



RIVER RHYMNEY TASK GROUP

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT DUFFRYN HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH ON MONDAY, 5TH FEBRUARY 2007 AT 2.00 PM

PRESENT:

Councillor R. Woodyatt - Chairman

Councillors:

CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Mr. K. Morgan, Mr. L. Ross, Mr. J. Porter, Mrs. A. Jones and Miss. H.C. Morgan

THE COAL AUTHORITY

Mr. S. Hill

ENVIRONMENT AGENCY WALES

Mr. J. Wheadon, Mrs. K. Bowen and Mrs. F. Attwood

DWR CYMRU

Mr. M. Davies

RHYMNEY RIVER FEDERATION OF ANGLING CLUBS

Mr. D. Roberts, Mr. B. Pritchard and Mr. R. Williams

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J. Bevan and M.G. Parker, and Mr. L. Keil (Dwr Cymru Welsh Water).

1. MINUTES - 2ND OCTOBER 2006

The minutes of the meeting held on 2nd October 2006 were received and noted. There were no matters arising which were not dealt with during the course of the meeting.

2. WATER QUALITY UPDATE

Reference was made to ongoing research in this area of activity and to the progress that had been made in identifying the source of the pollution in the vicinity of Tir-y-Berth Industrial Estate. It was noted that the problem has been brought to the attention of the relevant company who have been requested to undertake necessary improvement works.

It was noted that the regular data being supplied by the Fly Life Team has proved to be a valuable asset and will continue to be used to assist in identifying possible pollution sources.

Reference was made to incidents which had occurred on the Nant Melin and it was noted that these are currently being investigated and details will be reported to a future meeting.

3. INCIDENTS ON DATABASE

Details of the list of incidents reported to the Environment Agency during the period 1st October - 18th December 2006 were noted and Mrs. Bowen responded to queries raised on the information provided and confirmed the action being taken on each of the reported incidents.

Mrs. Bowen confirmed that the difficulties in retrieving the information from the database had now been rectified. It was noted that there are regular meetings between the Environment Agency and Kelda Water Services in order that the details can be cross-reference with information held on both databases.

Specific reference was then made to ongoing problems with the combined sewer outlet at Factory Road, Bargoed and Mr. Roberts indicated that he had spoken to the operatives on site and it would appear that the issues with surface water discharge have been traced to Thomas Street, Aberbargoed. It was noted that on several other occasions Drainsaid had been called to the site to deal with the surcharge of the manhole and that investigations are ongoing into the result of a CCTV survey carried out in the vicinity. Mr. Davies indicated that the operatives are aware of problem with the chamber and are dealing with the infiltration along the trunk sewer in that location.

4. MINEWATER CONTAMINATION AT TIRYBERTH

Mr. Hill produced graphs to evidence that the flows continue to be monitored on a monthly basis and reported that the iron concentration remains at a low level. With regards to progress on the settlement ponds he referred to the ground investigations and topographic surveys which had revealed that certain levels of contamination are present on the site and to the further investigations required to determine whether this site is suitable. It was noted that the Environment Agency have agreed to examine the results of the survey and that in the event that it is not possible to proceed with the site, an alternative will need to be identified.

Mr. Hill referred to monitoring which is being undertaken on the borehole on the other side of the road and indicated that the Coal Authority are exploring the feasibility of pumping water at that location.

6. CULVERT AT PONTLOTTYN

Mr. Hill referred to the flows at that location and indicated that the details have not been able to be updated since the vandalism to the data logger equipment. He confirmed that repairs have been undertaken to the gas vent and that he is in liaison with the county borough with regards to the safety of the site and options which may be available to alleviate further vandalism in that vicinity. He also indicated that he would be looking for a contribution to enhance the security of the facility by the extension of the palisade fence should that be the preferred option.

