



MEETING Thursday 5th March at 3pm
 Wichelstowe Project Offices Mill Lane Swindon SN1 7BX

Item	<u>Draft Notes</u>	
	Attending	
JL	John Laverick (President)	
FdRP	Cllr Fleur de Rhe Philippe (Chairman) Wiltshire Council	
KO	Ken Oliver Wiltshire Council Partnership Officer	
RB	Richard Broadhead Wiltshire Council	
JA	John Allan Cotswold Canals Trust	
DL	Dominic Lamb VWHDC	
PH	Paul Harris Oxfordshire CC	
AM	Andrew Matters WBCT	
WS	Cllr William (Bill) Scott Semington PC	
BS	Brian Stovold WBCT	
TW	Tim Wheeldon Inland Waterways Association	
JW	Jonathan Wilshaw Swindon BC	
1	Apologies Cllr Yvonne Constance Oxfordshire CC; Cllr Gary Sumner Swindon BC, Steve Petty Berryfield residents & Melksham Chamber, Mark Evans CRT, Russell Weymouth Swindon BC, Cllr Sue Brown Melksham TC, Mark Evans CRT, Vaughan Welch WWT, Richard Wiltshire Melksham Trust	
2	Notes from the last meeting Thursday 5 th December 2019 (pre-circulated) were Agreed	
3	Chairman's Announcements FdRP welcomed everyone. Colin Goodhind had let us know that he could no longer represent Melksham Community Area Partnership – FdRP thanked him for all his work and hoped that there would be a replacement. Partners were invited to view the completed work at Canalside following the meeting. FdRP thanked the Wichelstowe Joint Venture Company for hosting this meeting.	
4	Partnership Officer Report- M4 Crossing Highways England Designated Fund Application. WBCT Trustees were about to sign off the application which would be submitted the following week. For clarity this application is for a full feasibility/design study and if successful would be followed by a further bid for capital for construction works. KO noted that groundworks had started on the M4 road crossing underbridge project. Melksham Link- planning application. KO was pleased that WS had attended this meeting and apologised that Semington PC had not been invited previously. The planning situation is that Wiltshire Council ecologists have suggested that WBCT use the newly released DeFRA metric to assess the net biodiversity net gain/loss as a quantitative	

	<p>indicator for the scheme. If the scheme showed net gain in all habitats, then it could probably be progressed through planning. WBCT team were working with their ecological consultants to use the metric on the Melksham Link scheme, however one of the emerging issues is that the category areas in the metric are not interchangeable so gains in one habitat cannot offset losses in another habitat. FdRP emphasised that Wiltshire Council planners were trying very hard to find an acceptable solution. KO said that current discussions with planners included whether the planning ‘red line’ could be varied to accommodate mitigation works. KO also reported further discussions with newly appointed Canal & River Trust Regional Director Mark Evans. Restoration matters have now been devolved to the regions and it is proposed that as soon as possible a meeting is set up with CRT/WBCT and Melksham Link Ltd to revisit issues around connection fees.</p>	
<p>5</p>	<p>Projects update – Swindon Wichelstowe</p> <p>Canalside – KO invited those at the meeting to visit Canalside afterwards. The next phase at Wichelstowe would involve extending the canal westwards from the lock at East Wichel towards Mill lane. When the JV Company’s 5 year business plan is approved the phasing of the next stages of the canal will be confirmed.</p> <p>East Wichel- canal leak- KO said that the excess winter rainfall had stopped work . When things dried out the whole leak detection plan would be reviewed. It is possible that the 3rd phase of works could be advanced.</p> <p>Swindon New Eastern Villages-</p> <p>The Public Enquiry for CPO of land had been completed with the Inspectors report due at the end of March . JW noted current planning consultation for Foxbridge. PH asked about the continuation of the canal from the NEV into Oxfordshire. KO said that in the main the canal route through the NEV has now been fully designed with the exception of the eastern section where it crosses the River Cole flood plain to go to the new railway crossing at Acorn Bridge. Much work with the Environment Agency will be required to design a suitable alignment . BS also described the current WBCT project to add wildlife habitat at Shrivenham Pocket Park which was currently being funded with a grant from IWA.</p> <p>Pewsham Locks BS reported continuing work on the ‘waiting wall’... Regarding the fatality in 2016 WBCT have just released the following statement;</p> <p><i>“Following the death of our friend Peter Koniitzer in August 2016 there was a lengthy investigation by Wiltshire Police in conjunction with HSE. As you were aware, in September 2019 it was confirmed the matter would now be dealt with solely by HSE, after it was confirmed the CPS found insufficient evidence for an offence of corporate manslaughter. This decision was welcomed by the Trust and we have continued to engage with HSE in relation to their ongoing review of the matter. This month, the Trust has been informed that Mr Konitzer’s family has requested the CPS to review its decision under the Victim’s Right of Review Scheme. This review may take a number of months and we await to hear further. The Trust continues to cooperate with the investigation. If you are contacted about the matter, please direct all queries to Brian Stovold.”</i></p>	

