

CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

RIVER RHYMNEY TASK GROUP

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT THE COUNCIL OFFICES, TREDOMEN ON WEDNESDAY, 17TH OCTOBER 2001 AT 2.00 P.M.

PRESENT:

Mr. S. Jackson, Councillors: M.G. Parker and Mrs. G.E. Williams, P. Davy (Head of Economic Development and Tourism), R. Woodyatt (River Rhydney Federation of Angling Clubs), R.S. Allen (Senior Legal Assistant), D. Broomfield, D. Griffiths and D.H. Williams (Environment Agency Wales), S. Hill (Coal Authority), V. Phillips (European Officer), G. George (Committee Services Manager)

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor H. Price.

1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN

It was agreed that Mr. Simon Jackson be re appointed chairman of the Task Group.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the last meeting of the Task Group held on 30th March 1999 were noted.

3. POSITION STATEMENT

The Task Group last met in March 1999 to consider the final report from Hyder Consulting Limited. It was resolved that the preferred option for the remediation of the mine water pollution should be the construction of a wetland on the Council owned area of land at New Road, Hengoed.

Recommendations from the Task Group were accepted by the Council on 22nd April 1999: They were:-

- The option of providing an aerobic wetland on land in this Council's ownership and the reservation of the area for that purpose is pursued.
- Possible sources of funding are investigated.
- The issue of way leaves over areas of land not in Council ownership in order to accommodate pipeline access is pursued.
- The practicalities of a variation of the final land reclamation proposals in respect of the removal of ash from the site are examined, such that the restoration takes account of the possibility of developing a wetland on the site.

In respect of recommendation 4 it was concluded that it was too late to make changes to the restoration proposals.

The indicative cost of the wetland was £1.2m. At the time of the completion of the consultancy

report the prospect of Objective 1 funding was on the horizon and this was a possible source of grant although there would be a requirement for match funding.

In the absence of any immediate prospect of funding it was considered that little further action could be taken and matters had been held in abeyance since mid 1999.

The Task Group had been reconvened to:-

- Review the current position in respect of the mine water pollution,
- Ascertain the current priority in the Coal Authority list, and
- To examine the prospect for securing European funding now the Objective 1 programme was fully operational.

4. **UPDATE REPORTS**

Coal Authority

- Progress was being made in Wales on a priority basis and the River Rhymney was close to the top of the list.
- The scheme would be re assessed although in cost benefit terms it might be difficult to justify.
- A design study would need to be carried and an area of suitable land would need to be identified; about 1 hectare as a minimum and preferably in local authority control, situated close to the river bank. A planning application would have to be submitted.
- The government provided funding to the Coal Authority to deal with minewater pollution to enable a rolling programme

Environment Agency

- No significant change since the last meeting.
- River was last monitored in December 1999 and indications were that level of pollution had not changed significantly since then.
- The impact of mine water pollution of the river was not, chemically, significant.
- The major impact was aesthetic particularly during low flow conditions.
- In cost benefit terms the scheme might be difficult to justify.
- The Agency were however keen to see an improvement in the quality of the river and would like the scheme progressed.
- There appeared to be a sterile part in the middle of the river.
- Welsh Water was currently working on storm water over flows further up the valley and the programme should be complete by March 2005.

River Rhymney Federation of Angling Clubs (R.R.F.A.C.)

- They were anxious to have the mine water pollution removed because of the effect on fish life and the general appearance of the river

- They were prepared, in principle, and subject to details of costs to meet the costs of negotiating way leave agreements; they were of the view that only one landowner was involved.

5. **MINE WATER POLLUTION - OPPORTUNITY FOR OBJECTIVE ONE FUNDING**

The Complement Document for the West Wales and the Valleys Objective 1 programme defined the eligible activities for funding. The key eligible activity that covered this project would be:

Treatment of discharges from abandoned coal and metal mines where there is no identifiable liability.

Funding could be up to about 40% of the eligible costs of the project. The application process was described

As a result of the delay in producing a strategy for Infrastructure, no applications have been dealt with yet under the relevant Priority Measure. It is difficult to predict how long this process will take, but it was unlikely to be less than six months from submitting the pro forma to receiving a project approval letter.

On the question of who would sponsor the project, Officers of the council would investigate and offer advice.

6. **MATCH FUNDING**

Investigations would need to take place as to appropriate sources. The council could gift the land needed in lieu of match funding, or act as a sponsor. The Coal Authority did not necessarily require ownership of the land; a lease for twenty-five years would suffice.

7. **FUTURE ACTION**

Officers and other agencies would now progress the various courses of action as discussed in the Task Group. This should not be seen as cutting across or detracting from the Coal Authority's planned programme for dealing with mine water pollution of rivers.

The Coal Authority would revisit the consultancy study and in conjunction with council officers investigate liability. The Environment Agency would seek to obtain up to date information.

8. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting would be held, depending on progress by the task group members, in late January 2002 at a date to be agreed with the Chairman.

The meeting closed at 3.40 pm

Approved as a correct record by Council at its meeting on 22nd November 2001

CHAIRMAN