



## **RIVER RHYMNEY TASK GROUP**

### **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT THE COUNCIL OFFICES, PENALLTA HOUSE ON MONDAY 2ND MARCH 2015 AT 10.00AM**

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**PRESENT:**

Councillor R. Woodyatt - Chairman

**CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

Councillor D.G. Carter, Ms M. Isles, Ms M. Johnston, Mr G. Jones, Miss. H.C. Morgan

**DWR CYMRU**

Mr D. Humphreys

**NATURAL RESOURCES WALES**

Mr. B. Pyott, Mrs. M. Healan

**RHYMNEY RIVER FEDERATION OF ANGLING CLUBS**

Mr. D. Couldrick, Mr. D. Roberts

**GROUNDWORK CAERPHILLY**

Mr H. Abbott

**1. APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor M. P. James, Mr P. Bradham (Dwr Cymru) and Mr. R. Williams (Rhymney River federation of Angling Clubs).

**2. PRESENTATION - HEALTHY RIVERS AND RIVERS SCHOOLS PROJECTS**

Mr H. Abbott (Healthy Rivers - Project Officer, Groundwork Wales) advised that the Healthy Rivers and Rivers Schools Projects are partnership projects coordinated by Groundwork Caerphilly and involve the South East Wales Rivers Trust (SEWRT), Environmental Agency Wales (EAW) and local authorities. The aims and objectives of the original project were to achieve good ecological status for the River Sirhowy (according to Water Framework Directive legislation), increase populations of migratory fish, educate local people about the river ecosystem, promote angling and tackle invasive weeds.

In 2014 Healthy Rivers received funding to improve the ecological status for the Rhymney, Nant Bargoed, Rhondda Fawr and Rhondda Fach, the removal/modification of 7 barriers to fish migration to increase populations of migratory fish, educate local people about the river ecosystem and deal with litter and waste.

Members were pleased to note that with regards to education, and as part of the Salmon in Classrooms Project, Healthy Rivers has a live display of salmon eggs/young salmon to take to

local primary schools and will teach children about the life cycle of the salmon and about issues affecting their survival in local rivers and encourage them to better understand and appreciate the river environment. The River School Project enables children to visit the river to take kick samples and to measure its width, depth and flow rate.

Mr Abbott advised that a further 2 years funding had been granted by Natural Resources Wales to continue work on South East Wales Rivers with emphasis on working with young people. He referred to proposals to work with NRW to carry out walk over surveys, undertake further works on the Nant yr Aber (including the clearance of the tree blockage at its confluence with the river Rhymney), to investigating the major litter issue at Caerphilly Retail Estate and to continue to work with schools.

He then referred to the River Rhymney and to the work on the weir at Fleur-de Lys, where trees blocking the water pipe had caught the buttress, the fish pass on the Nant Bargoed at its confluence with the river (which should alleviate the barriers to migration) and to works at the weir 100 metres upstream from this point.

Reference was made to the installation of the fish pass at Nant Bargoed and a query was raised as to whether it was effective in allowing migration. Mr Abbot advised that Officers are assessing whether adaptations, including changes to the baffles, are required but confirmed that overall, it is slowing water and maintaining a consistent depth, although the tree debris may be causing a problem. There is a maintenance programme and walkover surveys will identify any further problems.

Mr Roberts advised that now the flow of the water has been redirected, it seems to be undercutting a garden wall. Mr Abbot confirmed that he would speak to the owners of the property to determine the extent of the damage. Reference was made to an obstruction of the waterway at Nant Twyn Harris (opposite the Coopers Arms, Ystrad Mynach, as a result of some work that had been carried out in the tributary some years ago. Mr Roberts advised that this had been discussed at a recent Rivers Trust meeting and, in view of the engineering difficulties, it had been agreed that works be held in abeyance for the foreseeable future.

Reference was made to the importance of community engagement and the use of volunteers to support the process. Members were pleased to note the classroom project, proposals to carry out walk over surveys, which should help to identify any issues that are impacting on the fish population (including trees and debris blocking the channel) and litter picking initiatives. They hoped that the removal or modification of any barriers would improve fish passage and would open up large sections of the upper catchment to migratory species and welcomed any environmental improvement to the river to improve its ecological status under the Water Framework Directive.

Mr Abbott was thanked for his informative presentation and for responding to questions and issues raised by the Group.

### **3. UPDATE ON WATER FRAMEWORK CLASSIFICATIONS, POLLUTION AND INVESTIGATORY WORKS - 2013/2014**

Data was provided on the water framework classification, pollution and investigatory work and Mr Pyott gave an overview of the comparative data for 2013 and 2014 as it related to the overall WFD, the failing elements and fish Spp. It was noted that other than the change in the status of the Nant Bargoed to Nant Cylla stretch from moderate to good, there are no other differences with the status of each of the identified stretches over the past two years, albeit that some of the failing elements and fish Spp have changed.

Mr Pyott went through each of the catchment areas identified and detailed their overall status, their failing elements and the fish spp. Members attention was drawn to the maps provided, which through colour coding, identified the overall WFD class and macro invertebrates. It was requested that in future the maps be produced with specific detail as it relates to the river and its confluences, rather than the surrounding areas.

