

MINUTES of a MEETING of the GRAND WESTERN CANAL JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE held on 4 March 2024 at 7.00 pm

JAC Members Present:

Cllr L Cruwys	Mid Devon District Council (Chairman)
Mr P Brind	Tiverton Canal Company
Mrs P Brind	Mid Devon Moorings
Cllr K Browse	Halberton Parish Council
Mr P Burgess	Devon Wildlife Trust
Cllr S Bush	Tiverton Town Council
Cllr G DuChesne	Mid Devon District Council
Mr John Hampshire	Cycling UK
Mr R Hodgson	Friends of the Grand Western Canal
Mr R Jones	Devon Bird Watching and Preservation Society
Cllr J Lock	Mid Devon District Council
Mr Steve Pidgeon	Canal Business Group
Cllr A Pilgrim	Holcombe Rogus Parish Council
Mrs J Pilgrim	Inland Waterways Association
Cllr R Radford	Devon County Council
Mr P Saupe	Tiverton Sea Cadets
Cllr C R Slade	Devon County Council (Vice Chairman)
Cllr S Taylor	Sampford Peverell Parish Council
Mr M Trump	Tiverton and District Angling Club
Cllr G Westcott	Mid Devon District Council
Cllr J Wright	Cabinet Member for the Environment
Cllr L Worrow	Burlescombe Parish Council

Also Present (Cllrs):

Cllr D Broom	Mid Devon District Council
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Officers:-

Mr R Walton	Public Rights of Way and Country Parks Manager, DCC
Mr M Baker	Country Park Manager, DCC
Mr S Densham	Land Management Officer, MDDC (online)
Mrs A Howell	Democratic Services Officer, MDDC

18 **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from:

- Peter Burgess
- Cllr A Davies
- Dion Howell
- Cllr Lance Kennedy
- Trevor White

19 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no public questions.

20 **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes from the meeting held on 3rd October 2023, having been previously circulated, were approved as a correct record.

21 **MATTERS ARISING**

The Chairman informed the Committee that having had a collection for Sarah Lees, the former Committee Clerk, on behalf of the Grand Western Canal JAC he had presented her with some flowers, earrings and a garden voucher as a thank you for her work as Clerk to this Committee. He passed Sarah's thanks onto the Committee for all those that had contributed.

Adam Pilgrim also thanked Angie Howell for organising the collection.

22 **AGGREGATE INDUSTRIES UK LIMITED UPDATE**

Mr Chris Herbert from Aggregate Industries (AI) updated the Committee as follows:-

- Aggregate Industries were currently working on a revised application which would be submitted to the Environment Agency
- Once approved the work would be undertaken in 2025 with an updated water transfer arrangement for the canal.

The Committee explained to Mr Herbert the importance of the amount of water being fed back into the canal and asked if AI had the funds to complete this work. Mr Herbert confirmed that the funds were available and that he appreciated the importance of the water supply to the canal.

The Canal Manager asked for AI and its consultants to liaise with him and the County Council's consultant to ensure that a scheme was developed which gave the greatest benefit in terms of water supply to the canal.

It was also agreed that AI would keep the JAC updated on progress.

23 CANAL PROGRESS REPORT

Committee had before it, and **NOTED**, a report * from the Country Park Manager summarising the work that had taken place on the Canal since the last meeting. A brief discussion took place regarding the following issues:

Lowdwells Culvert

Phase 1 of the works was almost complete. Phase 2 was to focus on improving the culvert under the road to reduce flooding. Designs had been drawn up by the DCC Bridges and Structures engineers and were now awaiting final costings before allocating capital funding to continue the work hopefully in time for summer 2024.

Mr Brind thanked Devon County Council as the culverts were part of the life blood of the canal.

Silt pollution in Sampford Peverell

The Canal Manager explained that measures had been put in place on the site but if high rainfall continued then the settlement ponds would be overcome and silty water would enter the canal. He informed the Committee that the Environment Agency advised that it fell well below Category 2 incident (a point at which they would consider prosecution) and that it was not likely to reach that level.

Mid Devon District Council (MDDC) funding cut

This would be discussed under Agenda Item 8.

Tiverton Canal Co Tourism Award

Mr Brind informed the Committee that the award was in the Best Small Visitor Attraction of the Year category and wished to thank the Committee as the award was due to all the work that everyone contributed in keeping the canal maintained and beautiful.

