



RIVER RHYMNEY TASK GROUP COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT THE COUNCIL OFFICES, PENALLTA HOUSE YSTRAD MYNACH ON MONDAY 3RD NOVEMBER 2009 AT 9.00 A.M.

PRESENT:

Councillor R. Woodyatt - Chairman

CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Councillors M.P. James and M.G. Parker, Mr. G. Jones, Miss. M. Johnson, Mrs. A. Jones, Miss. H.C. Morgan

ENVIRONMENT AGENCY WALES

Miss. F. Attwood, Mr. J. Goldsworthy, Miss. M. D'Onofrio, Mr. D Walters

RHYMNEY RIVER FEDERATION OF ANGLING CLUBS

Mr. D. Roberts

KELDA WATER SERVICES (WALES)

Mr. D. Power

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Mr. S. Hodges, Ms. M. Sutherland (Caerphilly County Borough Council), Mr. B. Pritchard (River Rhydney Federation of Angling Clubs) and Mr. S. Hill (the Coal Authority).

1. MINUTES - 25TH JUNE 2008

Subject to amendments to minute no. 3 (Incidents on Data Base) as follows the minutes of the meeting held on 25th June 2008 were received and noted.

1. line 1 of paragraph 1 being amended to read Tafarnabach and not Tiryberth,
2. line 3 of paragraph 2 being amended to read substrate and not substrands and
3. line 5 of paragraph 3 being amended to read invertebrate and not vertebra.

2. WATER QUALITY UPDATE

Mr. Waters made reference to the passive monitoring being undertaken on the drainage system in Tiryberth and it was noted that this would continue until there are no further signs of permethrin. Mr. Roberts confirmed that the Fly Life Monitoring Team will continue to monitor on a monthly basis and indicated that the levels of permethrin had been extremely high at the beginning of the year and whilst they have now reduced, the invertebrate within the river do not appear to have recovered to any great extent, although there are limited signs of improvement with certain species. He indicated that although there has been a slight

increase, there are still concerns at the overall biology of the Rhymney River generally.

Miss. Attwood confirmed that comparisons of data collected by the Environment Agency and the information provided by the Fly Life Team has highlighted problems at the top of the river. Mr. Roberts highlighted the disparity in the way the Agency and the Team record data and indicated that whilst the BMWP scores recorded show an increase in species the abundance levels are still low. He explained the differences in the number of species of invertebrate and the abundance of those species and noted that while there are an extensive range of species, there is not the abundance that would be expected.

It was agreed that Mr. Roberts and Miss. Attwood would continue to discuss the collection, logging and recording of data. A query was raised on the methodology for the collection of data and it was noted that there is a national protocol which outlines the methodology but that each river is assessed on its own merits. For the Rhymney, the River Rhymney Federation of Angling Clubs introduced a Fly Life Team which collates and records data each month at twenty sites along the river. This has proved to be a great success in measuring invertebra life and isolating sources of pollution and as such, the initiative has now been launched nationally. The Environment Agency carries out its own monitoring of water quality.

It was agreed that details of the sites monitored and the biological abundance data be reported to the next meeting.

3. INCIDENTS ON DATABASE

Details of incidents reported to the Environment Agency from May - October 2008 were noted and Miss. M. D'Onofrio responded to queries raised on the information provided and confirmed the action being taken on each of the incidents reported.

Specific reference was made to the number of reported incidents associated with a combined sewer outlet discharge in New Tredegar and it was noted that the desilting had been hampered by the poor weather conditions and that although work is progressing further root cutting is required to prepare to clear the sewer. Those present were reminded that the bung (which had subsequently been illegally removed) had been installed only as a temporary measure to stop the problem and that Officers are continuing to examine a long term solution.

Miss. M. D'Onofrio drew members attention to the incidents reported associated with Watford Park Lake and confirmed that whilst a number of fish had died and samples had been taken, the source of the pollutant could not be indentified. With regards to the incident on the Nant Gledyr, the Company concerned will be prosecuted.

4. MINEWATER CONTAMINATION AT TIRYBERTH

In the absence of Mr. Hill, details of his report were tabled at the meeting.

