



## **RIVER RHYMNEY TASK GROUP**

### **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT THE COUNCIL OFFICES, TREDOMEN ON MONDAY, 12TH SEPTEMBER 2005 AT 2.00 P.M.**

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#### **PRESENT:**

Councillor R. Woodyatt - Chairman

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

Councillor M.G. Parker, Mr. A. Brown, Mr. J. Porter, Ms. M. Sutherland, Miss H.C. Morgan,  
Mr. R. Van Gemeren

#### **THE COAL AUTHORITY**

Mr. S. Hill

#### **ENVIRONMENT AGENCY WALES**

Miss M. D'Onofrio, Mr. T. Griffiths

#### **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor J. Bevan, Mr. A. Norton (The Coal Authority), Mr. J. Gregory and Ms. K. Vowles (Environment Agency Wales), Mr. B. Pritchard and Mr. D. Roberts (Rhymney River Federation of Angling Clubs), Mr. T. Rees (Kelda Water Services (Wales)) and Mrs. C. Bowen (Dwr Cymru/Welsh Water).

#### **1. MR. GRAHAM HOBSON**

The Chairman referred to the recent retirement of Graham Hobson and paid tribute to his efforts in enhancing the partnership and working arrangements between all parties involved in the Task Group. Those present reiterated this sentiment and in wishing to place on record their appreciation for his support and assistance, it was agreed that a letter be sent on behalf of the Group wishing him a long and happy retirement.

#### **2. MR. JOHN PORTER**

The Chairman welcomed John Porter to his first meeting of the Task Group.

#### **3. MINUTES – 17TH JANUARY 2005**

The minutes of the meeting held on 9th May 2005 were approved as a correct record.

#### 4. WATER QUALITY UPDATE

Mr. Griffiths, Environment Agency, circulated a document prepared by the Ecological Appraisal Team which gave details of the River Rhymney Water quality investigations, a progress report and highlighted future works that are proposed to be undertaken. He confirmed that based on the results of the surveys undertaken in 2004, four sites had been chosen to survey following the areas of pollution identified at that time (Nant Carno, Nant Melyn, Pontlottyn area and a further site near the Heads of the Valleys Industrial Estate - this device had subsequently gone missing following a fire in that area).

With regards to the SPMD deployments (February to April 2005) he confirmed that permethrin had been detected below Nant Melyn, dieldrin in the Carno and although dead gammarus had been found in Bargoed, the results had shown that pollution was unlikely. This specific site would continue to be monitored on a monthly basis.

Reference was then made to the results of the biological survey which had shown areas impacted by pollution and which will be followed up. Mr. Griffiths confirmed that historical data shows a general improvement in the biology of the Upper Rhymney Valley from the early 1990's to present.

Mr. Griffiths indicated that a survey in May 2005 had shown three areas impacted by pollution (downstream of Carno, Heads of the Valleys Industrial Estate and Pontlottyn) and that these would be followed up. It was noted that the Upper Carno biology does not indicate significant pollution impact but, as pesticides had been traced, there would be a further inspection in November. Members were advised that a discharge of foul water near the Heads of the Valleys Industrial Estate had been detected and reported to Kelda for attention and that the low scores at Pontlottyn should improve following remediation works which would increase the flow of water. Sampling in September would determine as to whether this is the case.

In noting the above actions as part of the future programme it was reported that the SPMD will be deployed for sheep dip in September/October at Carno (gully) and upstream of the A465. Routine biology tests will be undertaken in September and the results will be presented to a future meeting.

Whilst discussion this item, reference was made to the success of the Fly Life Project and to the collection of the data which will assist in determining areas for future deployment of equipment.

Mr. A. Brown then made reference to the brown trout that had been tested and which had sampled negative and concerns were expressed at the length of time taken by the laboratory to produce the results.

#### 5. INCIDENTS ON DATABASE

Miss M. D'Onofrio circulated a copy of the updated list of incidents reported to the Environment Agency during the period 10th May - 27th August 2005 and responded to queries raised on the information provided and confirmed the action being taken on each of the reported incidents.

With regards to the incident at Scandinavian Design, she reported that all measures had been taken to minimise firewater run off into the river and the clear up had been successful. She pointed out that most of the sewer related incidents have been resolved and it was noted that the fire at Capital Valley Industrial Estate, Rhymney had resulted in all of the run off entering the foul sewer and as such, no pollution entered the river.

Reference was then made to the two ponds in the vicinity of Angel Lane, Britannia and to the cloudy appearance of the water and Miss. D'Onofrio indicated that arrangements would be made to investigate the area.

