

MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of a MEETING of the GRAND WESTERN CANAL JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE held on 6 March 2018 at 7.00 pm

Present:

Cllr R F Radford	Mid Devon District Council
Cllr C R Slade	Devon County Council
Cllr Mrs C A Collis	Mid Devon District Council
Cllr C J Eginton	Mid Devon District Council
Cllr K Browse	Halberton Parish Council
Cllr L Neville	Burlescombe Parish Council
Mrs P Brind	Mid Devon Moorings
Mr P Brind	The Tiverton Canal Company
Mr R Hodgson	Friends of the Grand Western Canal
Mr D Howells	Community Patrol Boat
Mr G Moore	Canal Business Group
Mr A Pilgrim	Holcombe Rogus Parish Council
Miss Jean Hall	Inland Waterways Association
Mr P Saupe	Tiverton Unit Sea Cadets Corps
Mr M Trump	Tiverton and District Angling Club

Officers:

Mr M Baker	Canal Manager, DCC
Mrs R Mills	Rights of Way and Country Parks Manager, DCC
Mr A Jarrett	Director of Finance, Assets and Resources, MDCC
Mrs S Lees	Member Services Officer, MDCC

13 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from the following:

- Councillor Mrs Heather Bainbridge
- Councillor Roger Croad
- Councillor David Cutts
- Councillor Mrs Chris Daw
- Mr Ray Jones
- Councillor Miss Clarissa Slade
- Mr Trevor White
- Councillor Kevin Wilson

14 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no questions from the members of the public present.

15 MINUTES

The minutes from the meeting held on 3 October 2017, having been previously circulated, were approved as a correct record and **SIGNED** by the Chairman.

16 **MATTERS ARISING**

There were no matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting.

17 **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman had no announcements to make.

18 **AI UPDATE FROM THE CHAIRMAN**

The Chairman provided the following update regarding Aggregate Industries:

After a long series of email exchanges a date had finally been arranged next month for a meeting between Aggregate Industries, the Environment Agency (EA) and representatives from the JAC. The EA would be represented by Doug Parker, the local area officer and hopefully a member of their Exeter permitting team. Marcus Francis, the Devon County Council's hydrological consultant from Jacobs would also be attending the meeting. He had recently been tasked with analysing and interpreting a rather complex technical report which AI had commissioned from AMEC and his presence was seen as being very helpful. It was hoped that one of the outcomes of the meeting would be to establish a set of agreed principles and to then follow through with the technical practicalities of an improved water transfer system.

It was stated that there had been a lot of snow and rain recently and that whilst at the moment there was no need for additional water in the Canal that situation could change if there was a dry spring and summer.

On a similar theme the Committee went on to discuss a live planning application to extract an additional 600,000 tons of stone from Rockwell Quarry at Westleigh and the effect that that might have upon the water levels of the canal. Mr Adam Pilgrim had circulated a draft letter of objection to the JAC membership and sought support from the rest of the Committee. He explained that there was local concern about the increased noise, dust and traffic movement on the two roads being that they were very close to Westleigh. It was felt that the water table may be affected by these new workings and the local community were upset at the lack of precautionary measures and procrastination on the part of the quarry owners.

It was expected that the application would be brought to the Development Management Committee at the County Council on 25 April 2018.

It was **AGREED** that the draft letter of objection be submitted on behalf of the JAC to Devon County Council.

Note: Councillor C R Slade wished for his abstention from this decision to be recorded as he was a member of the Development Management Committee at Devon County Council.

19 **PROGRESS REPORT**

Consideration was given to a report * of the Public Rights of Way and Country Parks Manager.

Arising thereon:

Wall moving project

The Canal Manager reported that following the Road safety Audit stage 3 report, the possibility of moving the telegraph pole was now being considered. Unfortunately the best time to have done this work would have been during the period of the works, the cost is now more affordable.

Play area

The ground was currently being left to dry out. Rubber mulch would be laid around the boat next week and the official opening would take place on 11 April.

Canal Basin car park flower bed

The flower bed was currently being redesigned to be a more attractive 'gateway' into the canal. It had been extended much further down with the parking bays being moved over. The wall that was by the gentlemen's toilet had been replaced and there were new litter bins. It was hoped that an agreement could be reached with the Mid Devon District Council's Grounds Maintenance team to maintain this flower bed.

Other works around the Canal Basin

There were plans to replace some picnic benches and to replace a lot of the signs in the car park. There would also be new interpretation panels as the existing ones were quite out of date. Initial drafts of the new panels were shared with members at the meeting. The funding for the majority of these improvements around the Canal basin had come from sources other than the Canal budget.

Tree management works

This winter the tree work undertaken by the Canal Ranger Service has been more proactive in managing trees for the future as well as dealing with present issues. Thinning and formative pruning means that they are well spaced, form a better shape and don't have low overhanging branches. A few trees had had to be felled due to suspected ash dieback. One large Ash near Tidcombe Bridge had its crown reduced rather than felled due to landscape concerns, but in the future where trees affected by this were not so iconic in the landscape, the rangers would have to take the most affordable course of action which will usually be to fell them. There was now a Devon ash dieback forum and a lot of research was being undertaken in this area.

