

Minutes



Monmouthshire & Brecon Canal Joint Steering Group

Date: 1 February 2018

Time: 10.00 am

Present: Councillors David Mayer (in the Chair), Roger Jeavons (Newport CC), Jackie Charlton (Powys CC) and Stuart Ashley (Torfaen CBC)

Officers: Andrew Stumpf, David Morgan & Nigel Annet (CRT), Richard Dommett, Yvonne Forsey, Bernard Illman & Wyn Mitchell (MBACT), Julian Stedman (BBNP), Kay Francis (Powys CC), Lynne Richards (Newport CC) and Carla Kavanagh (Torfaen CBC)

Apologies: Councillors Sean Morgan & Carl Thomas (Caerphilly CBC), Collette Thomas & Jon Horlor (Torfaen CBC) Richard Roden (Monmouthshire), Nick Worthington (CRT) and Collette Bosley (Monmouthshire)

1 Apologies for Absence

As noted above.

2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Minutes of 31 August 2017 submitted.

Item 3: Implication of Legislative Changes

A Stumpf confirmed that Natural Resources Wales has issued notification of implementation of licenses for previously exempt abstractions. He reminded members of the need for evidence of abstraction of water over a period of 4 years.

Item 6: Memorandum of Understanding

Officers had not yet met regarding a review of the MoU and it would therefore be deferred until the next meeting.

Agreed:

That the minutes of the meeting be were recorded as a true record.

3 Newport Panel Survey

This presentation was made by Councillor Yvonne Forsey who is a trustee of MBACT.

The Newport Survey had been carried out in Autumn 2017 and Cllr Forsey's presentation centred on a set of questions from Rogerstone Community Council. 238 people had completed the survey, the majority being over the age of 55.

Questions posed included:

How often people used the canal

Activities the canal was used for
Level of maintenance of the canal
What opportunities the canal could be used for

Following the presentation a discussion ensued and the following questions and comments were raised by the steering group:

1. 13% of those completing the survey were part of a disabled group.
2. Each quarter a different survey is prepared and distributed to the same panel.
3. On completion of the survey the results are passed back to Newport City Council.
4. This type of survey could be used for schools and also youth councils.
5. K Francis reported that Powys had had success engaging with a Youth Forum and getting them to complete various surveys.
6. Cllr Stedman was keen for the BBNP to engage with local authorities in arranging activities on the canal.
7. A Stumpf confirmed a handbook had been produced by CRT showing wildlife habitats along the canal and it was hoped to launch this at a workshop in the Spring.
8. Cllr Charlton was pleased to report that the volunteer group on the canal was growing and hoped that more disabled people could be encouraged to volunteer.
9. The Chair had recently attended the Assembly Cross Party Group on Waterways. The theme of the meeting was 'people, places and our industrial history' and he had found it particularly interesting.

4 Update on Regional Development Programme Water Management Strategy

A bid had been submitted late 2017 to the Rural Development Programme (RDP) under the sustainable management strand. Whilst the bid had been unsuccessful the feedback from the RDP had been extremely useful.

The feedback RDP requested the following:

1. How the principles of sustainable management of natural resources were used to develop and shape the project
2. Greater and wider collaboration – how, not just what
3. Clear outcomes, physical “initiating” actions on the ground, not just strategy but a practical application of the principles
4. Sight of the bigger picture if the whole canal is opened

The next round of bids is the Spring 2018 when CRT have been invited to re-apply.

5 MBC Regeneration Resource Archive

A Stumpf led on this item. Looking at personnel changes taking place in CRT, MBACT and Local Authorities there is concern that information on the canal might well be lost and CRT are proposing the appointment of a consultant to review existing information regarding the engineering proposals and costs of restoring the canal between Five Locks, Barrack Hill and Cwmcarn including the proposed extension to the River Usk at Crindau. The purpose of the review would be to collate whatever information is available, identify any gaps in existing knowledge and provide a total figure for the full restoration and for each individual element. This figure, together with the review report, would form part of the evidence base for the case of restoration.

CRT were aware of 24 blockages on the canal but realised there could well be more. Information would need to be collated from all partners on the steering group to ensure all capital works and much needed repairs are identified. It was agreed that ideally the information should be collated and stored online, as opposed to hard copies.

