

Minutes



Monmouthshire & Brecon Canal Joint Steering Group

Date: 19 April 2018

Time: 10.00 am

Present: Councillors Stuart Ashley & Jon Horlor (Torfaen CBC), Roger Jeavons, Jane Mudd (Newport CC) and Jackie Charlton (Powys CC)

Richard Dommett & Wyn Mitchell (MBACT), David Morgan (CRT), Julian Stedman (BBNPA) and Richard Wysom (Islwyn Canal Association)

Officers: Kay Francis (Powys CC), Andrew Osborne (Caerphilly CBC) and Lynne Richards (Newport CC)

Apologies: Councillors D Mayer (Newport CC), Carl Thomas (Caerphilly CBC), Richard Roden (Monmouthshire CC), Collette Thomas (Torfaen CBC) and Bernard Illman (MBACT)

1 **Agenda - Cym**

2 **Welcome & Introductions**

As the host authority Cllr Ashley took the Chair

Introductions were made and the Chair welcomed everyone to the Power Station, giving a short history on how the name of the venue had come about.

3 **Apologies for Absence**

As noted above.

4 **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the previous meeting were submitted. J Stedman pointed out that he was not a councillor but a member of the Brecon Beacons National Park appointed by Welsh Government.

Item: 6: Update on Ty Coch Waterway Park Feasibility Study. W Mitchell confirmed that he had met with the Head of Regeneration at Newport City Council regarding the removal of the protection order on Crindau. The officer agreed to discuss the matter with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration.

Agreed:

That the minutes were a true record subject to the above.

5 **Memorandum of Understanding**

No amendments had been made to this document since 2013. R Domett informed the group that it needed to be updated and had recently been discussed at the officers group (now re-named the working group). Suggested amendments had been made and officers were advised to take these amendments to their legal section to be checked. The document would then be brought back to the next Steering group meeting.

Some of the new members were concerned as they had not had sight of the original Memorandum and would not wish to make decisions on anything they had not seen previously.

Agreed:

That the original Memorandum of Understanding be circulated to all Steering group members and the document be brought back to the July meeting.

6 MBC Regeneration Resource Archive

This item had been discussed at the meeting on 1 February 2018 when A Stumpf had suggested that various parties make a donation towards the £15000 fee for a consultant to collate all information relating to the canal from the relevant sources as it was feared this could be lost with changes to personnel etc. This would help identify any gaps in existing knowledge of the canal and assist in providing a total figure for the full restoration and for each individual element.

The item had been discussed at the recent working group and it was agreed that due to lack of resources there was no funding available but it was agreed that officers would give their time to assist the consultant in the project.

The project would now need approval from the Trustees of CRT and provided this was forthcoming work could start on 1 May 2018.

7 Itinerary for CRT Trustees Visit on 23 May 2018

D Morgan was pleased to announce that CRT Trustees would be visiting South Wales on 23 May 2018. CRT had been liaising with MBACT on the visit. The day would begin at 14 Locks at around midday. Approx 150 had been invited including representatives for the Swansea canal and possibly other canals. This would be an informal gathering giving those invited the opportunity to discuss the canal system with the CRT Trustees.

During the afternoon CRT would be meeting with Natural Resource Wales officers at St Fagans. An evening reception would take place at the Norwegian Church at Cardiff Bay. Council Leaders and AMs had been invited to this event and its purpose was to make them aware of the importance of canal restoration for tourism and the economy.

The Chair informed everyone of a recent meeting of South east Wales Community Councillors that Alun Davies AM (Cabinet Member for Local Government and Public Services) had attended. Mr Davies had made reference to a new 'landscape park' in South East Wales which would be maintained by the community. A discussion ensued and it was agreed that a landscape park would be preferred to a national park.

8 Update from Individual Authorities

Newport City Council

Further to her update in February L Richards confirmed that tarmacking of the three and a half mile stretch of cycle way bordering the canal was being carried out.

She had given recommendations for potential RPD funding for the canal to MBACT who would be meeting with CADW.

She also clarified a query regarding NCC Landfill Tax for the Trust. Criteria for Landfill Tax grants had changed with effect from 1 April. Welsh Government would be making these monies available to environmental projects and expenditure of the monies would be limited to 5 miles from the landfill site and not 10 miles as had previously been the criteria although firm details were not available yet.

Torfaen

A Osborne had a short presentation updating members on the Canal Adventure Triangle. 10 projects across Wales had received a share of £27.7m ERDF monies including 3 in SE Wales - Porthcawl Harbour, Rock UK at Merthyr and the Mon Brecon Canal. Partners involved in the Mon and Brecon Canal project are Torfaen CBC, Caerphilly CBC, CRT and MBACT.

