



MONMOUTHSHIRE AND BRECON CANAL - CRUMLIN ARM WORKING GROUP

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH ON
FRIDAY 20TH JUNE 2014 AT 10.00 AM**

PRESENT:

Councillors:

Ms L. Ackerman, N. George, D.M. Gray, Mrs P. Griffiths, K. James, A. Lewis, D.W.R Preece

Together with:

A. Bolter (Group Manager - Strategy Funding and Support) R. Davies (Funding and SET Officer), K. Kinsey (Principal Engineer - Consultancy), R. Barrett (Committee Services Officer)

Mr R.J. Dommatt (Monmouthshire, Brecon and Abergavenny Canals Trust), Mr B. Illman (Chairman Monmouthshire, Brecon and Abergavenny Canals Trust).

1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR

Councillor D.W.R. Preece was unanimously appointed Chair of the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal – Crumlin Arm Working Group for the ensuing year.

Mr R. Dommatt, Monmouthshire, Brecon and Abergavenny Canals Trust, was unanimously appointed Vice-Chair of the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal – Crumlin Arm Working Group for the ensuing year.

Members extended their appreciations to Mr Dommatt for his efforts as Chair of the Canal Group during the preceding year.

2. OFFICER RETIREMENT

The Chair advised the Group that Mr Robert Davies, CCBC Funding and SET Officer, would be retiring shortly and that this would be his last Canal Group meeting. Members wished Mr Davies a long and happy retirement and extended their appreciations for all the work he had carried out on behalf of the Group

3. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs K.R. Baker, D.M. Gray, G. Johnston, Ms P. Leonard, K. Lloyd, Mrs R. Passmore and D. Rees, together with Councillor T.J. Williams, Cabinet Member for Highways, Transportation and Engineering.

4. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

5. **MINUTES – 28TH FEBRUARY 2014**

The minutes of the meeting held on 28th February 2014 were approved as a correct record.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following reports.

6. **MAINTENANCE UPDATE**

Kevin Kinsey, Principal Engineer, presented an update on matters relating to the Canal.

Canal Channel – Members were advised that weed cutting and channel clearance would be reinstated for 2014/15 with a continued frequency of two visits in July 2014 and October 2014.

Grass Maintenance – Members were advised that grass cutting had been undertaken, with the last cut on 20th May 2014 and the next scheduled cut for 17th June 2014. Subsequent cuts would be on a monthly basis up until October 2014, at which time they would be suspended for the winter months.

7. **2014/2015 WORKS PROGRAMME**

Towpath – maintenance works are programmed to raise a short length of canal bank to the rear of Brynhyfryd Terrace. There is a long-standing problem with overtopping during periods of heavy rainfall and this year there have been two requests for the provision of sandbags.

Mr Bernard Illman raised a suggestion in that advance notice of canal works be advertised or circulated via email.

Access Enhancement – no works are planned for this year.

Water Control – initial walkover investigations have been undertaken in the locality of Cwm Byr stream with a view to developing a system to control and maintain the excessive quantities of silt that are being carried into the canal. Recent monitoring suggests that these volumes have increased. Officers confirmed the location of the stream and discussion took place with regard to the use of silt traps.

Dredging – dredging works are planned for the section of canal between Green Meadow Bridge and Darran Road Bridge in order to restore a navigable route through this section. It was explained that these plans are currently on hold pending the progression of planning permission, and Members were advised that problems have been encountered in relation to silt disposal. Discussion took place in relation to the methods of disposal utilised by other authorities, with it confirmed that silt could be reused for other projects once it was dried out.

Tree Maintenance – budget permitting, it is planned to undertake a tree survey over the full length of the canal and undertake recommended maintenance work

External Funding – there are no external funding sources available at present.

Channel Leak Repair – works to repair the leak within the Pontywaun section of canal started the first week of February and are programmed to continue into June. The timing of these works have allowed the use of the 2014/2015 budget so that the first two phases of work can be completed. Works are progressing well and are now approaching the final phases that can be accommodated within the budget.

8. FUNDING

Capital – a Capital budget of £212,000 has been allocated for the 2014/2015 financial year and this funding will be used to progress the channel leak repair at Pontywaun. Initial indications are that this level of funding will be sustained during the financial years 2015/16, although given the current economic climate there can be no guarantees in this respect.

Revenue – the 2013/2014 budget allocation was £124,000 and, at the time of writing, £3500 remained unspent. The remaining budget will be used to undertake a long-standing repair to a damaged wall at Navigation Street, and form a ramp into the canal at this location to allow the weed cutting boat access to the canal channel. The 2014/2015 budget allocation is £126,500.

Expenditure under this heading is allocated to cover the cost of grass and channel maintenance, tree maintenance, general cleansing, towpath repair, management cost and emergency response.

9. BOATS

No update in this respect. It was confirmed that a query had been received in regards to putting a boat back on the water.

10. TERM SERVICE CONTRACT

The current term service maintenance contract has been extended by 6 months to allow procurement of a new contract.

Members thanked the Principal Engineer for his report and queried whether tree removal costs as a result of the current larch disease epidemic would fall under the remit of Engineering Services. Officers confirmed that they would take advice on this and report back to the Group.

11. PROMOTION OF THE MONMOUTHSHIRE AND BRECON CANAL

Reference was made to regional research currently being undertaken by Torfaen County Borough Council, with £25,000 secured by that Authority. Torfaen have offered to extend that work across the wider regional partnership subject to funding contributions from other local authorities, with it felt by CCBC Officers that such data would be key to support any future canal development bids.

The Group unanimously recommended that this offer be accepted and that such funding be sought, and queried whether the £3500 carry over from the 2013/14 engineering revenue budget could be used to support an economic impact assessment and promotional video that were being produced by Torfaen. Officers confirmed that they would make enquiries in regards to this and report back at the next Canal Group meeting in October 2014.

Officers proposed that an Officers Working Group be established to examine wider consultation processes relating to the Canal, including that of trusts and fishing groups, and

that such findings be brought back to the Canal Group as an agenda item for future meetings. This proposal was unanimously endorsed by all Members present.

12. ISLWYN CANAL ASSOCIATION TRIP BOAT – CONCESSIONARY LICENCE

The Canal Group gave consideration to an issue raised by the owner of the Islwyn Canal Association trip boat in relation to an increase in licensing fees, silted water and the potential impacts of both on the boat concerned.

Discussion followed on the licensing fees cited by the boat owner, with Officers confirming that clarification had been sought from the Licensing department in regards to such fees. It was explained that Licensing Officers had advised the boat owner to delay any payment until the canal length was usable.

Mr Dommett raised a proposal in that licensing fee discounts to canal boat owners be considered and circulated a list of Business Licence Fees from the Canal and River Trust as an example of this. The Group supported some discretion in applying licensing costs, particularly to new and charitable sponsors.

The Group determined that further information needed to be sought on the issue and requested that an update report by Officers be brought back to the next meeting of the Canal Group in October 2014. It was agreed that Mr Dommett would contact the boat owner to establish which licensing fees were being referred to in his query.

13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Members were reminded of the usefulness of the Waterways World magazine and MBACT e-magazine, and Mr Illman requested that any newsworthy items on Canal matters be forwarded to him to be included in the MBACT e-magazine.

The meeting closed at 10.54 am.

The next meeting of the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal – Crumlin Arm Working Group is scheduled for Friday 31st October 2014 at 10.00 am.