6	<p>Wessex Waterways Restoration Trust. Their Chairman was unwell and will be invited to the next meeting.</p>	
7	<p>Partners Reports and Issues</p> <p>PH asked whether there are any plans to revive the towpath challenge project. KO said that the overall aim is still to reinstate the towpath for the full length of the canal before full restoration. Without a WBCT project manager it was difficult to progress things. BS also described another issue around the status of the right of way leading to the proposed rebuilding of Cornhill bridge near Childrey. A further project that required funding was the land at Stockham near Grove where land was available for restoration. BS offered to contact DL/PH to discuss these projects in more detail. PH said it would be very useful to be able to integrate any plans in the cycling initiatives currently being considered by Oxfordshire CC. AM said the Trust is also working on how to repair the damaged wall at Childrey Wharf. There was a brief discussion about water supply issues noting that CRT are now having to apply for abstraction licences from EA where they had previously been exempt.</p> <p>WS said the Semington PC were very supportive of canals but requested a little more caution if further Melksham Link presentations were made.</p> <p>TW reported that IWA now have new Chairman and CEO – details to follow</p> <p>BS is very keen to strengthen links with Local Authorities on planning issues.</p> <p>JW noted that the Great Western Community Forest project is keen to work with the canal scheme to find suitable planting areas south of the M4.</p> <p>AM noted the continuing popularity of the boat trips from Canalside in Swindon.</p> <p>JA reported good progress on the Highways England funded A38 crossing project. He also noted that CCT are having all electric powered trip boat built.</p> <p>RB reported that work is under way to produce a Green Infrastructure plan for Wiltshire. Initial work by the consultants has acknowledged the importance of canals in this plan. He also said that he was in the process of writing a policy for where trees could be planted on Wiltshire Council land.</p> <p>DL outlined his role within the planning team at VWHDC and that the Local Plan Part 2 protected the route of the canal.</p> <p>FdRP said that in May 2021 there were Council elections and that she would not be standing again so the Partnership should consider what should happen for a replacement Chairman</p> <p>JL said he was pleased to see the Partnership working as it should with collaboration and was particularly please that Oxfordshire and VWDC had been able to attend.</p>	
8	<p>Date and time and location of next meeting : 4th June 2020 at Wichelstowe Project Offices Mill Lane Swindon. It is hope to organise a boat trip on the canal afterwards. Further dates 3rd September, 3rd December</p>	



MEETING Thursday 17th September 2pm
On line via Teams


Item	<u>Draft Notes</u>	
	Attending	
JL	John Laverick (President)	
FdRP	Cllr Fleur de Rhe Philippe (retiring Chairman) Wiltshire Council	
CW	Cllr Chris Williams (Chairman)	
SB	Cllr Sue Brown Melksham TC	
JA	John Allan Cotswold Canals Trust`	
RB	Richard Broadhead Wiltshire Council	
DD	David Dewart Swindon BC	
DL	Dominic Lamb VWHDC	
KO	Ken Oliver Wiltshire Council Partnership	
GO	Gordon Olson WBCT	
SP	Steve Petty Berryfield residents & Melksham Chamber	
WS	Cllr William (Bill) Scott Semington PC (first part of meeting)	
1	Apologies Paul Harris Oxfordshire CC, Cllr Yvonne Constance Oxfordshire CC; Cllr Gary Sumner Swindon BC, Brian Stovold WBCT , Mark Evans CRT, Brian Stovold WBCT, Tim Wheeldon Inland Waterways Association, Stuart Maluare EA, Richard Wiltshire Melksham Trust	
2	Notes from the last meeting Thursday 5 th March 2020 were pre-circulated and will be formally approved at the next meeting.	
3	Chairman's Announcements FdRP announced that this was her last meeting as Chairman and thanked officers and members for all their support over the years . JL on behalf of the project team and partners sincerely thanked Fleur for her work over the years and said that the project could not have advanced without all her hard work. FdRP nominated Cllr Chris Williams as the new Chairman and this was approved by the meeting. CW reiterated the thanks to Fleur gave a short background description noting that he is the Member for Ludgershall and that he is the Portfolio Holder for Military-Civilian Integration, Communications, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, European Structural Investment Fund and Canals.	
4	Partnership Officer Report- M4 Crossing Highways England Designated Fund Application. The proposal for a feasibility study for the M4 canal crossing was due for consideration the following day by the Highways England funding team. Post meeting note. Highways England have deferred a decision seeking further clarification of scheme benefits	