50th Anniversary of the horse-drawn barge operating on the Canal

Mr Brind explained that an open day would take place on the 13th July where celebrations would be held in the Canal Basin. The Horse Drawn Barge began on 13th July 1974 so it would be exactly 50 years to the day that it had been running. They would not be trading on this day and so visitors would be invited onboard to look at the barge and displays. He invited everyone to come along and enjoy the day.

The Canal Manager explained that a small working group had been progressing plans for the event and also wished to thank Cllr Duchesne for all her support with organising the celebrations.

Sale of the Ducks Ditty floating café-bar

Mr Brind explained that negotiations were still taking place and hoped to update the Committee at the next meeting.

Ash Dieback-related tree works

Annual surveys were undertaken where recommendations would be given to DCC for the relevant work to be carried out. A lot of trees were still having to be removed. DCC Highways were paying for this work.

Memorial tree at Fossend Wharf

Jane Pilgrim passed on her thanks for the care and consideration given to this.

Landslip at Greenway cutting

There had been another small slip since the one mentioned in the report which would be cleared up. For the moment it was manageable with clearing the slips away as and when they happened. They were potentially caused by the bank/hedge trimming tractor cutting into the foot of the cutting which took away some of the support. Unless this was reinstated then small slips would continue. In future the use of a small tractor to cut that part of the canal would be looked into.

New Noticeboards

Two noticeboards would hopefully be installed in March or April though it was not yet agreed where these would be placed as this depended upon the outcome of a funding application for more noticeboards which was pending.

Note: * Report previously circulated.

24 CANAL BUSINESS GROUP REPRESENTATION

The Canal Manager advised the Committee that the Canal Business Group Representative Graham Moore had sadly passed away and that Mr Steve Pidgeon had agreed to take on that role moving forward.

Mr Pidgeon introduced himself and advised the Committee that he had been in touch with various stakeholders and advised of the following concerns that had been passed to him:-

- The muddy colour of the canal water as a result of the silt pollution. The Canal Manager explained that the Environment Agency had confirmed it was not bad enough for them to take action. He hoped it would be resolved once the building work had been completed.

- There were several issues along the towpath between Buckland Bridge and Holbrook Bridge which included pot holes and dog fouling.

The Canal Manager explained that with regard to dog fouling the Rangers were currently dealing with this and that they had also received a large number of complaints. He had reported this to MDDC via their online submission service and was currently awaiting a response. Cllr Wright asked for any witnesses or evidence to be passed to Luke Howard, Environment Enforcement Officer who would be able to give advice. Cllr Wright also advised that a statement could be distributed at the State of District Debate.

Mr Browse asked if posters could be provided to discourage dog fouling. He would email Cllr Wright with details so that this could be taken to Policy Development Groups with a view to helping to budget for this.

25 UPDATE ON FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE GRAND WESTERN CANAL

Cllr A Pilgrim advised the Committee that the contribution from MDDC had decreased this year. He explained that the original arrangements made in 1971 stated that the funding would be shared jointly between MDDC and DCC but that this had now changed to MDDC's contribution being a discretionary grant. He had been making some enquiries with regard to this but could not find any agreement to show that the original arrangement had changed though he would continue to work on this.

Parish Councils had been contacted with the idea that they may be able to help meet the shortfall in funding.

A general discussion took place regarding the shortfall of funding and the effects this would have on the canal and how MDDC should have honoured their agreement.

26 PLANNING ENFORCEMENT UPDATE

Cllr A Pilgrim updated the Committee and advised that he had met with Dean Emery and Richard Marsh, MDDC Officers who were open to the fact that enforcement was an issue at the moment.

The Chairman confirmed that there was currently 1 Enforcement Officer on a temporary contract for 6 months and that an advertisement would go out for a permanent position.

27 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The following was raised:-

- Cllr L Worrow wished to note that despite proposing alternative means of funding for the canal and asking for a wider conversation regarding this, that he was an ally to the Grand Western Canal Joint Advisory Committee and objected to anyone that suggested otherwise.
- Mrs Pilgrim handed out brochures with regard to our waterways and asked the Committee to enjoy reading them.

28 IDENTIFICATION OF ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING

It was requested there be an update on water transfer at the next meeting.

29 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting was agreed as Tuesday 1st October 2024 at 7pm.

(The meeting ended at 21:00)

CHAIRMAN