This review would involve the consultant meeting with each local authority and other parties. Once all cost information was to hand it would be adjusted to today's prices. This work would take approximately 3 to 4 months and the cost is anticipated to be in the region of £15,000. CRT were looking for confirmation that the staff/volunteer time to service the consultant would be made available and ideally contributions towards the cost from members of the steering group.

Whilst it was agreed to the principle of the study there were a couple of comments.

It was queried whether there were any other funds available to cover the costs of this project.

Cllr Stedman observed that in its present form only the unrestored area of the canal had been identified and suggested that it be extended to cover the whole of the canal thus encouraging more parties to contribute.

The Chair suggested that a formal letter be drafted and sent to all members of the steering group.

Agreed:

That A Stumpf amend the terms of the consultation to include the whole canal in this project and that he draft a letter requesting a contribution that would be distributed via the clerk to all parties of the steering group.

6 **Update on Ty Coch Waterway Park Feasibility Study**

This presentation was made by R Dommert of MBACT

The HLF Waterworks project at Ty Coch, Llantarnam had been completed in September 2017. This project had over 270 volunteers working on it during its restoration. Many of the volunteers had secured accredited NVQ qualification. The total cost of the restoration had amounted to £1,400,000 but this included volunteer time of £325,000.

The Ty Coch Waterway Park Feasibility study is currently in progress and will be going out for community consultation later this month. Suggestions for the site included a farmers market, restaurant, pond and marina, wild life reserve and visitor centre to include reconstruction of a 200 year old saw pit which had been uncovered during the HLF Waterworks project.

Members were also reminded of the positive points of using the new modular lock gates developed with the support of Swansea University. The gates were constructed of steel instead of timber giving them an extended life of over 100 years, as opposed to 25 years for timber ones. The gates were also far easier to install as they could be constructed on site and fitted without the need for a gantry.

Volunteers are also currently engaged clearing vegetation at Pensarn bridge, Allt-yr-yn nature reserve and clearing brick work at Allt-yr-yn bridge.

W Mitchell introduced the final slide in relation to Crindau. He reminded everyone of the precarious position that redevelopment of the Crindau area around a canal marina had been placed due to the protective designation having been removed from the LDP, primarily because of the lack of flood defence. The flood defence was now in place and he was concerned that this would encourage piecemeal applications for inappropriate uses such as warehousing which would hamper a comprehensive quality redevelopment scheme and destroy the setting of any marina.

He had had sight of the recently published consultation draft Newport 'City Centre Masterplan' and was disappointed that the area marked the 'Northern Gateway' stopped

north of the old Sainsbury site when it could well have been extended to the M4 to include a Crindau Regeneration area. The area has enormous potential as it has excellent communications being a few minutes from the M4 and within walking distance of the rail and bus stations and also the city centre shopping area.

In his view several things needed to happen urgently:

1. The Council should ask it's officers to revive plans for the redevelopment of the Crindau area and include the proposal in the LDP and Supplementary Planning Guidance as soon as possible.
2. That officer time and resources need to be allocated to developing and promoting the scheme, in a similar way that the City Centre retails scheme was managed. A private/public partnership needs to be established.
3. Newport City officers need to meet with officers at the Welsh Government to secure their help and support. Following a report by Newport Taskforce headed by Simon Gibson set up in 2013, the Welsh Government commissioned consultants to investigate the Crindau redevelopment vision. They did this and produced a report which confirmed previous studies that the project has huge potential.
4. An alternative and complementary mooring facility to Crindau, which can be developed easier and quicker is a marina basin at Bettws Lane. This can provide much needed mooring space in the short term and function as a partner basin with Crindau in future. Newport City Council commissioned consulting engineers Atkins to draw up such a scheme in 2006, but it has never been progressed.

7 **Update from Individual Authorities**

Newport City Council

NCC will be delivering a new three and half mile stretch of cycleway along the Monmouthshire Brecon Canal using the new Active Travel grant .

NCC led on an Ambassador programme using external grant involving the Fourteen Locks and the canal. This was about raising the awareness of the Story of Newport and thus the importance of the canal in that story, linked to the industrial Heritage theme. This is still being delivered through cross referencing of the Friends and Heritage Groups as well as other organisations with their visitor groups.

The Fourteen Locks staff and volunteers make full use of social media and the Council links up with them to resend their messages which is a good to engage with youth and the Canal.

In terms of promotion of the Canal Newport is working with Monmouthshire and Torfaen and Visit Wales to promote the canal via the 'Valleys that Ruled the World' campaign. A new campaign by Visit Wales is called the 'Wales Way' which promotes sites and attractions off the key visitor car routes across Wales. This will include the Canal and Fourteen Locks.

