



MEETING Thursday 3rd March at 2pm
Online meeting Microsoft Teams

Item	<u>Notes</u>	
	Attending	
JL	John Laverick (President) Acting Chairman for meeting	
DE	Cllr Duncan Enright Oxfordshire CC (part of meeting)	
CG	Cllr Colin Goodhind Melksham Town Council	
MH	Cllr Mark Harris Melksham Without PC	
WS	Cllr William Scott Semington PC (part of meeting)	
JA	John Allan Cotswold Canals Trust	
MHo	Martin Hollis Wilts & Berks Canal Trust	
DL	Dominic Lamb Vale of White Horse DC (part of meeting)	
SM	Sam Meredith Environment Agency	
GO	Gordon Olson Wilts & Berks Canal Trust	
CS	Chris Sims K&A Canal Trust	
KO	Ken Oliver Wiltshire Council (Partnership Officer)	
1	Apologies: Cllr Nabil Najjar Wiltshire Council, Cllr Gary Sumner Swindon BC, Chris Clark Wiltshire Council; Paul Harris Oxfordshire CC;	
2	Notes from the last meeting 2 December 2021 (pre-circulated) were agreed	
3	Chairman's Announcements JL agreed to chair the meeting in the absence of NN. (On behalf of the NN) KO reported that the invitation to Wessex Waterways Restoration Trust to join the Partnership had been temporarily suspended GO noted that the WWRT annual report had been filed at Companies House and Charity Commission	
4	Partnership Officer Report- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • M4 Crossing National Highways Designated Fund GO reported that the bid for the second stage design study is for over £700k is nearly complete and will be submitted imminently. The work so far has been carried out by the WBCT team and consultants following on from the initial feasibility study (£41k funded by NH). JA asked what the £700k would be used for. GO confirmed this would be a completed design to go to tender. KO asked if WBCT could consider making the stage one work publicly available. GO said he would investigate . • Melksham Link- planning application- update KO said that WBCT had now submitted to the planning team the latest responses to EA issues. SM confirmed that the response had been received and was being 	GO

	<p>processed and reviewed. MHo noted that this is a key project and wondered if there was a timescale for delivery. KO said that determination of the WBCT planning application is the main obstacle to progress. The follow up to a successful consent will be dependent on WBCT masterplanning partners – the earliest likely element will be a marina. GO said that the WBCT partner Melksham Link Ltd had recently made offers for all the land required. The developer has indicated that they would consider using and Transport & Works Act order in the event if this process not being successful. CG said that the scheme is dependent on the construction of 900 houses and that understandably this aspect is causing local concern. He is conscious that Parish & Town Councils have not commented on the funding aspect of the scheme and he was therefore keen to combine with other councils to look at this aspect of the scheme. GO asked that there should be some dialogue that included WBCT. CG was eager to make a more proactive response as the scheme was generally viewed as a once in a lifetime opportunity. MH was in favour of the idea and said that previously it had been proposed that a Partnership Group was set up to specifically deal with the Melksham Link CG wanted to include Semington and Lacock PC's. GO added WBCT support. WS also confirmed support of Semington PC. KO noted that Lacock are not currently members of the Partnership but could be invited to join. MHo said that as a newly appointed Trustee of WBCT he was keen to understand what is required to progress the project. JL said that as previously noted the issue is with lack of progress on the planning application and that Wiltshire Council seemed not to be willing to lead on this issue and that recently there appeared to be an issue with the retiring Head of Planning not handing the case properly to his successor. CG reiterated the high level of local support. JL said that there seemed to be a consensus that a Lacock PC should be invited to join and asked KO to action.</p> <p><i>[At this point JL welcomed Cllr Enright who had just joined the meeting- the members introduced themselves. Dominic Lamb also joined at this point]</i></p>	KO
5	<p>Projects update –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Swindon Wichelstowe <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ East Wichel- canal leak <p>KO reported that the contractor continued to monitor the levels in the bunded sections of the canal. One major issue has been resolved and a leak in further section has yet to be diagnosed.</p> <p>Images of East Wichel canal with bunds:</p>	



- Landowner issue-

GO reported that WBCT were in written communication via solicitors as they had received an offer to allow the boat to run this year

- **Swindon New Eastern Villages-**

KO reported that the planning applications for the site continue to be assessed. It was hoped that there may be an opportunity to work with the new developer at Lotmead to assess whether it would be possible to construct the canal at the same time as the 2000 houses.

