

Minutes



Monmouthshire & Brecon Canal Joint Steering Group

Date: 20 October 2016

Time: 10.00 am

Present: Councillors J Richards (in the Chair), R Truman, (Newport CC), K James, T Williams (Caerphilly CBC), & S Ashley (Torfaen CBC), R Dommett, R Francis, W Mitchell (MBACT) & D Morgan (Glandŵr Cymru/ Canal River Trust)
G Jones, H Carey (Torfaen CBC), C Bosley (Monmouthshire CC) & J Howells (Newport CC)

Apologies: Councillors D Mayer (Newport), D Edwards (Monmouthshire), A Lewis (Caerphilly), C Thomas (Torfaen) & J Holmes (Powys).
B Illman (MBACT), A Stumpf (GC/CRT)
A Dallimore (Caerphilly), K Francis (Powys) & M Tribbeck (Newport)

As the host Council Councillor J Richards took the Chair and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1 **Agenda Page - Welsh**

2 **Apologies for Absence**

As noted above

3 **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting of 14 April 2016 were submitted.

Agreed:

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

Matters Arising:

Item 2: Matters arising. W Mitchell apologised for not yet having supplied the briefing note regarding Crindau to the Chair.

Item 4: 2016 World Canal Conference (Inverness). R Dommett had attended the conference with R Francis and both had been very impressed with what Scottish Waterways were doing. They engaged successfully with the community and were currently looking at working in a deprived area of Glasgow by pumping water uphill which would create a rainbow effect.

R Francis had been taken on a pre-conference tour and saw that the town of Falkirk and Grangemouth had benefitted immensely from the regeneration of the canal. During the first year following completion of the works approximately 2.5million visitors had visited the area. Because of its obvious success Councils in Scotland had got behind the regeneration in a big way. It was hoped that similar support could be given to the regeneration of the Mon&Brecon canal.

4 **Funding Update**

In previous meetings G Jones had outlined the European funding bid for the M&B Canal Adventure Triangle which was part of a wider bid Visit Wales project across Wales. £2m funding had been approved by WEFO and Visit Wales but £1.5m match funding would be required from Welsh Government (WG). A meeting had taken place recently at Welsh Government but no decision had been made as WG wanted more information on the benefits of the project. Project partners are compiling additional information for the business case and hope to have the match funding request considered by early next year. A lot of projects throughout Wales have been approved with only the canal and one other being subject to more scrutiny. There have been cuts to the WG regeneration budget and therefore there is a need for them to be more stringent.

It is hoped that the 'Overview Strategy', also on today's agenda, will show the Welsh Government of the partnership approach to the regeneration of the canal being progressed between the 5 authorities, MBACT and Canals & River Trust in order that they will buy into the project.

MBACT had been invited to bid for £20k from the South Wales branch of Inland Waterways. They were also applying for small grants to continue with the Waterworks project.

W Mitchell reported that funds had also been forthcoming from Brecon Beacons National Park Authority which would be put towards the refurbishment of the community boat, which hopefully should be in the water by Spring 2017.

5 **Waterworks Volunteer Restoration & Training Project**

This presentation was made by R Dommett and H Carey.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XxKU8DGg0sk>

The Waterworks project, a partnership between Torfaen CBC and MBACT, started in 1999 and involved working with volunteers, the local community, training organisations and local schools. Funding is coming to an end so further funds are now being sought to carry on work. To date 6 locks have been restored, the work has been carried out by over 270 volunteers who have worked over 7000 volunteer days. A lot of the volunteers are young people 'not in education, employment or training' (NEETS) and the experience they receive can be credited towards NVQ qualifications. Over 70% of the volunteers had moved onto a positive outcome following their work at the project.

The project has been runner up in the Education & Learning category of the Living Waterways Awards and had also been finalists in the World Canal Conference Guardian award and Leadership award.

The potential of developing links with the Canal College training project in Scotland are being explored by the project team.

R Dommett advised that an ideal scenario would be for the Mon&Brecon Canal to work in partnership with canals across Europe. A team from Midi Canal, Southern France had participated in one of the Mon Brecon Canalathons resulting in them staging their own Canalathon this year in Toulouse. MBACT hoped it would be possible to twin with them.

The Chair thanked H Carey and R Dommett for the presentation which was well received.

6 **M&B Canal Regeneration Overview Strategy (Consultation Draft)**

G Jones presented this item.

