

CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

RIVER RHYMNEY TASK GROUP

MINUTES OF A MEETING HELD AT THE COUNCIL OFFICES, TREDOMEN ON WEDNESDAY, 23RD APRIL 1997 AT 11.00 A.M.

PRESENT:

Councillors:

P. Slarke, T.J. Williams, J. Wood.

Together with:

Chief Executive, Special Projects Officer (PD), Senior Legal Assistant (RA), Committee Services Manager, Senior Valuer.

Also present:

Messrs. T. Evans, H. Price (Environment Agency), D.H. Williams (Environment Agency), R. Woodyatt (Rhydney River Federation of Angling Clubs), Harvard Prosser (Welsh Office), Keith Parker (Coal Authority), Ray Clarke (Nabarro Nathanson), Simon Jackson (A.C.A.).

Appointment of Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Task Group

It was agreed that Mr. Simon Jackson be appointed as Chairman of the Task Group and Councillor T.J. Williams appointed as Vice-Chairman.

MINUTES

The minutes of a meeting of interested parties held on the 3rd December 1996, copies of which have been circulated to all present were agreed as a correct record.

Caerphilly County Borough Council decision: River Rhydney

Members noted the following decision of the Council meeting held on 19th December 1996 about supporting the Task Group, i.e.

- (i) a commitment be given in principle to support the aims of the consortium to establish ways and methods of eliminating the pollution of the Rhydney River;
- (ii) that secretarial support be provided to the consortium and assistance be given by commissioning the feasibility study i.e. by acting as the employer of the consultant providing that the fees of £25,000 are met by the Coal Board, Rhydney Fishing Association and the Welsh Office in proportions to be agreed.

Future framework for the Task Group

It was agreed that there should be a flexible approach to the future composition of the Task Group but no change at the moment in membership. Any decisions would be reached by a consensus amongst those present, where possible, but in the event of a vote being required, there should be one vote per organisation/group.

Litigation

It was explained that as part of the settlement of the litigation between the Angling Club/ACA and the Coal Authority a sum of £7,500 had been made available for the study by joint agreement between the ACA and the Coal Authority.

Environment Agency report on further monitoring and priority list

Recent monitoring of the mine water discharge into the River Rhymney had been undertaken and samples collected from seven points plus another sampling point further downstream of the discharge. The mine water quality had not changed significantly although the samples further downstream exceeded the prescribed standards. It was accepted that there was a problem. It was explained that the mine water discharge remained constant whatever the flow was in the River, thus there was little dilution of this discharge when the river levels were low. Details of the sampling results would be circulated to all members before the next meeting.

Specification and procurement of the feasibility study

Members considered that the drafting of the specifications required for the feasibility study needed to be proceeded with as quickly as possible. A lot of technical data was presently in the hands of Simon Jackson and the Coal Authority and it was agreed that this material would be made available to the consultants when appointed. The Council's Special Project Officer would circulate a draft of the specifications for all sides to reply with comments by the end of May. He would also invite comments on whether or not the suggested list of contractors should be amended. Once the specification had been agreed by the Task Group then the Council in accordance with its Standing Orders would begin the tendering process.

Funding Arrangements

Members are aware that the funding arrangements to finance the commissioning of the feasibility study were already in place. However, if the cost of the feasibility study was in excess of £25,000 then other sources of funding would need to be investigated. It was stressed that the specifications should perhaps make provision for the study to be kept below the figure of £25,000. On behalf of the Council it was stressed that they would not be prepared to sign a contract until confirmation had been received that the funds were committed from the sources indicated.

The Coal Authority stated that from their experience of tenders for other sites £25,000 was unlikely to be exceeded.

Press Release

It was agreed that in any press release the positive work of the Task Group should be stressed i.e. to clean up the River Rhymney through a partnership approach. The Chairman in

consultation with the Chief Executive Officer would draft a press release which would be circulated to all present for their comments. The press release should emphasise that all partners involved were aiming to improve the environment of the River Rhydney in a spirit of co-operation. It was hoped that this press release would be issued during the week commencing the 5th May.

Date of Next Meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting would be held on the 3rd June 1997 by which time the specification for the feasibility study and the tender list would be available for final approval.