- **Pewsham**

GO reported that Wiltshire Council had granted a lease for an 8 acre site at Reybridge. This will add 500m of canal to the existing section at Pewsham

- **IWA National Policy Panel – proposal for a Canal restoration Fund**

KO said that plans to ask Government to replicate the fund set up for railway restoration were progressing. There were still some uncertainties about how this would be presented but it would likely be as part of the levelling up agenda.

- **Questions and other Partner updates**

KO on behalf of WBCT reminder Oxfordshire members of the briefing meeting on 23rd March

KO outlined the current consultation by Water Resources South East – details would sent separately after the meeting. **JA** asked that members consider supporting the restoration of the Cotswold Canals as part of the water transfer proposal between the Rivers Severn & Thames.

KO

6

Partners Reports and Issues

- **Proposal to form M.P.s group for the Wilts & Berks project**

KO reported that the meeting proposed for February had been postponed and it was now intended to reschedule for the summer **GO** offered to contact the 5 MPs who were (or has been invited to be) Vice Presidents of WBCT to try to enlist their support.

GO

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cotswold Canals –update <p>JA advised that the project to create a new under bridge for the railway crossing at the Ocean had been completed on time over the Christmas break.</p> <p>CG asked whether it was possible to share contact details of interested parties regarding the Melksham Link.</p> <p>JL asked if the previously agreed action of monthly updates about the partnership could be revived. KO noted that there was a detailed Partnership report that was submitted monthly to WBCT and an edited version of this could serve this purpose- some careful consideration should be given to the format of the report to avoid the need to duplicate report writing. KO suggested it might be appropriate for an online platform for the report with notification to members when an update had been made.</p> <p>JA widened the discussion to consideration of what the Partnership is for. He concluded that based on the Cotswold model it should be a forum where organisations (particularly community based like Parish Councils) could meet to help unlock issues that prevented progress. He added that it was important that the Unitary County and District Councils were involved at the highest level. JL said his view was that the Partnership should be made up of organisations that were in a position to facilitate restoration projects particularly for the Canal Trust . GO thought that there should be more defined actions from Partnership meetings. JL observed that a Partnership allowed members to be not so closely involved as having to be a signed up member of the Trust</p> <p>GO suggested that perhaps a review should be scheduled to consider this further.</p> <p>A further general discussion looked at possible options.</p> <p>KO noted the geographic disconnection of the 70 mile long project but noted that the Partnership was a forum to consider all aspects of the scheme. The earlier discussion of specifically targeted Partnership groups could perhaps provide element that could create local engagement.</p> <p>JL suggested that this subject is headlined as an agenda item for the next meeting - Future Purpose of the Partnership It was agreed that JL would be pleased to receive ideas of the intervening period</p> <p>KO asked also whether in this review consideration might be given to a rotating Partnership Chairman between the Local Authorities.</p> <p>KO thanked JL for chairing the meeting</p>	<p>KO</p> <p>JL</p>
7	<p>Date and time and location of next meeting: 2pm Thursday 9th June 2022- hybrid meeting Wiltshire Council Offices Monkton Park Chippenham and online</p>	



MEETING Thursday 9th June at 2pm
At Wiltshire Council Offices Committee Room D
Monkton Park Chippenham SN15 1ER
 Or Online meeting Microsoft Teams

Item	<u>Notes</u>	
	Attending	
JL	John Laverick (President)	
NN	Cllr Nabil Najjar Wiltshire Council (Chairman)	
GE	Cllr Graham Ellis (Melksham Town Council)	
CG	Cllr Colin Goodhind Melksham Town Council	
MH	Cllr Mark Harris Melksham Without PC	
GS	Cllr Gary Sumner Swindon BC	
CC	Chris Clark Wiltshire Council	
MHo	Martin Hollis Wilts & Berks Canal Trust	
GO	Gordon Olson Wilts & Berks Canal Trust	
SP	Steve Petty Berryfield Residents	
KO	Ken Oliver Wiltshire Council (Partnership Officer)	
TW	Tim Wheeldon IWA	
1	Apologies: Cllr Duncan Enright Oxfordshire CC, John Allan Cotswold Canals Trust	
2	Notes from the last meeting 3rd March 2022 (pre-circulated) were agreed	
3	Chairman's Announcements Dominic Lamb Vale of White Horse DC is changing roles and will be replaced by Matt Gulliford from the next meeting. Sam Meredith has left the Environment Agency and we are waiting to hear about a replacement. NN noted the conversation at the previous meeting regarding the future of the Partnership. NN suggested that rather than an open-ended general debate at this meeting, he asked that all Partners contacted him (and KO) by email with suggestions and ideas so that some proposals could be drafted and pre circulated before the next meeting in September for discussion then. NN also apologised for the sub standard quality of sound and vision for the hybrid meeting due to IT issues that we are unable to resolve in time for the meeting	
4	Partnership Officer Report- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • M4 Crossing National Highways Designated Fund – further funding application GO reported that WBCT submitted the Phase 1 report to National Highways in April and has been very well received with the senior	KO

