



MONMOUTHSHIRE AND BRECON CANAL – CRUMLIN ARM WORKING GROUP

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT THE COUNCIL OFFICES,
PENALLTA HOUSE ON 23RD JUNE 2009 AT 10.00AM**

PRESENT:

Councillor S. Jenkins - Chairman

Councillors:

Miss L. Ackerman, M. Davies, D.M. Gray, Mrs. P. Griffiths, M.G. Parker, Mrs. B.M. Toomer

Together with:

K. Kinsey (Principal Engineer - Consultancy), N. Liversuch (Principal Planner - Countryside and Landscape Services), R. Davies (European Officer), D. Nutt (Tourism Officer), G. Gordon (Senior Assistant Solicitor), H.C. Morgan (Senior Committee Services Officer)

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

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R. Davies and M.H. Newman, R. Keep, D. Price, D. Rees and S. Trew.

1. MINUTES - 28TH NOVEMBER 2008

The minutes of the meeting held on 28th November 2008 were approved as a correct record.

2. CANAL SITE VISIT - 27TH MAY 2009

The Chairman made reference to the site visit held on 27th May 2009 and to the buffet laid on at Whysoms Wharf by the Islwyn Canal Association. It was agreed that a letter be sent to Mr. and Mrs. Whysom to thank them for their hospitality and welcome.

3. REGIONAL MANAGER BRITISH WATERWAYS

Mr. Dommatt was pleased to announce that Andrew Stumpf (who had been present at the above site visit) had been appointed as Regeneration Manager (Wales and the West).

4. **REPORTS OF OFFICERS**

Consideration was given to the following items.

5. **Licensing Update**

It was noted that in April 2009 following receipt and approval of insurance documents two craft's, the Jemina Morris and Rhayader, were approved to use the Crumlin Arm of the Canal for individual private boat use during the period 1st April to 30th September 2009. Both craft's boat safety certificate expire in late October 2009.

6. **Use Update**

A request had been received from the county boroughs Outdoor Education Section to utilise the Pontywaun section of the Canal for paddlesports (canoeing). Subject to a risk assessment being formally approved by the Corporate Health and Safety Officer and insurance approved by the Insurance and Risk Manager, no time restrictions being imposed on the usage (but no guarantee given on availability of sufficient water supply all year round) and Outdoor Education being requested to ensure the sterilisation of equipment to ensure no contamination of the Canal by crayfish from Penyfan Pond, this request was approved following consultation with Councillor S. Jenkins, Chairman of the Working Group.

7. **Awareness Day**

An application was received from Islwyn Canal Association for a Canal Awareness Day on 16th May 2009 at Pontywaun and the required risk assessment and insurance were both received and approved and as such, the application was granted.

Councillor S. Jenkins gave an update on the success of the event and Members who had attended referred to the number of activities which were available on the day, including a boat ride on the Canal.

During the course of the meeting it was noted that the Islwyn Canal Association would be seeking permission to hold another Canal Awareness Day early in September at Manor Road and agreed that subject to the required risk assessment and insurance the application should be approved.

8. **Works Update**

Manor Road - works to reline the section of canal from Manor Road, downstream to Pontygraig Bridge, were undertaken between August 2008 and January 2009. Approximately 600m of canal channel was relined using a synthetic liner with a puddle clay capping, together with the resurfacing of the adjacent towpath with a tarmac finish. The access point to the canal at Manor Road was also improved, with the installation of new vehicle and motorcycle barriers, areas of block paving, benches and litter bins.

Navigation Road to Temperance Hill - works to reline the section of canal from Navigation Road, upstream to Temperance Hill, were undertaken between December 2008 and February 2009. Approximately 150m of canal channel was relined, using a synthetic liner with a puddle clay capping.

Pontywaun - works to repair a leak opposite the overflow were undertaken between December 2008 and January 2009. During the course of the works, defects were uncovered within a section of culvert running below the canal channel. A specialist contractor was employed to repair these defects, using a proprietary lining system. The leak within the canal channel was repaired using puddle clay in combination with a section of synthetic liner.

9. Access Enhancement

Gelli Avenue - the access point downstream of Gelli Avenue was improved with the installation of new vehicle and motorcycle barriers and areas of block paving. The access point upstream of Gelli Avenue was improved with the installation of a new motorcycle barrier, areas of block paving, a bench, dog fouling bin, litter bin and a small section of decorative walling.

Brynhyfyd Terrace - the access point at this location was improved with the installation of new vehicle and motorcycle barriers and areas of block paving.

Penrhiw Bridge - the access point at this location was improved with the installation of a new motorcycle barrier, areas of block paving and a section of ornamental fencing.

Towpath - the section of towpath between Penrhiw Bridge and the Prince of Wales public house was resurfaced with a tarmac finish in April 2009.

10. Canal Channel/Grass Maintenance

Canal Channel - a new weed cutting/channel clearance regime has now been introduced. The programme to be implemented consists of three visits, timed to take place in April, July and September. The first of these visits took place on 27th April 2009, during which all weed present within the canal channel was cut and removed, together with accumulated litter and other debris.

