



## **RIVER RHYMNEY TASK GROUP**

### **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT THE COUNCIL OFFICES, TREDOMEN ON MONDAY, 9TH MAY 2005 AT 2.00 P.M.**

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#### **PRESENT:**

Councillor R. Woodyatt - Chairman

#### **CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

Mr. A. Brown, Mr. G. Hobson, Ms. M. Sutherland, Miss. H.C. Morgan

#### **THE COAL AUTHORITY**

Mr. S. Hill

#### **ENVIRONMENT AGENCY WALES**

Miss. M. D'Onofrio, Mr. J. Tanner and Mr. D. Walters

#### **RHYMNEY RIVER FEDERATION OF ANGLING CLUBS**

Mr. B. Pritchard and Mr. D. Roberts

#### **ZELDA WATER SERVICES (WALES)**

Mr. T. Rees

#### **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor J. Bevan, Mr. R. Van Gemeren (Caerphilly County Borough Council), Mr. A. Norton (The Coal Authority), Mr. J. Gregory and Ms. K. Vowles (Environment Agency Wales).

#### **1. MINUTES - 17TH JANUARY 2005**

The minutes of the meeting held on 9th September 2004 were approved as a correct record. There were no matters arising.

#### **2. WATER QUALITY UPDATE**

Mr. Jeremy Tanner, Environment Agency, circulated a document on the River Rhymney water quality investigations, gave a progress report and highlighted future works that are proposed. He gave a review of the two passive monitoring surveys undertaken in the autumn and winter of 2004 and detailed the pollutants of interest that been found present in each of the surveys undertaken.

Mr. Tanner then highlighted progress that has been made since the last meeting and pointed out that based on the previous results; new sites (deployed during February to April) had been

chosen to concentrate on the found areas of pollution. These SPMDs have been sent to the laboratory for analysis and it was anticipated that the results should be received by the end of the month.

It was noted that once received, the results will give a guide towards the sources of pollution and assist in determining where the next deployment of monitoring will be undertaken. It will also tie in with work on plans to identify industrial sites for further inspection.

With regards to the biology review, Mr. Tanner reported that routine monitoring has been carried out and that historical data has shown a general improvement. Mr. Roberts referred to the data and indicated that whilst there has been some improvement seen on the lower parts of the river, the biological quality at the top of the river does not seem to have improved with the BMWP scores on the river below Pontlloftyn culvert remaining poor and giving cause for concern.

Reference was then made to the future programme and Mr. Tanner pointed out that recent routine biological samples will be analysed as a priority. A biological survey (to complement passive monitoring analysis at the bank side) to back up the SPMD work and further investigate the effects of the Nant Carno, Nant Melyn and industrial estates will be carried out in May. With regards to the latter, he reported that a press release is to be issued to advise all of the industries that the Environment Agency will continue to monitor the river for traces of pollution. It was noted that any issues that may arise will be followed up with additional sampling.

### **3. INCIDENTS ON DATABASE**

Miss. M. D'Onofrio circulated a copy of the updated list of incidents reported to the Environment Agency during the period 17th January – 3rd May 2005 and responded to queries raised on the information provided and confirmed the action being taken on each of the reported incidents.

Reference was made to the initiative to record on a database the activities that each of the companies on the industrial estates undertake and to note the chemicals which are stored on site and, in view of the siting of foam in the upper river, it was queried as to whether its source has yet been identified. It was noted that the matter will continue to be monitored and investigated and, whilst the source has yet to be identified, industries in the area will be visited as part of a targeted campaign.

With regards to the several reports of black silt entering the river at Bargoed, it was reported that Officers have visited the White Rose Way development and that the banks have been reinforced with rope netting to prevent future occurrences. Reports of plastic getting into river from this site have been investigated but no evidence of plastic on site has come to light.

Reference was also made to several reports of white discharge from a freshwater culvert near Bargoed and it was noted that the site has been visited on several occasions by no evidence of this occurrence has yet been found.

In respect of the reports of black silt in the Nant Cylla, reference was made to ongoing works on the Penallta Colliery Development Scheme, to the discharges into the river from that point and to enforcement action being taken. It was noted that the drainage management on site is being closely monitored.

Reference was then made to an incident on the Heads of the Valley Industrial Estate whereby the Budlepack premises had been damaged by fire. Members wished to place in record their appreciation to all of the agencies involved for their prompt and effective response in dealing with the incident.

**4. MINEWATER CONTAMINATION AT TIRYBERTH**

Mr. Hill reported that the flows are being monitored on a monthly basis and it has been found generally that the average flows are increasing. He indicated the rectangular v-notch monitors are recording flows up to 140 litres, which is an improvement on the data reported at the last meeting.

With regards to the identification of a site for settlement ponds he indicated that site investigations are ongoing and that results of searches (from statutory bodies) are awaited. He confirmed that all of the information collated would be taken into account when consideration is given to which is the most suitable for this purpose.

In noting the comments made at the previous meeting regarding the vandalism to the steps, Mr. Hill confirmed that the vandalism to the facility appears to have stopped

**5. CULVERT AT PONTLOTTYN**

Mr. Hill then made reference to the works undertaken at the culvert and confirmed that the ventilation pipe/chimney is now in place and that any gases are vented out of the culvert. It was noted that flow monitoring is being undertaken where the mine water flows into the culvert (fairly consistent at seventy litres per second) and a monitor would be sited at the exit to the culvert. This method ensures that the flow of the mine water is monitor both on its way in and out of the culvert.

He then referred to proposals to establish a mine water treatment scheme in Pontlottyn and to areas of land, which are being considered for this purpose. Mr. Hill indicated that he would report on progress to the next meeting.

**6. RIVER IDENTIFICATION, SURVEY AND MONITORING WORKSHOPS**

Reference was made to the success of the two one day River fly Workshops held in Brecon on 27th and 28th April 2005 and to the workshops facilitated by representatives of the Natural History Museum on behalf of the River fly Team. Specific reference was made to the role played by Mrs. Bridget Peacock and her colleagues at the Museum and to all those who had participated in the event.

The Chairman indicated that it is intended to contact all sponsors to thank them for their contributions to the event and their participation at the workshops.

Mr. Roberts indicated that subsequent to the meeting he had met Mr. A. Robinson and it had been agreed to establish a ' Rhymney River Fly Life Survey Group', which would set up an efficient monitoring system along the length of the river. It would meet on a quarterly basis to co-ordinate data and consider which other sites should be monitored and included in the survey. Mr. Roberts indicated that he would undertake the initial co-ordination of the survey and prepare a database of results collected. He confirmed that as co-ordinator all participants would be required to liaise with him to ensure there is no duplication of efforts. The River Federation of Angling Clubs has agreed to finance the scheme to enable the necessary equipment (nets, sample trays etc) to be purchased.

It was noted that the Environment Agency intend to use this scheme as a pilot and if successful it is intended that it be introduced nationally, with anglers and river groups being trained to undertake the necessary monitoring.

**7. NEXT MEETING**

It was agreed that the next meeting be scheduled for September 2005.

The meeting closed at 3.00 p.m.