	<p>Melksham Link- planning application. KO reported a further meeting with Canal and River Trust, WBCT and Melksham Link Ltd to discuss first phase of development proposals. A proposal is to be submitted to Canal & River Trust to see if the issue of connection to their network can be agreed with normal fee being allocated to the construction of the Melksham Link. The WBCT Planning application has once again stalled due to no response from the Environment Agency (EA) since February. GO noted that Robert Buckland MP (South Swindon) was intending to hold a meeting at Westminster to try to resolve the ongoing problems with EA.</p>	
5	<p>Projects update – Swindon Wichelstowe . KO introduced David Dewart who has taken over the work previously carried out by Russell Weymouth.</p> <p>Canalside – House building is progressing well and first dwellings are occupied. KO noted that there was an issue with an adjacent landowner who had temporarily closed the canal. Discussions were taking place to try to resolve the problem</p> <p>East Wichel- canal leak- KO said that it appeared that the sections in front of the houses were not leaking so the investigations were now moving westwards</p> <p>Swindon New Eastern Villages- KO outlined the 8000 homes scheme noting that unlike Wichelstowe the canal would not currently be built as part of the scheme infrastructure. During the planning process the aim is to fully integrate the canal design into the development plans so there would be no major issues with subsequent construction. WBCT still believes there would be significant flood defence potential in building the canal as part of the infrastructure</p> <p>Work was about to start on southern connector road and WBCT were about to submit a pre-app for the adjacent canal design.</p> <p>Pewsham Locks GO reported that WBCT are planning to restart work on the top lock.</p>	
6	<p>Partners Reports and Issues</p> <p>SB asked about the current issues surrounding the Melksham Link project . KO responded that the single issue that causes delay is the continuing position of EA wishing to charge for officer time unless they are carrying out their statutory duties as part of the planning process. This is a cumbersome way of dealing with technical issues that could probably be resolved with a meeting of the relevant officers, however WBCT simply does not have sufficient funding to facilitate further meetings beyond the one that held 2 years ago to “finally define all the outstanding issues” (which it did not !). KO noted Wiltshire Council’s reluctance to grant consent while a statutory consultee had an objection.</p> <p>The Melksham link scheme will be delivered by a third-party developer and they are in discussion with any relevant landowners, some of whom are more enthusiast than others.</p> <p>JA reported good progress on the Highways England funded A38 crossing for the Cotswold Canals project which is nearing completion.</p> <p>DL outlined his role within the planning team at VWHDC and that the Local Plan Part 2 protected the route of the canal and that the Council were now looking at the next local plan and was mindful of the canal requirements in any new development</p>	

	<p>GO reported that WBCT finances were stable despite loss of income due restriction of activities during the Covid 19 situation . WBCT is trying to recruit as many members as possible.</p> <p>JL (the meeting was unable to hear Johns final remarks due to technical issues) Subsequently JL said “What participants would have heard was my welcome, as president, of Chris Williams to the Partnership and more particularly my thanks for his agreeing to accept the role of chairman. I said that I look forward to the combination of his military can-do attitude together with Gordon Olson's super charged initiatives at the Trust, which should see restoration move forward 'at pace', to quote a well-used government phrase.”</p>	
<p>8</p>	<p>Date and time and location of next meeting : 3rd December 2pm online Teams meeting</p>	



MEETING Thursday 3rd December 2020 at 2pm
 Online meeting Microsoft Teams

Item	<u>Notes</u>	
	Attending	
JL	John Laverick (President)	
CW	Cllr Chris Williams Wiltshire Council (Chairman)	
GS	Cllr Gary Sumner Swindon BC	
JA	John Allan Cotswold Canals Trust	
RB	Richard Broadhead Wiltshire Council	
DD	David Dewart Swindon BC	
DL	Dominic Lamb VWHDC	
KO	Ken Oliver Wiltshire Council Partnership Officer	
GO	Gordon Olson Wilts & Berks Canal Trust	
SP	Steve Petty Berryfield Residents Association	
WS	Cllr William (Bill) Scott Semington PC	
RW	Richard Wiltshire Melksham Trust	
TW	Tim Wheeldon Inland Waterways Association	
1	Apologies Paul Harris Oxfordshire; CC,Cllr Yvonne Constance Oxfordshire CC; Stuart Malaure *EA ; Leslie Tait (Thames Water) *New catchment co-ordinator to be contacted	
2	Notes from the last meeting 17 th September (pre-circulated) These were approved with an amendment from SB noting the sign off of the Melksham Neighbourhood Plan	
3	Chairman's Announcements To note that the meeting is being recorded	
4	Cotswold Canals – JA gave details of the £8.9m National Lottery Heritage Fund award of funding on the Phase 1b project to connect the Stroudwater Navigation to the Gloucester & Sharpness canal The whole project cost is just over £23m and includes the A38 crossing which has just been completed and is part of the 'missing mile' by the M5, the restoration of which is being funded by Highways England.	
		