Grass Maintenance - a new grass-cutting regime, developed in accordance with the recommendations contained within the LTC Landscape Architects Report, has now been introduced. Details of the regime as identified on the sketch plan attached to the report which outlined the limits of grass cutting adopted in rural and sub-urban stretches of canal were noted. Plans were also circulated at the meeting which identified those lengths of the canal that have been identified as rural and sub-urban.

The first cuts of this season was undertaken on 6th April with subsequent cuts on 26th April and 20th May, with the next cut scheduled for 24th June 2009. The frequency of the cutting is based around a three/four week cycle, depending on prevailing weather conditions and consequential rate of grass growth. All feedback received on the new regime has to date been positive

11. 2009/2010 Works Programme

Maintenance Framework Contract - it is planned to let a maintenance framework contract in July 2009. The contract will be of two years duration and is intended to cater for both reactive and routine/planned works, either maintenance or new in nature.

Towpath - it is planned to resurface sections of towpath within the sub-urban areas with a tarmac finish. The sections of towpath identified in this respect are from Moriah Hill to Gelli Avenue, Navigation Road to Penrhiw Bridge and from Temperance Hill to Darran Road. Some areas of ponding have been denitrified within the rural areas, which will be addressed by localised repairs.

Access Enhancement - it is planned to undertake improvement works to the access points at Thistle Way, Navigation Road, Darran Road and Green Meadow Bridge. The scope of works at all locations will include the installation of vehicle and motorcycle barriers and areas of block paving. Where the location requires it, litter and dog fouling bins will also be installed.

Water Control - it is planned to install a number of additional control measures within the canal channel in the form of depth gauges and the creation of locations suitable for installation of stank boards. The installation of stank boards at key locations will allow the easy

compartmentalisation of the canal to deal with future flooding and leak issues.

Works are planned to improve the feed at the Cwmcarn Scenic Drive and investigate the feed/overflow arrangement at Fernlea.

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 query was raised as to whether any consultation has been undertaken with the residents and it was noted that the scheme is still in its early stages and that the necessary consultation will be undertaken at the appropriate time.

12. SKILLS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME FOR VOLUNTEERS

In his opening comments, Mr. R.J. Dommatt, Monmouthshire, Brecon and Abergavenny Canals Trust, referred to the draft proposals of the Inland Waterways Heritage Initiative - Supporting the Training of Volunteers on Waterway Projects in England and Wales and indicated that whilst he would give a brief presentation on its content he would arrange for the document to be circulated to the Group for information.

Mr. Dommatt reported that the Inland Waterways Heritage Skills Initiative aims to develop a national framework for the training and support of volunteers who undertake work on the canals and navigable rivers of England and Wales. He referred to the waterway network for South Wales and the West Country and to the need to work in partnership in order to develop this framework.

With the assistance of a slide presentation, Mr. Dommatt gave examples of volunteers undertaking structural restoration work, constructing new facilities, undertaking vegetation control and referred specifically to the European Volunteers exchange programme 'Crosscut' and 'Environav' and to proposals to develop a volunteering scheme within the county borough. Members were pleased to note that for the first five months of the year 3,280 volunteer hours have been committed to restoration.

Mr. Dommatt referred to the need to establish a national framework for volunteer training in waterways heritage skills which is recognised by all navigation authorities and waterways organisations, to set up assessment and certification frameworks at appropriate levels and develop a network of courses, training centres, trainers and assessors. He detailed the underlying principles for the development of a training strategy and framework and gave an update on the proposed volunteer training development programme and referred to the number of volunteer skills providers available and the different level of qualifications available as part of the qualification and credit framework (City and Guilds, NPTC or LANTRA). He detailed the various modules available (working safely/first aid, manual handling, operation of small tools, operation of hedge trimmers, safe use of chain saws, control of waterway fauna and flora habitat, build and natural bank techniques) and the additional units that are available (operation of work boats and water bourn equipment and the helming and crewing of small 12 passenger trip boats).

It was pointed out that if successful with the project 'Environav' European Grant Partnership Scheme it is intended to develop a tool kit for establishing a Volunteer Group with European Partners. Having identified a role for volunteers, the process will consider who will provide volunteer support, what training the role will need and how it will be identified, what resources are required and what resources are available and determine what on-going feedback and support will be available to the volunteers.

As part of the process, the next step by the Inland Waterway Association is to review with other Canal Societies, Trusts and Restoration Groups the type of skills training required by

their organisation, the number of volunteers to be involved, the delivery time scale and investment costs.

In closing Mr. Dommett referred to the need to conserve the past by skills training for the future which can only be progress thought partnership.

The Group thanked Mr. Dommett for his informative presentation and for responding to questions and issues raised during the course of the debate.

13. FREQUENCY OF FUTURE WORKING GROUP MEETINGS

It was noted that it had previously been agreed that meetings of the Group would be held on a six monthly basis (special meetings would be arranged as and when required) and that arrangements would be made accordingly.

The meeting closed at 11.00am

CHAIRMAN