

CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

RIVER RHYMNEY TASK GROUP

NOTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT THE COUNCIL OFFICES, TREDOMEN
ON MONDAY, 26TH JANUARY 2004 AT 2.00 P.M.

PRESENT:

Councillor N.G. Turner - Chairman

Councillors:

Caerphilly County Borough Council

Councillors M.G. Parker, R. Woodyatt, Mr. A. Brown, Mr. R. Van Gemeren, Mr. G. Hobson,
Miss H.C. Morgan

The Coal Authority

Mr. A. Norton

Dwr Cymru Welsh Water

Mr. H. Williams

Environment Agency Wales

Mr. J. Gregory, Miss M. D'Onofrio

Rhydney River Federation of Angling Clubs

Mr. D. Roberts

Wessex Water Enterprises

Mr. P. Oaten

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Mr. S. Hill (Coal Authority), Mr. P. Kemp (Dwr Cymru) and Mr. B. Pritchard (Rhydney River Federation).

MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 3rd November 2003 were approved as a correct report.

RIVER POLLUTION TASK GROUP

The meeting was convened to consider how to develop joint working arrangements to improve responses to problems and discuss proactive protective measures with the aim of improving the quality of the River Rhydney.

Contact List of Responsible Officers (minute no. 6)

Details of the report which provided contact points within the respective organisations in order to ensure that incidents are dealt with as quickly and efficiently as possible were noted.

Details of Incidents received from the Environment Agency/Database

Details of incidents reported to the Environment Agency since November 2003 and the course of action taken were noted. It was suggested that in future additional information should be supplied which will detail the final outcome of the actions taken and where non-attendance is identified the reasons for that non-attendance should be qualified. Mr. Gregory indicated that each call received is placed into a risk category. Those in the high risk category are dealt with as soon as possible but those in a lower category are inspected when the opportunity arises.

Miss D'Onofrio indicated that it is intended to use this format to form the database requested at the last meeting and that she would take on board the comments made and amend the format accordingly. Reports of this nature would be presented to each meeting of the Task Group.

Consideration was then given to the actions taken on the items detailed in the report and specific reference was made to an issue that had arisen whereby sewage from a trunk sewer was surcharging onto land in Llanbradach. The action had indicated that in view of the public health risk it had been pumped to the river as a temporary measure but it was pointed out that although it had been considered as an option an alternative source had been identified via the highway drainage system. Agencies are to meet to consider this ongoing problem and it was agreed that feedback should be presented to this Group in due course.

With regards to an issue of foam surcharging from a manhole in Pontllytyn, it was reported that in view of ongoing problems in the area a meeting had been arranged with interested parties in an attempt to address the difficulties.

Details of Programmes for Improvement and Future Investment

Planned activities for the Rhymney River from January to March 2004 were circulated by Mr. Gregory.

Members were pleased to note the details contained therein and discussed the proposals to collect and analyse the last five years water quality data, the deployment of four continuous water quality monitors, biological sampling, and to collect and collate data on inputs to the river in conjunction with Group Members. Proposals to visit industrial locations to advise on pollution prevention strategies and to maintain a database of incidents on the river were also noted.

With regards to biological sampling Mr. Roberts circulated details of kick-test sampling that he had undertaken at three separate locations on 20th January 2004 and highlighted the BMWP scores for each of the areas. It was agreed that these details should be analysed and a comparison between other samples collected be presented to a future meeting. It was proposed that the Ecology Officers from the Council and Environment Agency should meet to progress this matter.

Mr. Roberts indicated that it may be possible to seek assistance in this process and that he would make enquiries from independent consultants who had carried out similar work in the past.

With regards to continuous monitoring Mr. Gregory indicated that he would liaise with Mr. Roberts in order to determine which areas should be included. He pointed out however that he would be unable to commit to additional resources at this moment in time but indicated that the programme would identify those areas which require attention and which would be considered for action at the appropriate time.

At this point Councillor Woodyatt gave an update on various initiatives being undertaken on the River Rhymney and referred specifically to the role of the Task Group established to examine specific pollution problems in Tiryberth.

He indicated that remediation works have been considered and the proposed solution of providing settlement ponds and need beds was actively being pursued by investigations into ground strata in order to determine the best location for these works.

Illegal Connections

Mr. Oaten circulated a copy of a report in respect of problems experienced by Wessex Water in relation to the problems with misconnections and highlighted the difficulties in tracing the source of the problem. He pointed out that misconnections are often made during renovation work or the building of extensions but in some instances properties may have been built with faulty plumbing.

He referred to the initiative which had been piloted in Bristol - 'Operation Streamclean' which had aimed to identify such households and in view of the success of the scheme, he would support the implementation of a similar scheme within the Caerphilly area subject to Welsh Water approval.

It was agreed that a letter supporting such an initiative in this area should be sent to Wessex Water and Dwr Cymru Welsh Water on behalf of the Task Group.

It was accepted that there is a need to advise householders of their responsibilities in ensuring the right connections are being made and to remind them of the difference between foul water drains/sewers and storm water drains/sewers and to specifically to detail what can and cannot be disposed off to those sources.

It was suggested that an article could be placed in Newline to raise public awareness and highlighting the continuing problems of pollution. It should identify steps that households can take to ensure that they are not adding to the problem and proposed that it should also reflect the effect of the illegal dumping of rubbish in the watercourse itself. Possibly a photograph could be included which shows the effect on the environment.

It was agreed that each agency would provide the information that they would wish to see included in such an article and to seek the guidance of the Communications Manager accordingly.

Land Drainage Database

Mr. Van Gemeren indicated that the and drainage database held by the Council has been downloaded to the Environment Agency and that arrangements are in hand to download the information to Wessex Water Enterprises.

Date of Next Meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting would be held at 2.00 p.m. on Monday, 29th March 2004.