



MONMOUTHSHIRE AND BRECON CANAL - CRUMLIN ARM WORKING GROUP

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH
ON FRIDAY 8TH FEBRUARY 2013 AT 10.00 AM**

PRESENT:

Mr. R.J. Dommett Monmouthshire, Brecon and Abergavenny Canals Trust
- Vice Chairman - Presiding

Councillors:

Ms. L. Ackerman, N. George, Mrs. P. Griffiths, K. James, G. Johnston, A. Lewis

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

Together with:

K. Kinsey (Principal Engineer - Consultancy), R. Davies (Funding Officer), H. C. Morgan
(Senior Committee Services Officer)

Mr. Bernarn Illman, Chairman Monmouthshire, Brecon and Abergavenny Canals Trust

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs. K.R. Baker, D.M. Gray, K. Lloyd,
Mrs. R. Passmore, D.W.R Preece and D. Rees.

1. BEREAVEMENT - COUNCILLOR STAN JENKINS

Reference was made to the recent death of Councillor Stan Jenkins and Members and Officers stood in silence as a mark of respect and extended their condolences to the bereaved family. Members referred to the late member's long and distinguished career in local government and paid tribute to the manner in which he had carried out his duties during his years of office and made particular reference to his role on the Islwyn Canal Association.

2. WELCOME - MR. BERNARN ILLMAN

Members welcomed Mr. Bernarn Illman, Chairman of Monmouthshire, Brecon and Abergavenny Canals Trust, to his first meeting of the Working Group.

3. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN

Mr. R. Dommett, Monmouthshire, Brecon and Abergavenny Canals Trust, was appointed Chairman of the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal - Crumlin Arm Working Group for the ensuing year.

4. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

Councillor N. George was appointed Vice-Chairman of the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal - Crumlin Arm Working Group for the ensuing year

5. MINUTES - 23RD JANUARY 2012

The minutes of the meeting held on 23rd January 2012 were approved as a correct record.

Members were advised that part of the Canal from Darran Bridge to Pontwaun was now available for navigable use and as such, the Islwyn Lily has been moored at Whysoms Wharf. It is anticipated that boat trips will start at Easter.

REPORT OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following items.

6. MAINTENANCE UPDATE

Canal Channel - the weed cutting/channel clearance regime for the coming year will continue at the reduced frequency of two visits. Clearance will be undertaken in August and October 2013.

Grass Maintenance - the first cut of the season will be undertaken in early March/April 2013, subsequent cuts will follow a 4-week cycle for the remainder of the year up to October.

Following representations from various sources a review of the grass-cutting regime has taken place and changes made on the grounds of public safety accordingly. The strip of grass that extends from the edge of the towpath down to the canal waters edge will now be cut on each visit. This course of action was supported by the Working Group.

7. 2013/2014 WORKS PROGRAMME

Towpath - no maintenance works are planned for this year.

Access Enhancement - no works are planned for this year

Water Control - no further water control measures are planned for this year.

Dredging - no dredging is planned for this year.

Tree Maintenance - a tree survey over the full length of the canal is to be commissioned during the new financial year to allow tree maintenance works to be undertaken through the winter period 2013/2014. Reference was made to problems where trees are reseeding and it was noted that this would be taken into account as part of the survey and they will be cut back and treated accordingly. It was also requested that the area that falls in Newbridge be included in the survey.

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

Channel Leak Repair - design works are ongoing to develop a re-lining scheme at the Pontywaun section. It was explained that the option being developed will consist of a composite construction formed from reinforced concrete walls, piled walls and a synthetic liner. It is hoped to commence these works towards the end of March 2013 and they will take approximately four months to complete. Reference was made to the storm weir at that location and it was noted that the overflow structure is being investigated. Mr. Dommett advised that water is needed at 14 Locks and welcomed the project, which will enable this to be achieved.

8. FUNDING

Capital - there is no capital budget allocation for the 2013/2014 financial year.

Revenue - the 2013/2014 budget is in the region of £350,000, which includes a carry over from 2011/12 and 2012/13.

The Working Group was advised that expenditure under this heading is allocated to cover the cost of grass and channel maintenance, tree maintenance, general cleansing, towpath repair, management cost, emergency response and the repair of the leak at Pontywaun.

9. BOATS

The Islwyn Canal Association was recently granted a licence for the operation of a trip boat. The boat, the Islwyn Lily, will be moored at Whysoms Wharf and it is understood that regular trips will run from March 2013.

It was noted that directions to Whysoms Wharf, and the facilities available, are not included on the diamond interpretation signs and it was agreed that this would be raised with the Countryside and Landscape Service. It was noted that there are proposals by Islwyn Canal Association to create a booking office/waiting area/visitor centre at Darran Road, for which a planning application will be submitted in due course.

