

# CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

## RIVER RHYMNEY TASK GROUP

### MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT THE COUNCIL OFFICES, NELSON ROAD, TREDOMEN ON MONDAY, 19TH APRIL 2004 AT 2.00 PM

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#### PRESENT:

**Caerphilly County Borough Council:**

Councillors M.G. Parker and R. Woodyatt. Mr G. Hobson, Mr R. Van Gemeren,  
Ms M. Sutherland, S.M. Kauczok

**Coal Authority:**

Mr A. Norton

**Dwr Cymru/Welsh Water:**

Mr H. Williams

**Environment Agency Wales:**

Miss M. D'Onofrio, Mr A. Robinson & Mr D. Walters

**Rhydney River Federation of Angling Clubs:**

Mr D. Roberts & Mr B. Pritchard

**Wessex Water Enterprises:**

Mr P. Oaten

#### APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Noel Turner and Mr Alan Brown.

#### CHAIRMAN

In the absence of the Chairman Councillor Malcolm Parker chaired the meeting.

#### MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 26th January 2004 were approved as a correct record.

#### Matters Arising

Whilst agreeing that the article "Help us to clean up our rivers" which had appeared in a recent edition of Newsline was an excellent source of information and guidance for members of the public, a member of the Task Group expressed disappointment that the views of the Cabinet Member rather than the views of the Task Group had been quoted in the article.

## **Water Quality Update**

Andy Robinson, Environment Agency, updated the Task Group on the findings of the review undertaken of historical water data, continuous water monitoring and biological sampling. He indicated that it was clear that there is a real issue of pollution at the upper end of the river, the source(s) of which had not yet been identified.

Mr Robinson and members of the Task and Finish Group thanked Dave Roberts for all his help with the water sampling.

In recognition of the scale of the problem, the Angling Federation had put forward a proposal to the Environment Agency that the Federation organise courses offering basic training for people to be able to undertake kick-start sampling tests on the river. An officer from the Environment Agency pointed out that the Agency had not yet agreed to this.

## **Biological Abundance Update**

Monitoring undertaken by the Environment Agency in February/March this year had revealed that the biological quality from Rhymney downstream to its confluence with the Nant Bargoed stream at Bargoed was poor, the worst areas being in the Pontlottyn and Rhymney areas. Although a broken sewer had been discovered it was believed that this was not the only source of the problem.

It was reported that the Environment Agency was planning to visit neighbouring farms and industrial estates to try and identify the source(s) of the problems. Mr Walters stated, however, that the Agency's resources were limited and that it could only commit approximately 10 days of an officer's time to the task. Mr Walters believed that there was a need for a person to be employed full time at the top end of the river and proposed that consideration be given to exploring possible avenues of funding in this respect.

## **Incidents on Database**

Maria D'Onofrio circulated copies of an updated list of incidents reported to the Environment Agency since November 2003, together with details of any action taken or proposed.

Reference was made, in particular, to the ongoing problem at Duffryn Industrial Estate which was being dealt with by Welsh Water.

## **Publicity – Newsline**

In accordance with the decision taken at the last meeting of the Task Group, an article had appeared in the Council's Newsline publication urging householders to check the drainage of their property and ensure that washing machines/dishwashers had been properly connected.

As reported earlier, whilst agreeing that the article was an excellent source of information for the public, a member of the Task Group asked that it be recorded that he was disappointed that the views of the Cabinet Member rather than the views of the Task Group had been quoted in the article.

## **Pollution Prevention Visits**

It was reported that the Environment Agency would target areas where they thought the problems were originating from. However, limited resources would restrict what they would be able to do.

Paul Oaten, Wessex Water, advised that they had made a bid for a dedicated team of officers to carry out planned maintenance and investigate misconnections and pollution incidents. Subject to resources being available, he offered to co-operate with the Environment Agency on request in response to pollution incidents by redeploying operatives to help trace pollution sources.

It was proposed that a sub group comprising a representative from the Environment Agency, Wessex/Welsh Water and the Council be established to explore what could be achieved on the investigative side. Graham Hobson, Caerphilly CBC, was requested to nominate someone from the Local Authority to sit on the sub group.

The Chair then invited Mr Norton to give an update on projects being undertaken by the Coal Authority. Mr Norton advised that steps had now been installed at 5 discharges and a desk study was in progress in two areas to evaluate the land area required. It was hoped to install a venting system in the main river culvert at Pontlloyn in order to remove gas build ups and to make the culvert safe for operatives to work within this confined space so that further investigative work can be undertaken into mine water discharges that enter the river within the culvert.

In conclusion, it was noted that officers from the Environment Agency were in the process of compiling a plan of action to investigate as many possible sources of pollutants as possible. They would examine available resources and identify any shortfalls.

The cooperation and offers of assistance received from all parties to try and solve the problems at the upper end of the river were welcomed.

The meeting closed at 14.53 p.m.