



MONMOUTHSHIRE AND BRECON CANAL - CRUMLIN ARM WORKING GROUP

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH ON
THURSDAY 27TH FEBRUARY 2020 AT 5.00 P.M.**

PRESENT:

Councillor A. Whitcombe - Chair

Mr R. Dommett (Monmouthshire, Brecon and Abergavenny Canals Trust) - Vice Chair

Councillors:

M. Davies, A. Hussey, L. Jeremiah, G. Johnston, B. Owen, D.W.R. Preece, J. Simmonds,
C. Thomas, R. Whiting

Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Services - Councillor N. George

Together with:

K. Kinsey (Principal Engineer), A. Bolter (Visitor Economy and Destinations Manager), E.
Sullivan (Senior Committee Services Officer), R. Barrett (Committee Services Officer)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Mrs A. Leonard and Ms P. Leonard,
together with Mr B. Illman (Monmouthshire, Brecon and Abergavenny Canals Trust).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received at the commencement or during the course
of the meeting.

3. MINUTES – 7TH NOVEMBER 2019

The minutes of the meeting held on 7th November 2019 were approved as a correct
record.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following reports.

4. **MEMBERSHIP OF THE MONMOUTHSHIRE AND BRECON CANAL – CRUMLIN ARM WORKING GROUP**

The Chair gave a warm welcome to Emma Sullivan (Senior Committee Services Officer), who presented a report reviewing the current membership of the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal – Crumlin Arm Working Group and set out various options by consideration by the Canal Group. Members were asked to note that any changes would need to be considered and approved by Council at its Annual Meeting.

The Senior Committee Services Officer outlined the 4 options for consideration as set out in the report recommendations:-

Option 1 - Membership of the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal – Crumlin Arm Working Group remain unchanged with full representation from all wards adjoining the canal:

Abercarn (2), Crosskeys (1), Crumlin (2), Newbridge (3), Risca East (3) and Risca West (2) including the Cabinet Member for Environment and Neighbourhood Services giving a committee membership of 13.

Option 2 - The Working Group be comprised of 1 Member + 1 nominated substitute from each of the wards adjoining the canal plus the Cabinet Member for Environment and Neighbourhood Services:

Abercarn (1), Crosskeys (1), Crumlin (1), Newbridge (1), Risca East (1) and Risca West (1) – giving a committee membership of 7.

Option 3 - The Working Group be comprised of full ward representation from those wards that have accessible connectivity to the canal plus 1 representative + 1 nominated substitute from each of the remaining adjoining wards (Crumlin, Abercarn and Newbridge) and the Cabinet Member for Environment and Neighbourhood Services.

Abercarn (1), Crosskeys (1), Crumlin (1), Newbridge (1), Risca East (3) and Risca West (2) – giving a committee membership of 10.

Option 4 - The Working Group be comprised of full representation from all wards apart from the Newbridge ward who would be invited to attend as and when such matters of interest to the ward arise, plus the Cabinet Member for Environment and Neighbourhood Services.

Abercarn (2), Crosskeys (1), Crumlin (2), Risca East (3) and Risca West (2) – giving a committee membership of 11.

It was highlighted to Members that the position of Cabinet Member has been left separate as Councillor Nigel George is both the Cabinet Member for Environment and Neighbourhood Services and a representative of the Canal Group as a Ward Member for Risca East. However, this might not always be the case and in order to ensure continuity of representation it was recommended that the Cabinet Member place be in addition to the representatives for each ward.

The Canal Group considered the options set out in the report and a Newbridge Ward Member moved Option 4, stating that he felt this to be a fair choice, given that the existing stretch of the Canal does not extend as far as Newbridge and the Canal Group covers matters that bear little or no relevance to the Newbridge Ward. A Crumlin Ward Member agreed with the Newbridge Member and also queried the relevance of his representation on the Canal Group. The Chair reminded the Canal Group that Option 4 includes full representation from the Crumlin Ward. Option 4 was then seconded.

The other Crumlin Ward Member stated that he would wish to remain as a representative of the Canal Group.

The Senior Committee Services Officer suggested that a solution for the Canal Group could be to amend Option 4 to comprise full representation from all wards with connectivity to the canal (Abercarn, Crosskeys, Risca East and Risca West), Newbridge being invited to attend as and when required, and Crumlin having 1 representative and 1 nominated substitute on the Canal Group, plus the Cabinet Member for Environment and Neighbourhood Services.

The first Crumlin Ward Member stated that he would be happy to attend as a substitute for his ward colleague who wished to remain on the Canal Group. Members indicated their agreement for the suggested amendment to Option 4 and Mrs Sullivan confirmed that she would highlight these changes to the membership list for approval at Council AGM.

Having moved and seconded Option 4, this was put to the vote with the inclusion of the suggested amendment, and by a show of hands was unanimously agreed.

RECOMMENDED to Council that membership of the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal – Crumlin Arm Working Group be amended to comprise full representation from all wards with connectivity to the canal (Abercarn, Crosskeys, Risca East and Risca West), Newbridge being invited to attend as and when required, and Crumlin having 1 representative and 1 nominated substitute on the Canal Group, plus the Cabinet Member for Environment and Neighbourhood Services.

The Chair thanked the Senior Committee Services Officer for taking the time to attend the meeting and present the report. Mrs Sullivan then left the meeting.

5. UPDATE ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE CANAL

Kevin Kinsey (Principal Engineer) presented a verbal update on matters relating to the Canal and responded to queries from the Group in turn.