Completed A38 crossing

Members of the meeting congratulated Cotswold Canals Trust and Stroud DC team for securing funding for this project.

JA noted that this was the culmination of 7 years work from a team of 15 people and followed an initial rejection requiring more information on the community engagement and other softer elements of the project. A development grant award had been secured 2 years ago which allowed the final bid with all the design details. An award ceremony was held in October and the first funding is expected in spring 2021. To give a sense of scale **JA** noted that the final bid document had an executive summary of 9000 words. **CW** wished to send congratulations on behalf of all members to the CCT/SDC team for this fantastic achievement.

5

Partnership Officer Report-

M4 Crossing Highways England Designated Fund – GO informed the meeting of the £47k funding award made by Highways England for feasibility study for the M4 crossing (having had to resubmit the original higher value bid). It is a significant event for the Wilts & Berks project as it affirms HE partnership working to achieve the M4 crossing. Consultants Stantec are working with the WBCT team and hope to deliver the study in 3-4 months. HE is keen to understand the wider community benefits that would be delivered by the construction of this essential link.

Melksham Link- planning application KO reported that after much effort by the WBCT team the Environment Agency has now responded to the latest proposals indicating a way forward. The ecology issues identified to create net biodiversity gain for the project require some further work by consultants to satisfy Wiltshire Council's ecologist. Progress on both these issues will be discussed in a forthcoming meeting with Mike Wilmott head of planning at Wiltshire Council. **CW** asked to be kept informed about the meeting and would help if possible. **RW** welcomed the progress.

6

Projects update – Swindon Wichelstowe

East Wichel- KO said that work continues with contractors to identify the canal leak by bunding various sections of the canal. This work seemed to indicate a particular section where there is a problem and further work is expected to identify what failure has occurred. **GS** noted that there is strong community support to help maintain the canal (vegetation removal etc).

Landowner issue KO outlined the current problem of a privately owned section of the canal to the north of Canalside Swindon which has

been closed by the landowner .**GO** said that WBCT did not understand the motives behind this action, where all support for the project has been withdrawn. There is a huge impact on WBCT including removal of the use of the maintenance yard and the potential loss of £1000 per month of lost trip boat revenue. **GS** said that Swindon BC legal team are looking to see if there is any right of access to the canal. At the request of WBCT **GS** had met with the landowner whose main interest seemed to be in development. This might be supported by SBC if a suitable scheme is submitted, however the issue of covenants on this private land is not one that could be addressed by the council. SBC have offered to facilitate an alternative site for the work compound. **KO** said that there seemed little else that Partnership might do as he had been part of the team discussing possible solutions with the landowner who has rejected all of the proposals. **CW** wondered what legal challenges would be appropriate. **GS** said that what the SBC legal team were trying to establish. **GO** said that the advice from WBCT solicitors suggested that it would be risky to try to enforce the terms of the licence with the landowner.

Swindon New Eastern Villages- WBCT have submitted a ‘pre app’ for the canal route adjacent to the Southern Connector Road. **GS** noted that the NEV developers currently did not see the advantage of constructing the canal as part of the housing schemes, but SBC were ensuring that the route was protected. **KO** noted that all the developments so far had integrated the full canal design into the plans so there should not be any barriers to construction later.

Pewsham Locks **GO** noted that the design of the accommodation bridge was nearly complete and that a ‘back to work health and safety plan ‘ was also close to completion for top lock

Shrivenham WBCT has received funding from Inland Waterways Association to carry out environmental improvements to the canal side park at Stainswick Lane. Planning work is under way.

7

Partners Reports and Issues

Wessex Waterways Restoration Trust. **KO** reported that another informal approach had been made about joining the Partnership. **KO** had responded that it would be best to wait until WWRT governance issues had been resolved.

SB noted a recent proposal from **RW** to form a Melksham working group to help support the canal project. The Town Council had recently appointed an economic development advisor and it was hoped that he would work with the newly formed group. **CW** said he would support the group when he able to.

TW said he was pleased to see the raft of good news of canal restoration projects being widely publicised and that a number of grants to various projects from IWA had helped. **GO** noted that WBCT had recently set up a new communications team..

KO noted that in talking with the IWA National High Level Panel that IWA Chairman would be pleased to support WBCT in any Parliamentary meeting regarding fees charged by EA. **RW** asked about the support of the local M.P. **GO** said that WBCT had met with Michelle Donelan and she had already written to the EA regional manager.

CW closed the meeting by wishing everyone a happy and peaceful Christmas and New Year

8	Date and time and location of next meeting : Provisional dates for 2021: 4 th March online	
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