It was noted that the monitoring continues, although the datalogger was vandalised then stolen. The ground investigation of the Local Authority Site (the ash tip next to the roundabout) has been completed. A few additions for clarification are required to the report but the initial views are that it will be suitable to accommodate the minewater reedbeds.

Several options have been presented for the access route to collect the minewater at the valley bottom and a site visit is to be arranged to decide the most suitable. Discussions to agree the pipeline easement and access rights are ongoing with the Landowners Agent.

Initial results from the monitoring borehole on the other side of the road (behind the playing field) do not indicate connectivity between the borehole and the water emissions into the river.

Members were concerned that the datalogger had been vandalised and subsequently stolen but were pleased with the progress being made and noted that a site visit is to be arranged to select a site. A query was raised as to whether there is an existing easement with the landowner and it was agreed that this should be clarified.

5. CULVERT AT PONTLOTTYN

In the absence of Mr. Hill, details of his report were tabled at the meeting.

It was reported that the Coal Authority, Mines Rescue, consultants and contractors are planning to go up the culvert to undertake a condition survey and assess the viability of installing a transfer pipe to bring the minewater out of the culvert. The 23rd and 24th October had been allocated for the visit but entry was subject to suitable conditions (an Engineer from the county borough would also use this opportunity to enter the culvert). A ground investigation and topographic survey of the surface is also planned within the next few weeks.

Clarification was sought as to whether the survey had been undertaken as arranged and Miss. Johnson indicated that this would probably have been a Structural Engineer and that she would make the necessary enquiries. A request was also made for further information on the timescales for the work to be undertaken and the requirement to take into account the potential of the hibernation of bats in the old culvert.

Members noted the progress being made and that an update would be given at the next meeting.

6. NEW TREDEGAR FLOOD ALLEVIATION SCHEME

Mr. Scott Squires, Project Manager, Environment Agency, attended the meeting to detail the progress made on the flood alleviation scheme and confirmed that the works had commenced in May 2008 as anticipated but that the inclement weather during the summer months and the migration of the salmon had affected the projected timescales for completion.

He confirmed that the existing bridge has been removed and the refurbishment and raising of adjacent river training walls in combination with the creation of supplementary defences would provide 1 in 100 year flood protection to those residential and leisure facilities currently affected by flooding (properties in Birchgrove adjacent to the river, the site of the former Tirphil Primary School, New Tredegar Sports Complex including the pavilion and bowls green and the sheltered housing complex (Glan yr Afon) adjacent to Ruperra Street).

It was now anticipated that the works would be completed in April/May 2009 and further works will be undertaken in the river (fisheries improvement and repair to the existing river banks) as required.

Mr. Roberts referred to the need to extend the period for the works being undertaken within the river and expressed concerns at the levels of siltation and the impact on existing invertebrates and their eggs. Mr. Squires indicated that problems had been experienced in the bridge area and an extension had to be negotiated. It was anticipated being in the river a further one/two weeks and then progressing works upstream which could be undertaken out of the river. Ecologists are inspecting the site as the scaffolding is being moved along the river and the concerns raised would be taken into account. Once the existing bund is in place there should be no further movement of the riverbed. Further works to construct the flood defences throughout the winter can be undertaken without affecting the ecology of the river.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Squires for the information provided and for responding to the queries raised by Members during the course of the debate and extended an invitation to future meetings should he be able to attend. Mr. Squires responded by inviting the Task Group to the site in order that they can view progress and appreciate the extent of the works being undertaken.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

7. SITES OF IMPORTANCE FOR NATURE CONSERVATION

Mrs. A. Jones was pleased to report that the Rhymney River and all other rivers and their tributaries in the county borough have been designated sites of importance for nature conservation in the deposit unitary development plan. Its qualifying feature being the residential and migratory fish and the presence of otters.

It was noted that the plan identifies where new developments such as housing, employment, community facilities and roads will go and it provides a framework for local decision-making and brings together both development and conservation interests to ensure that any changes in the use of land are coherent and provides maximum benefits to the community. Where development is permitted, it may be necessary to use planning conditions and/or obligations to safeguard the nature conservation value of the site, or provide appropriate compensatory measures by enhancement of existing habitats and the creation of new ones, either elsewhere or on the site.

CHAIRMAN