10. PRESENTATION - MAINTAINING OUR WATERWAY HERITAGE 2013 AND BEYOND

Mr. R. Dommett, Monmouthshire, Brecon and Abergavenny Canal Trust Regeneration Manager, gave a presentation on maintaining the waterway heritage during 2013 and beyond through unlocking skills and volunteering. He reminded the Working Group that last year was the 200th anniversary of the opening of the Canal.

With the aid of a slide presentation, and since the inception of the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canals Regeneration Partnership, he detailed those sections under restoration (Newport to Cwmbrian - 7 miles, Newport to Pontywaun - 7 miles) and outlined those sections maintained by the county borough, those funded through the Heritage Lottery Fund Waterworks Project (Pentre Lane) and those areas requiring general maintenance.

Reference was made to the number of projects that have been undertaken by the various partners and to the next phases to be taken forward as part of the regeneration programme. The Working Group noted the slides which identified those areas which have been restored but are now in need of maintenance including the locks (Tyfynnon Lock, Malpas Lock, Gwasted Lock), certain of the waterway channels and paths and the general environment.

He confirmed that the present objective is to maintain the restored infrastructure and there will be engagement through the partnership with an agreed annual programme of maintenance. Training will continue for volunteers to provide for a range of heritage, canal management and environmental skills in order to maintain the historic built structure of the canal and it is intended to maximise the opportunities for community access, education and involvement and to raise funds for the ongoing maintenance and restoration. It is also intended to review the water supply arrangements in the Crumlin Arm section of the canal.

The key objectives for the future are the preparation of a strategic objective and establishing a Partnership funded Restoration Project Team to oversee future funding, restoration and maintenance undertaken by trained volunteers. The Working Group commended the collaborative and strategic approach to the canals restoration and proposals for community and volunteer engagement.

As part of his tabled report he advised of the progress with the Heritage Lottery Fund Waterworks Project (in conjunction with Torfaen County Borough Council and Monmouthshire Brecon and Abergavenny Canals Trust) to restore 8 locks from Pentre Road to Ty Coch Top Lock. It was noted that due to the programme of funding, work is concentrated on Ty Coch Bottom Lock and Shop. De-watering of the two lock chambers will start as soon as water control measures are in place. Tree stumps are being removed from spillway weirs.

LANTRA Awards, providers of national accredited training qualification, have been contacted to agree a range of Heritage Skills Training Modules and an application for WCVA Gateway funding will be submitted to help fund the Heritage Skills Training Project. The funding will also be used towards the Waterway Recovery Group Summer Camp booked for August 2013. There are ongoing discussions with property developers to lease a factory unit in Cwmbran to construct bespoke lock gates.

With regards to the general maintenance of the restored waterway, the Regeneration Partnership Steering and Officer Group have met and reviewed the importance of agreeing and putting into action a programme of maintenance over the restored section of waterway. The Group will look at ways in which funds can be provided to finance the annual works undertaken by experienced community volunteers. Costs are being provided, including a schedule of agreed annual maintenance, to assist in this process.

Mr. Dommett was pleased to report the success of the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canals Bicentenary Celebrations during 2012 which had started with the ringing of the bells along the length of the canal on 10th February 2012 and was followed with a number of events during the course of the year which had been well received by the community. A plaque and sculptured replica bell will be sited as a permanent feature at Pontymoile.

In closing Mr Dommett announced that an abstract summary of the Monmouthshire and Brecon Regeneration Partnerships Project to re store the un-navigable section of canal including the significance of the Heritage Skills Training Scheme for the communities unemployed/volunteers has been submitted for consideration at the 26th World Canal Conference and, should it be successful, will be presented at the Conference in Toulouse, France in September 2013.

Mr. Bernarn Illman, Chairman Monmouthshire, Brecon and Abergavenny Canals Trust, referred to the role of Volunteers and outlined the works that they will be undertaking along the canal (including hedges being layed, cutting back of brush, litter picking - supported by Keep Wales Tidy). As part of the collaborative approach to community and volunteer engagement it is proposed that a number of events will be arranged during the course of the year, the next event being at Fourteen Locks on Easter Sunday when the trip boat will be operating on the pond. In detailing others events that have been scheduled to date he referred specifically to activities proposed for Goytre Wharf (which will include schools), a steam boat at Llanfoist and a light show proposed in December.

Mr. Illman referred to ongoing discussions with Canoe Wales - Newport Sea Scouts to use the section of the canal that is restored and to proposals to purchase land at Pentre Lane to enable a small basin to be provided to enable canoe polo to be played.

Reference was then made to the Manor Road festival that had previously been organised by Councillor S. Jenkins and it was suggested that Councillor N. George take on this role, in liaison with Islwyn Canal Association and Caerphilly County Borough Council.

11. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

It was agreed that meetings would be scheduled on a quarterly basis. Dates would be circulated to the Working Group in due course.

The meeting closed at 11.15 am.

It should be noted that since the meeting it has been determined that the Capital budget for 2013/14 will be £250k in addition to the revenue funding reported. This should allow the extension of the lining at Pontywaun up to the downstream edge of the aqueduct.