Despite the Memorandum of Understanding being signed by all parties in the Mon Brecon Steering Group no overarching plan or strategy had been drawn up of the work the group hoped to carry out to the canal. He had therefore prepared a draft overview strategy for comment and possibly future adoption by the group.

Welsh Government had requested an overview of the regeneration and he believed that a joint strategy could be used as part of the action plan for regeneration of the canal and would aid any funding bids. The strategy could also be used as a short succinct document to engage various groups and communities if it was made into an A4 glossy document for distribution.

G Jones recognised that whilst the total figure quoted (£85m) was a large one it did refer to the regeneration of the whole canal which could be delivered in a series of work packages over 10 years.

The strategy reflected the fact that the regeneration would be a model of sustainable development embodying the principles of the Well Being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 and would result in creating an iconic visitor destination to bring the best return of investment to Wales. It will deliver cross-cutting outcomes through a collaborative approach contributing to Welsh Government policy and legislation related to employment, tackling deprivation, education and training, health, tourism transport, heritage and environment.

A lengthy discussion ensued including references to Section 106 monies and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). Whilst it was agreed by all parties that a joint strategy would be of benefit to the steering group the decision was taken to bring the item back to the next meeting after the various parties had discussed the document with their relevant departments as there would be costs involved to produce the final copy of the strategy.

Agreed:

That the group record its thanks to G Jones for compiling all the details for a very informative document.

That each authority consider the draft strategy further and the item be brought back to the next meeting.

7 Update from Individual Authorities

I. Caerphilly County Borough Council

Alun Griffiths Contractors Ltd was awarded the contract for Phase 2 Ponywaun lining and aqueduct works. The work would comprise of repairs to the aqueduct which is a listed structure and relining of a section of the canal. Work started on 31 August 2016 and it was hoped that it would be completed by February 2017.

Aqueduct refurbishment to brickwork and masonry is ongoing with areas now rebuilt.

Once this is completed there will be 1.5 kilometres of navigable canal from Darran bridge to Cwmcarn.

The binding layer is now complete and preparation works are ongoing for installation of a mass concrete slab at the invert and adjacent beams for the liner with the section of the canal on Pontywaun Rd. Weed cutting will take place on the lower section in Pontywaun. It is hoped that boats will be back on the canal next Spring.

II. Monmouthshire County Council

No specific works reported. MCC highlighted that Goytre Hall wood which is owned by the authority would soon be closed. Boulders and a barrier system would be installed, the barrier would however still allow the Canals Trust access. MCC have discussed with the Canals Trust the possible take-over of their car park which could offer a strategic loops and links connection for the canal. D Morgan to raise the issue again with Andrew Stumpf.

III. **Newport City Council**

Following completion of the final tranche of works at Fourteen Locks, the Council continues to manage and maintain the Newport stretch of the Mon and Brecon Canal.

The Council's Regeneration team would welcome a meeting with members of the MABCT in order to discuss their concerns around development in the area of the proposed Crindau Marina and identify any ways in which they can assist bringing forward the scheme; however it must be pointed out that the Marina proposal was rejected from Newport's LDP by the Inspector because of the lack of certainty around the development. The Council cannot therefore withhold permission for any other schemes in the area on the grounds that they might prejudice a redevelopment proposal which does not exist.

IV. **MBACT**

Welsh Water had renewed the penstock at Manor Road which had released water into the Newport section of the canal which had dried out over the summer. Caerphilly are now looking at installing their own penstock.

MBACT had taken over the running of the 14 Locks café from Newport City Council and it was proving very successful. They would be looking to Newport City Council for future grants for the 14 Locks Visitor Centre.

V. **Torfaen County Borough Council**

The funding for the Waterworks project will soon end so other avenues of funding are being investigated.

With regard to the Adventure Triangle Torfaen were now looking at developing the programme of works in more detail.

VI. **Canal & River Trust**

The Winter programme of works (spanning November to March) had been compiled.

The canal would be relined between bridges 115 to 116. An Open Day is scheduled for 28 January 2017 when the public would be invited to walk in the bed of the canal.

D Morgan had visited the Lime Kilns at Llangattock where some artists had carried out lime burning. This was a trial run in readiness for another lime burning which would be streamed live direct to Cardiff as part of a contemporary art festival

8 **Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting will take place on Thursday 26 January 2017 which Torfaen agreed to host.

The Chair thanked those present for their attendance and input into the meeting.