With regard to the data as it relates to the river source to the confluent at Nant Bargoed, the status remains the same albeit that the failing elements in 2013 were invertebrates and are now fish. Investigations have been undertaken but there has been no evidence found to support this change. There have been no changes on the Nant Bargoed confluent to the river but it is hoped that this will improve with the installed fish pass. The Nant Bargoed to Nant Cylla confluent (Ystrad Mynach) shows an increase from moderate to good but the number of invertebrates has decreased. This is thought to be associated with mine water contamination.

Mr Pyott advised that there has been no improvement on the Nant Cylla confluent to the river, which is associated with barriers and sewage. Similarly, the data for Nant Cylla to Chapel Wood confluent and for the Nant Aber confluent show no changes. With regards to the latter, at this location, the status of the river is of a heavily modified water body. There has been a reduction in salmon on the Nant Glandulas confluent which has been associated with barriers and MMA and Roath Brook, which is also identified as a heavily modified water body, identifies further failing elements due to MMA and misconnections.

During the course of the debate, reference was also made to the problems associated with signal crayfish and to the methods of eradication to ensure they do not threaten the native crayfish with the river.

Mr Roberts then referred to the overnutrition of the river and the amount on filamentous algae that has appeared along the bottom of the river and attached itself to rocks and plants, which prevent invertebrates from feeding properly. It was explained that a number of surveys have been undertaken and whilst there are a number of reasons as to why algae has become established, if a source can be identified, control options will be considered. Mrs. M. Healan advised that proposals within Natural Resources Wales to merge the fisheries and biodiversity departments would assist in this process.

It was noted that through collaborative working there have been improvements over the years. In going forward it was noted that the Fly Life Team will be working downstream of the Nant Melin and the Chair suggested that the River Rhymney Federation may be able to provide resources to support further mitigation initiatives. Mr Pyott advised that as resources are one of the main issues, he would make enquiries with the Federation. It was accepted that regular surveys that show locations of poor biology are extremely helpful in directing investigations and resources.

Mr Pyott was thanked for his informative report and for responding to questions and issues raised by the Group during the course of the debate.

#### 4. **FEEDBACK ON INCIDENTS**

Mr Roberts made reference to incidents that are reported and to no feed back being received on the outcome. He suggested that as well as being given an incident number, the operator can ask whether feedback is required in order that it can be logged and actioned. Mrs Healan advised that she would raise this with the appropriate officers

## **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

### **5. Update - Dwr Cymru/Welsh Water**

Mr D. Humphreys referred to problems at the Nant Bargoed at New Road Deri and the sewers in Pontlottyn and advised of proposals to alleviate the problems. With regards to the latter, investigation works have been completed, costing prepared and it anticipated that the contract would commence in April. In relation to the Nant Bargoed, investigations have resulted in a number of improvements proposed - including sewer cleansing, a review of the storm asset system and of the existing combined sewer outlet. Every effort will be made to remove surface water from the system. Mr Humphreys was thanked for the assistance in dealing with misconnections and camera surveys and for the reports prepared as a result. It was confirmed that Officers of the county borough, NRW and WW are working closely on this problem.

### **6. Minewater Contamination at Tiryberth/Culvert at Pontlottyn**

Mr Roberts referred to previous discussions relating to the mine water contamination at Tiryberth and the culvert at Pontlottyn. It had been reported at that time that although an analysis under the Water Framework Directive had been prepared, in view of the current economic climate, unfavourable cost v benefits assessments, the prioritisation of competing remedial schemes and changes to the classification of the river, these schemes had been deferred.

In that the second tranche of bids is under consideration it was requested that a further approach be made to the Coal Authority to take these schemes forward. Mrs Healan advised that as a member of the Mine Water Group she was aware that the schemes had been deferred but that there may be a potential for them to be reconsidered should the Miller Argent application be granted. She advised that Steve Hill had moved to a different position but would seek to invite a representative of the Coal Authority to a future meeting.

Mr Roberts advised that the South East Wales Rivers Trust is looking for projects and it was agreed that an approach be made to determine whether the problems with minewater at Rhymney can be included in the programme. He confirmed that he would make arrangements accordingly.

### **7. Abandoned Shopping Trolleys in Rivers**

Mr Abbott referred to the number of shopping trolleys that are found in the river and its tributaries and as to whether it would be feasible to invite the Managers of the local stores to attend the meeting. It was noted that this is being pursued as part of the Keep Wales Tidy initiative and suggested that Rhodri Lloyd be invited to a future meeting.

### **8. Flood Prevention Works on the River at Ystrad Mynach**

Mr Couldrick referred to works that had been undertaken within the river, as it abuts Duffryn Industrial Estate, which has caused it to be deepened as part of a flood protection scheme. The movement of material within the river has left an amount of shale on the banks. Mrs Healan advised that she would make enquires as to the nature of the work and required remedial arrangements.

### **9. FUTURE MEETINGS**

It was agreed that future meetings be held on a quarterly basis and that arrangements be made accordingly. It was accepted that further information is required on the incidents on the data base and that they should be coordinated to ensure all agencies are able to provide input.

The meeting closed at 11.30am