- The facilities at Pontymoile were quite poor and these would be improved. There was also a lack of parking in the area and it was hoped to access Welsh Government grants from active travel routes.
- A canal basin would be created in the middle of the new development at South Sebastopol and it was hoped to put in situ moorings and a bridge.
- Pontynewydd Park - the overgrown vegetation would be cleared to link the park with the canal.
- A private sector individual had shown an interest in hiring out boats at the 5 Locks Basin.
- A scoping study would need to be carried out on Twmbarlwm & Mynydd Maen as a lot of the pathways had been destroyed by off road bikes.
- More pods would be placed in Cwmcarn Forest Centre. Work would be carried out on the cross country cycle routes at the centre and some re-lining was required on the canal at Pontywaun.

The gross cost of the above works is £4,674,779 and approval was anticipated in April/May 2018. Following approval work was start in May 2018 and hopefully be completed by December 2020.

R Wysom queried the fact that there was no mention in the Adventure Triangle of the canal between Pontywaun and the Darran Bridge at Risca. Andrew confirmed officers in Caerphilly had suggested the Caerphilly projects.

L Richards congratulated those authorities on securing ERDF monies which were no longer available to Newport.

MBACT

MBACT were hoping that funding would be secured from the ERDF Adventure Triangle project, led by TCBC monies, to have a charging point provided at 5 Locks for the Trip and electric powered hire boats. The use of electric boats was discussed and also the need for more charging points along the canal.

Powys

Although having nothing canal related at present there was a hope that in the future the Adventure Triangle would link up with Powys.

J Charlton considered the Steering group a good mix of Local Authorities and organisations which was an open forum discussing and delivering rural urban areas and ideas on the ground which protected heritage and history which can result in economic results.

She believed that following Brexit when European funding was not available it was imperative that everyone work together more closely to secure money for Wales, especially South Wales.

Brecon Beacons National Park

J Stedman reported that BBNP is presently going through a restructuring process and have recently appointed a new Chief Executive. A new Chair will be appointed at the AGM at the end of July.

Canal River Trust

CRT are also going through a restructuring process when the waterway regions are being reduced from 10 to 6. This area would now include Wales and the Avon & Kennet & Avon canal and would be called the Wales & South West region. The handover would take place on 4 June.

D Morgan updated members on the Hinterlands project which is a new arts programme supported by the Arts Council of Wales and the Arts Council England. New arts activities curated by regional creative producers will tour and connect stretches of waterway or 'hinterlands' – areas under-served by the arts and facing economic or social hardship. This programme would involve the local communities near Pontypool.

CRT are currently laying the groundwork for phase 2 of the project and, providing application to the Arts Council Wales was successful, the programme would extend from its current focus on the Torfaen section of the canal.

On 23 April 2018 4 short 'Year of the Sea' digital animation films would be launched at Brecon Theatre. Each film is set in a different season and follows the various tram roads which transported different products down to the docks in Newport. Once launched he agreed to forward a link to MBACT for them to display on their website.

The canal between Govilon and Pontymoile is part of the Discovery Trail project led by Torfaen CBC to develop a circular walking/cycling trail connecting Blaenavon World Heritage Site to the canal at Goytre.

CRT were currently looking at re-branding and re-launching a new logo. This will take place on 22 May when the trust will launch themselves as a well-being charity.

9 Other Funding Applications

R Dommett was pleased to confirm that the feasibility study for the visitor hub in lower Cwmbran was nearing completion. The study was looking very positive and could proceed with the right funding. He will update at the next meeting.

10 Any Other Business

The Chair has reported at the last meeting that the developers at Erdogan Wharf had laid a cycle track over a nest of glow worms. He had spoken with the Head of Planning at Torfaen and the developers had agreed to look at a solution to the problem. He hoped to have more information at the next meeting.

R Wysom queried what was being done at the Old Sainsburys site in Newport. J Mudd confirmed that the owners of the site had been granted planning permission some time ago for a hotel and housing demolition work was currently being carried out on the old buildings.

Once again concern was voiced with regard to Crindau which was not protected as the Planning Inspector had recommended that the original Crindau Marina be removed from the LDP as no developer was onboard at that stage. J Mudd confirmed that the authority were still looking to secure housing the site.

11 Date of Next Meeting

Thursday 19 July 2018 which Caerphilly would be asked to host.
Powys agreed to host the meeting on 18 October 2018.

With no further matters to discuss the meeting ended. The Chair thanked everyone for attending.