Powys County Council

The recently launched Powys County Council **Vision 2025** announces the Cabinet's mission of 'change for Powys – delivering an open, proactive and engaging council for 2025'.

http://pstatic.powys.gov.uk/fileadmin/Docs/Democracy/Vision_2025_booklet_Final.pdf

The Vision 2025 is made up of 4 priority areas (programmes), which are:

Economy: developing a vibrant economy

Health and Care: leading the way in effective, integrated rural health and care

Learning and Skills: strengthening learning and skills

Residents and Communities: supporting our residents and communities

The Regeneration team will be responsible for the delivery of a large proportion of the projects that fall within the Economy programme. The projects are currently under development with a view to starting in April 2018.

Collaborative working continues between Powys County Council and Ceredigion County Council in the development of a Mid Wales Regional Plan for Targeted Regeneration. Economic regeneration in the area is co-ordinated and promoted through the Growing Mid Wales (GMW) Partnership which is one of the four regional partnerships covering Wales. The Mid Wales Regional Plan will provide the evidence base for future funding applications.

Torfaen CBC

Torfaen had submitted a bid to HLF for the restoration of five locks. Unfortunately, the bid was not approved based on a VFM basis, however, Torfaen have been invited to resubmit. Since the departure of Gareth Jones and the uncertainty as to whether his post will be replaced due to budget pressures, Torfaen are not yet in a position to resubmit.

Torfaen also submitted a bid to RDP to restore Cabin Lock, one of the locks that had to be dropped during the Waterworks project due to funding and timescale issues. RDP have come back with queries, however, due to lack of resources, Torfaen are currently not in a position to progress this any further.

Clr Ashley brought up problems being encountered by the developers of Edlogan Wharf in Sebastopol including a cycle-way being laid on top of glow worms. Officers had been asked to investigate this and he hoped to report back at the next meeting in April.

Brecon Beacons National Park

BBNP are currently reviewing conservation areas across the park, looking to include more areas and also looking at how they can work best with these areas. The 2018 National Park Tourism Conference, a partnership between BBNP and Brecon Beacons Tourism is due to place on 7 February at Llangynidr Village Hall. The conference is tourism focused.

MBACT

R Dommatt confirmed that he had taken over Chairmanship of MBACT from Roger Francis who had now stood down.

MBACT - The Lime Kiln Trail Leaflet will be designed and printed to cover the southern section of canal including the Crumlin Arm and the Trusts Magazine will be published as soon as funds become available.

Glandŵr Cymru/Canal River Trust

A case study (<https://goo.gl/9RnKQZ>) had been written of the work carried out under the Welsh Government's Green Infrastructure Capital Investment Fund. The work comprised repairs to structures including relining of parts of the Mon Brecon canal, delivery of the natural environment prospectus (<https://goo.gl/dJ1czn>), works to improve the resilience of habitats, education visits, skills development and community engagement. CRT's first outcomes measurement report was recently launched which included 14 sites (two in Wales, one of which is picking up the length of Canal in Pontymoile) (<https://goo.gl/wscUWa>). Towpath use will be monitored using machine learning cameras giving a better understanding of who is using the waterways.

CRT's Annual Heritage Review (<https://goo.gl/EAWXnn>) and Annual Review for Wales (<https://goo.gl/b8Uc5o>) was published at the end of 2017.

8 **Any other Business**

Mon Brecon Canal Regeneration Site Visit : All those who had taken part in the site visit on 1 November 2017 agreed that it had been very worthwhile and gave everyone a better

understanding of the regeneration works which had already taken place and the plans for the future. Cllr Ashley suggested that, funds allowing, another site visit be arranged and that the invitation be extended to more members and also members of the Welsh Government so that they could see the opportunities to be gained from regenerating the whole of the Mon Brecon Canal.

Richard Dommatt informed the group that Andrew Stumpf would be retiring from the Canal River Trust in April. He thanked Andrew for the excellent work he had done and also thanked him for his support of MBACT.

The Chair thanked Andrew on behalf of the group. His work as a member of Glandwyr/Canal River Trust was very much appreciated.

9 **Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting is scheduled to take place on Thursday 19 April 2018. The venue is to be advised but will be hosted by Torfaen.

The Chair thanked everyone for attended, especially those who had given presentations.