Maintenance Update

Canal Channel - Members were advised that channel clearance has taken place to remove debris and weeds from the Canal.

Grass Maintenance – Grass cutting will commence in March and will include the amended cutting regime going forward across the length of the Canal to promote wildlife bio-diversity.

2019/2020 Works Programme

Channel Leak Repair – work is ongoing regarding the water loss at the Pontywaun aqueduct. External consultants are undertaken geophysical survey of the ground surrounding the aqueduct and examining the history of the towpath. So far they believe there to be a multitude of holes in the aqueduct area which are contributing to the water loss but will map these out for the Council's Engineering department, who will then plan for works in aqueduct perimeter to address these issues.

The Canal Group were also advised of an emergency towpath closure on the grounds of public safety which had begun on 25th February and will remain in effect until further

notice. The closure is located between the Halls Road and Greenmeadow Bridge (The Deeps) section of towpath and is due to a reported leak which on investigation had partially undermined the towpath, causing a void of unknown size. Officers attended the site and undertook a repair to the canal channel which has stopped the leak, but are unable to reinstate the void under the towpath at this time due to operational constraints. Further investigation will be progressed at the earliest opportunity to enable a repair to be made and the towpath re-opened.

Water Control – Officers have inspected water levels in view of the recent Storm Dennis events but there have been no direct flooding incidents across the Canal. Concerns had been raised about the section of open concrete channel that the Dragons Teeth overflow discharges into, in terms of blockages due to accumulated debris. This channel is not on canal land but was inspected immediately after the storm and cleaned by CCBC operatives to ensure continued public safety.

Tree Maintenance – there were very few instances of tree fall along the Canal during Storm Dennis and this is testament to the tree maintenance works that were carried out last year.

Funding

External Funding – It was noted that the spend date for Adventure Triangle funding has been extended to May 2020.

Capital - A capital budget allocation for 2019/20 is £212k plus the £361k carry over from 2018/19, giving a total budget of £573k. Tendering for Phases 3 and 4 of works has been delayed and is anticipated to begin in March 2020. The length of Canal to be addressed in these phases will extend from the downstream terminus of Phase 1 down to the Pontywaun overbridge and include The Deeps and Greenmeadow Bridge.

Boats

Mr Kinsey explained that following the previous meeting of the Canal Group, where he was asked about Council membership on the board of the Islwyn Canal Association, he had attempted to contact Mr Wysom but had no success to date. The ICA's leisure boat (The Islwyn Lily) remains moored at Whysom's Wharf and has been stationary for some time.

The Canal Group were also advised that the Canal Management Plan is currently being updated and will be brought to a future meeting of the Group once completed.

A Member referred to enquiries around the funding balance for the Cwmcarn Memorial Cottage Hospital Fund, which had been set up to assist survivors of the Flannel Factory disaster in 1875. The Chair explained that he had received confirmation through the Council's Acting Section 151 Officer that there is almost £7000 remaining in the fund, and that Mr Kinsey and his colleagues are currently looking at spending scenarios which will benefit the area.

Mr Kinsey also responded to queries around water control during the recent storms, and in response to a query on the overflow at the Deeps explained that this operates when the canal level rises above normal operational levels, as it did during the recent storm. A Member also referred to recent flooding events in Risca and sought assurance that this was not related to the Canal. Mr Kinsey confirmed that there had been no instances of overtopping in this area and that the Canal water feeds at Pontywaun and Manor Road were both turned off and as such caused no issues during the recent storms. Although there has been some flooding issues in the area, these are unrelated to the Canal.

The Chair thanked Mr Kinsey for his presentation and for responding to the queries raised, and asked that the thanks of the Canal Group be conveyed to the Engineering department for all the recent work they had carried out, particularly in view of all the extra work arising from Storm Dennis.

The Canal Group noted the details of the update from Mr Kinsey.

6. UPDATE FROM MR RICHARD DOMMETT - MBACT

Mr Dommatt (MBACT) provided a verbal update on recent MBACT developments and matters relating to the Canal.

The Canal Group were advised that the Monmouthshire and Brecon Joint Steering Group are due to resume their meetings shortly, with a meeting being held between Officers from the Group and Monmouthshire Council on 12th March 2020, together with representatives from the Canal and River Trust, to discuss the way forward. Arising from this, Mr Dommatt will contact local authorities (including Caerphilly Council) to seek confirmation of outside body representatives to the Monmouthshire and Brecon Joint Steering Group.

Members were also advised that the Memorandum of Understanding for the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal Regeneration Partnership Scheme will be reviewed at the next meeting of the Joint Steering Group and will then be circulated to the Canal Group for comments.

Mr Dommatt also referred to the Adventure Triangle works being carried out at Sebastopol in Pontypool and should be completed within the agreed timescale. These include a canal-side sanitary station and electrical hookup. In addition, MBACT's new Community Boat being sited at Goytre Wharf is currently undergoing final preparations and is awaiting a licence from the Islwyn Canal Association to carry up to 30 passengers, and should then be fully operational.

In conclusion, Mr Dommatt referred to MBACT's busy workload arising from the events of Storm Dennis but explained that no serious overtopping of the Canal had been experienced in the area.

The Canal Group thanked Mr Dommatt and noted his verbal update.

The Chair thanked those present for their attendance and contributions and the meeting closed at 5.33 p.m.

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 25th July 2022, they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIR