

Minutes



Formal Council Questions and Responses

Date: 15 August 2022

1 **Question to the Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Bio-Diversity: 2022/13 - Rogerstone Residents' Concerns about the Canal and Local Wildlife**

Councillor Reeks asked:

There is a strong feeling amongst the residents of Rogerstone about the apparent lack of concern by Newport City Council as to the rapidly declining condition of the Mon & Brecon canal within the area. The infrastructure is in a state of disrepair, what little water is entering the canal is draining away, the vegetation is becoming overgrown and overtaking the route of the canal and the wildlife is being forced away from its natural habitats.

Would the Cabinet Member agree with me that this decline is damaging to the local environment, causing distress to the wildlife and blighting the local area and the popular tourist attraction of Fourteen Locks Visitor Centre, and as a council we have a responsibility to protect the environment and ensure the sustainability of it and its inhabitants? Can the Cabinet Member advise of what action they can take to urgently address this situation and restore the canal and the area to a thriving natural environment again?

Councillor Forsey responded:

It has been well documented that low water levels in the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal in Newport are caused by issues outside the city boundaries. We working with partner organisations such as NRW, neighboring councils and the Canal Trust to manage penning levels and water flow through the system.

However, we are restricted by volume available from the higher sections of the system which are experiencing issues. In recent months we undertook a limited amount of channel clearing, but unfortunately it was not sufficient to improve levels due to lack of rainfall. We are aware that water levels are low but at present there are no water sources to divert to this area.

Fortunately, the majority of the fish stock was relocated from this pond to sections where the levels are holding, so there should be limited impact on the aquatic species, but we appreciate that people are concerned about the water fowl and other birds and we will monitor the situation.

The council is seeking funding to undertake de-silting, channel re-lining and other works. Newport has about seven miles of canal within the city and it manages this community asset with very limited resources.

Where possible we have used external resource to tackle issues such as surface maintenance and land management, through the creation of active travel routes along the towpaths, invaluable work is also carried out by the Canal Trust and Countryside Service volunteer groups.

We fully understand the frustrations of local people and will continue to seek funding to improve the canal and keep the community updated of any works that may be undertaken to help alleviate the situation.