Consultants have been engaged to examine the transfer of water from the culvert to a preferred site and further details will be presented in due course. Mrs. Jones requested that environmental issues be taken into account when determining the location of the proposed pipe work and Mr. Hill indicated that at present the Consultants have been tasked to determine the feasibility of a scheme and ecology issues would be taken into account in the event that such a scheme is able to proceed. He indicated that at that stage he would be seeking a meeting with the relevant parties and would invite Mrs. Jones to attend at that time.

7. PROGRESS ON RIVERFLY MONITORING SCHEME

Mrs. Attwood referred to the success of the use of fly life monitoring and water quality monitoring techniques to identify pollutants and their sources on the river and details of the report which highlighted the schemes, the selected sites and the results to date were noted.

Reference was made to the use of the passive monitors which provide a continuous measure of water quality and can accumulate low concentrations of chemicals that may not be detected in water samples. It was noted that the semi-permeable membrane devices preferentially absorb low solubility lipophilic substances and as they can also be deployed in drains (providing they are continually submerged) are particularly useful in tracing the source of particular pollutants. The locations for the devices were determined by the results from previous deployments and investigations of possible routes for and sources of pollution.

The results of the analysis as detailed in the appendices to the report and the levels of chemicals detected at the selected sites were noted. It was confirmed that the majority of these chemicals are not in current use in the UK but are particularly persistent in the environment so they are not uncommon at low concentrations, as such, they are likely to be present as a result of historical pollution. It was confirmed that permethrin was the only chemical detected that was likely to be present due to current use and this had been detected at three of the four runs. It was indicated that permethrin is used in a wide range of products such as timber treatment, flea sprays for pets and houses and head lice treatment. Reference was made to its toxicity to aquatic invertebrates at defined concentrations as detailed in the appendix to the report.

Members were reminded of the usefulness of that data and noted that following the analysis an industrial estate had been identified as a likely source of permethrin. Following investigations by the Environment Agency Wales some pollution prevention work was undertaken in May 2006 to stop the release. There has been no further analysis of water quality following this work.

With regards to the Flylife monitoring it was noted that the Group monitor 18 sites on the main Rhymney River on a monthly basis. A three minute kick sample is taken from each site and sorted on the bank side and eleven groups of invertebrates have been identified including cased caddis, caseless caddis, baetidae (olives), ephemeridae (true mayfly), ephemerellidae (blue winged olive), heptageniidae, stoneflies, gammaridae, leeches, snails and assellidae.

It was noted that the results drew attention to a decrease in the biological quality in the main Rhymney River downstream of the Nant Melyn. On viewing the data of the results (2004/05) at the 18 sites a distinct decrease in biological quality between sites 1 and 2 which are upstream and downstream of the Nant Melyn during were noted. Mr. Roberts pointed out that since May 2006 an increase in biological quality has been noted at site 2 downstream of the Nant Melyn and that the difference in biological quality between sites 1 and 2 has decreased.

It was accepted that the partnership between the Rhymney Anglers Flylife monitoring and Environment Agency Wales water quality monitoring was successful in detecting permethrin in the Rhymney and identifying the industrial estate as a likely source. It was noted that the pollution prevention work undertaken to stop the release of permethrin from the industrial estate has coincided with an increase in biological quality in the Rhymney downstream of Nant Melyn. This suggests that the permethrin may have been a contributing factor to the poor biological quality.

Mr. Roberts was pleased to announce that the scheme will go nationwide on 8th March 2007 at the National History Museum and each area/agency will be invited to run one project. He reported that the River Rhymney Task Group has been instrumental in bringing forward the scheme and at the moment are being held as an example of good practice. He confirmed that each member of the monitoring team will be provided with a fleece jacket with appropriate logo which would be worn at the launch.

Mr. Roberts confirmed that at present there are 33 monitors and in noting the success of scheme reported that it is intended to run further River Fly Workshops late spring/early summer.

Members wished to place on record their appreciation to all those who are participating in the scheme which has resulted in a significant amount of data being produced and has assisted in determining where there may be potential sources of pollution and will be used as a direct comparison with similar river systems.

The meeting closed at 3.15 p.m.