVICE CONTRACT

The current term service maintenance contract has now come to an end and will not be re-tendered. Future maintenance works will be undertaken by CCBC Network Contracting Services.

10. EU FUNDING

Antony Bolter, Group Manager, Strategy Funding and Support, advised the Group that the European Commission had recently approved a number of European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) programmes, with £960m of funding made available for West Wales and the

Valleys. It was explained that it was not yet clear how much of this funding would be made available to CCBC but that it was hoped some of this funding could be put towards schemes relating to the Canal. Officers outlined the Welsh European Funding Office (WEFO) guidance relating to the use of the ERDF. It was explained that a maximum of 2-3 proposals should be developed across the region (South East Wales) and that the funding for infrastructure proposals should embrace physical/urban regeneration and tourism, with a key focus on job creation. One of the proposals being developed is based around the Canal (from Pontypool to Cwmcarn).

News of the funding and the potential for the regeneration of the Canal and surrounding areas were welcomed by Members, and it was agreed that Officers would keep the Group updated on progress relating to this funding.

11. DRAFT ACTION PLAN

Christine Bradley, Funding Officer, presented the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal – Crumlin Arm Draft Action Plan to the Group, which had been requested at a cross-departmental meeting relating to the Canal. The document consisted of a number of proposed actions relating to the Canal and was appended to the agenda papers.

The Draft Action Plan contained information on the background and geography of the Canal, together with its strategic context and asset value. It also contained information on CCBC's vision and objectives for the Canal, proposals, the estimated costs of works and an implementation plan of works. It was explained that the Draft Action Plan had been derived from several methods, including site visits by Officers to the Canal, and meetings with local partnerships and organisations.

Members' attention was directed in particular to the Implementation Plan contained within the Draft Action Plan, which outlined in detail a number of actions relating to the Canal, the action description, potential funders/partners, the priority rating of each action (compulsory, realistic or visionary) and an estimated cost of each action. Officers explained that subject to approval by the Canal Group, the document would be circulated for wider consultation.

Discussion of the Draft Action Plan ensued with a number of queries raised regarding actions included within the Implementation Plan. Reference was made to the potential for the towpath to be used as a direct route for broadband cable and Members queried the financial benefits this could have on other initiatives, and it was explained that an impact assessment would firstly need to be carried out to determine whether such a venture was sustainable.

Discussion took place regarding the proposed sale of Adam's Quarry and a number of potential uses for the site, with it confirmed that the sale of the site was currently under review. Members also suggested improvements to the cycle network that linked into the Canal towpath in the Pontywaun area.

12. SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Officers provided an update on the Sustainability Impact Assessment that was being led by Torfaen Council. It was explained that Caerphilly were contributing information to this assessment in relation to developmental funding proposals. It was anticipated that work on the assessment would be completed by the end of January and that the results would be relayed to the Canal Group when available.

13. UPDATE ON ISLWYN CANAL ASSOCIATION TRIP BOAT

Officers provided an update on an issue raised by the owner of the Islwyn Canal Association trip boat in relation to an increase in licensing fees, silted water and the potential impacts of both on the boat concerned.

It was explained that there had been some difficulty in establishing the nature of the issue and that the lead Officer dealing with this matter had now retired. It was clarified that the boat could not be used at the present time due to issues relating to silted water. The Principal Engineer offered to make further enquiries as to who was responsible for the matter and report back to the Group at a later time.

14. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

It was explained that a number local residents in Rogerstone have recently set up a community group to address issues relating to the Canal. This group will be affiliated with the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canals Trust and it is hoped that this will encourage the formation of other such groups along the Crumlin Arm of the Canal. The next meeting of this group was scheduled for 4th December 2014 at 7pm at Fourteen Locks Centre, with Members of the Canal Group informed that they were welcome to attend.

The meeting closed at 11.04 am.

The next meeting of the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal – Crumlin Arm Working Group is scheduled for Thursday 25th February 2015 at 10.00 am.