The Canal Manager was thanked for taking this approach as overhanging trees and their roots had proved to be a real concern. Whilst agreeing that this work needed to be done, he pointed out that there had been some complaints from members of the public about the extent of tree works in recent years.

Ivy growth had become prolific on a number of large trees and whilst it did not damage healthy trees it could add to the 'sail effect' of large trees when it began to extend throughout the crown, making them more prone to being blown over in storms. Ivy was being severed at ground level when this became the case.

Hedge laying and planting

A lot of work had been undertaken to thicken the hedge and provide better screening of the AD plant at Crownhill. There was a possibility that the operators of the AD plant would be contributing funding for this work.

420 trees would be provided free by the Woodland Trust due to an application made by the Friends of the Grand Western Canal.

Atherton way ditch works

Works were approaching completion. Many tonnes of material had been removed and the channel which has since been lined with a cement impregnated material. The works will reduce the amount of overtopping during bad weather and reduce the flood risk to properties on Atherton Way.

Badgers in Wilcombe embankment

A badger sett with a family of around 5 or 6 badgers had been present in the embankment beside Wilcombe Primary School since around 2009. It was imperative that they did not burrow through and create a leak in the canal. A line of steel bars had been put in in 2011 to try to ease the potential for this to happen. There were plans to engage some ecological consultants to provide further advice.

Green Flag Award / Management Plan

The Canal Manager had made good progress on drafting a new management plan for the Country Park based around Green Flag Award criteria. His intention was to have this completed before the next round of judging took place. JAC members would be sent copies of the draft plan for comment.

Management projects to be progressed

A brief discussion took place regarding the redesign of the interpretation panel and the historical accuracy of some of the information. The Canal Manager stated that he would look into this and make any necessary adjustments.

Fenacre Farm

It was confirmed that the legal issues regarding unauthorised works at Fenacre Farm had still to be resolved but if capital monies became available it would be possible to move towards something more positive.

Weed management

The Canal Manager was thanked by the representative operating the Community Patrol Boat for the work undertaken to remove weed along the canal. The Patrol Boat had recently picked up three baskets of rubbish from the Canal. It was felt that the dog bins were getting blocked up with general rubbish but Mid Devon District Council had refused to provide additional bins.

The Committee wished to thank the Canal Manager and his team for all the work that they did and for such an excellent and positive report. They also wished it to be noted how good the new design of the entrance to the canal now looked.

20 **IMPACT ON THE CANAL OF RECENT PLANNING APPLICATIONS**

This item had been discussed under item 6, 'AI update from the Chairman'.

21 **SUSTRANS MEMBERSHIP**

The Committee had requested at the last meeting that one further attempt be made to contact Sustrans in an effort to revive their interest and seek regular representation at meetings. A role description had been provided to them so that the named representative, who had been unable to attend the previous few meetings could seek alternative representation from amongst his colleagues. Hitherto no response had been received following this latest attempt.

The Committee considered that it was important to encourage leisure cyclists to use the canal, for example those families venturing out for a short cycle on a Sunday afternoon. Sustainable travel was also important to Devon County Council as a policy. However, it was not considered appropriate to encourage sports cyclists as this presented a danger to other users.

It was **AGREED** that Sustrans be written to explaining that they would be removed as a member of the Grand Western Canal Joint Advisory Committee with immediate effect and that an approach be made to Cycle England to see if they would like to attend the next meeting on 2nd October. The Committee would then be able to hear from them, ask questions and afterwards decide whether to invite them to join the JAC.

22 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The following items were raised under this item:

Crownhill Anaerobic Digester

The Chairman confirmed that the liaison group had recently met and the owners had been very forthcoming with information regarding traffic movements, monitoring outputs etc. Another meeting was due to take place in April 2018.

Dogs in the Canal Basin area

It was reported by two local PCSO's that recently there had been some dog attacks on both dogs and humans and Philip Brind reported that fouling had reached an unacceptable level in the picnic area and around the Ducks Ditty. Bylaws in relation to this merely stated that 'dogs needed to be kept under control'. However, the Assistant County Solicitor had advised that Devon County Council as the landowner could decide to exclude dogs from the new play area and Canal Basin and, in accordance with byelaw 23, issue a direction (by notice) to ensure that dogs were kept on leads in the picnic area. This could be done by having the signs made up and installed without the need to do anything else.

Discussion took place regarding irresponsible dog ownership and the fact that the Canal Basin was becoming more and more a place to relax and have a picnic. If signage was provided to state that dogs must be kept on a lead in the Canal Basin area then this could be enforced. It was suggested that Mid Devon District Council be asked to patrol this area more frequently especially in the mornings once the signage had been changed.

It was **AGREED** that the Canal Manager arrange for the signage to be amended to state that all dogs must be kept on a lead in the Canal Basin area.

23 **IDENTIFICATION OF ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING**

The following was requested to be on the agenda for the next meeting in addition to Canal Manager's usual progress report:

- Update on the Community Patrol Boat
- Update on the situation with Aggregate Industries

24 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as being Tuesday 2nd October at 7pm.

Members would be contacted in due course with details about the summer site visit.

(The meeting ended at 8.37 pm)

CHAIRMAN