Councillor Woodyatt then raised an issue in relation to sewer blockages and queried as to whether it would be possible to have access to the routine programme of regular maintenance of the outflows undertaken by Kelda. Miss D'Onofrio indicated she would enquire as to whether such a schedule is available, although it was pointed out that it is possible that such works are undertaken on a reactive rather than proactive basis. It was agreed that any information on works being undertaken/programmed would assist in determining areas where regular problems are being identified.

## **6. MINE WATER CONTAMINATION AT TIRYBERTH**

In noting that the flows are being monitored on a monthly basis, Mr. S. Hill circulated photographs and a graph which identified the latest flows data. He pointed out that the ongoing monitoring is reactive to rainwater which has an effect on the concentration of iron detected. He confirmed that to date the iron monitoring data shows less than 4 milligrammes per litre which, bearing in mind the history of the area is a particularly low level. It was noted however that this figure can fluctuate depending on the volume of water.

Reference was then made to the preferred site for the settlement ponds and Mr. Hill referred to ongoing discussions in relation to the area of land in Hengoed in proximity to the viaduct. He referred to the information which had been collated in order that the most suitable site could be taken forward and detailed proposals for the facilities which would be incorporated within the scheme should it proceed at that location.

In noting that areas of land within that vicinity are in the ownership of the County Borough, it was suggested that he liaise with Officers within the Property Division to determine the history of the site and undertake further surveys to determine as to whether the indicative layout would be suitable.

## **7. CULVERT AT PONTLOTTYN**

Mr. Hill circulated photographs and a graph which identified the latest flows data. He confirmed that monitoring continues to be undertaken where the mine water flows into the culvert and is monitored by an automatic data log which measures the flow into the main river. He indicated that further sampling be undertaken later in the week .

In noting that the ventilation pipe/chimney is in place and that any gases are vented out of the culvert, Mr. Hill indicated that at present, albeit with difficulty, it is possible for people to gain access. It was noted that the risk needs to be considered and pointed out that the fencing of the culvert mouth may not necessarily be the most suitable solution. It was suggested that Mr. Brown/Mr Porter/Mr Van Gemeren liaise with the Environment Agency to determine how best to overcome this problem."

Reference was then made to the Pontlottyn data log for the period 27th March – 17th August 2005 and it was agreed that the details contained therein be forwarded to Mr. J. Porter for examination.

Mr. Hill gave an update on proposals to establish a mine water treatment scheme in Pontlottyn and indicated that the site south of the culvert has been identified as the preferred location. He referred to ongoing discussions in an attempt to determine the ownership of the land in question and indicated that he would report on progress to the next meeting.

## **6. PROGRESS ON RIVERFLY MONITORING SCHEME**

Councillor Woodyatt reported that the monitoring had commenced in July and referred to the establishment of a data base to monitor the results which are being collated by both Mr. D. Roberts (Rhymney River Federation of Angling Clubs) and Mrs. Helen Leach (Environment Agency). The collection of such data will assist in determining areas for future deployment of equipment.

Members were pleased to note that this is the first occasion that an efficient monitoring system has been introduced along the whole length of the river and details of the seventeen separate sites (from Rhymney to the mudflats in Cardiff) were noted.

Councillor Woodyatt indicated that the results have proved interesting and that whilst a fairly stable picture is emerging and the overall results are promising, the monitoring is also finding a number of species which are being recorded.

It was reported that a meeting of all Monitors and the Environment Agency would be held on 29th September 2005 when all data collected would be analysed and a website established to detail the activities taking place in order to encourage other Groups to undertake a similar exercise on other rivers.

In wishing to place on record their appreciation to all those who are participating in the scheme, special reference was made to the role of Mr. Roberts and it was noted that he had been presented a certificate by the Federation for the works he has undertaken in driving forward the initiatives and co-ordinating all parties involved.

It was agreed to contact the Islwyn Federation of Angling Clubs to invite them to meet representatives of the Group (Councillor R. Woodyatt, Mr. D. Roberts and Miss D'Onofrio) to detail the activities which are taking place and offer support and advice should they also wish to establish a similar monitoring system.

## **9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

### **Children Swimming in the River Rhymney**

Reference was made to correspondence received expressing concerns at children swimming in the river and querying as to whether notices can be erected at strategic sites pointing out the dangers in such an activity.

It was agreed that in view of the length of the river and number of signs which would be required rather than post notices, it would be more appropriate to place an article in Newsline in the spring.

## **10. NEXT MEETING**

It was agreed that the next meeting be scheduled for January 2006.

The meeting closed at 3.00 p.m.

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CHAIRMAN