reviewing officer recommending that WBCT proceed with Phase 2 (bid for £900k for full design study). This funding application will be considered at the end of June by the NH Investment panel. WBCT are hopeful that the bid fulfils the criteria for investment and the stage 1 finding that for every £1 invested would generate £1.79 in economic benefits in the surrounding areas (Swindon and Royal Wootton Bassett). **GO** noted that as the largest technical issue to be resolved he was pleased with the way that WBCT had tackled the issue with National Highways giving the best chance of success.

- **Melksham Link- planning application- update**

NN noted the relentless challenge to WC to encourage more active participation in obtaining consent for the planning application . In response **NN** & **KO** had provided briefing papers for cabinet member Cllr Nick Botterill. **NN** had asked for a clear direction of what the Authority's commitment is to delivering the scheme as soon as possible and had been assured that this would happen, however it may require a further paper to Cabinet and it is firmly on the Leader's and Cabinet Member's agenda. **NN** noted that it was now outside his direct control, but both are aware of the imperative and time pressure and he is confident that there would be some action shortly. **JL** noted that as yet he had not had a reply to his email to Cllr Clewer and added that this week is the 10th anniversary of the planning application being submitted. **NN** thanked **JL** for the clarity of the briefing provided, which was very helpful for his understanding, being relatively new to the role. **NN** had personally spoken Cllrs Clewer and Botterill and to the new Corporate Director of Place. **KO** added that he recently met with Parvis Kansari (Corporate Director of Place) and Kenny Green (Planning Team Leader and Case Officer). The continuing issues with EA objections and questions being answered only to provoke new ones was identified as one of the stumbling blocks to progress. Kenny was asked to find contact names of EA officers who are working on other Wiltshire Council led projects to see if they might be able to assist. The other point to note is that we would find it very difficult to override EA objections as they have special status as a statutory consultee. **NN** added that he hoped that it is of some comfort to the project that the right people are now engaged in looking at what might be possible

CG Asked about protection of the route and the enabling development proposals. Both Melksham TC and Melksham Without PC support the canal through the Neighbourhood Plan and are keen to set up dialogue about enabling development as it is widely felt that 900 houses would be excessive. The Councils would like a dialogue with the Melksham Link project team to try to come up with an enabling scheme that is acceptable to the local community. **NN** asked if there had been any community surveys- **CG** said that there had been a survey but not for some years. **SP** said that the proposed masterplans had been made available to the community for a number of years – there had been a specific Berryfield survey confirming that those responding still wanted the canal to go through the community. **CG** wanted this dialogue to be started to avoid misconceptions about the project. **SP** said that it would be good to come to some conclusion on this as already 350 houses had been built without any significant contribution to the canal. **KO** said that the two issues raised should be considered separately. The route protection is currently done via

the Council's Core Strategy Policy 53 &16. The somewhat delayed Local Plan review will need to address how to continue with both policies, if possible, strengthening them to add some support for restoration rather than just route protection alone. In response to the need for further communication **KO** agreed with **CG** the enabling masterplan sometimes confused the situation as it has varied the route depending on landowner cooperation – for clarity the current planning application is seeking permission for the original route- the enabling development proposals will need to rely on the merits of any submitted scheme which may be at variance with this application. **KO** emphasised the required next step for the project is approval of the current application

MHo noted his concerns as a Trustee of WBCT of the 'going round in circles' process with the EA in the planning system, and also wondered in view of the time it was taken to progress the Melksham Link whether there are any lessons learnt from the planning process at Swindon for instance to speed things up. **NN** said that learning was always possible, but he was not sure whether now was a time for such a debrief when there was some apparent progress to move things forward. If things change and the application has to be resubmitted, then it might be appropriate. **NN** further said that he had heard very clearly the concerns and will do his best to feed them through the system and come back with some answers which will be positive and constructive soon.

6

Projects update –

- **Swindon Wichelstowe**
 - **Canalside**

KO said that plans are being submitted for the next phase of housing and shortly planning consent for the next section of the canal will be discussed with WBCT.

- **East Wichel- canal leak**

KO reported that further investigation has revealed offside bank leakage in some areas. A plan is being drawn up to make the affected sections watertight with an aim to complete by the end of the year. **GS** noted that it is important that this is resolved as the next sections of the canal to connect to it are due to be constructed in the near future.

- **Landowner issue**

GO said that the canal remains closed to boating traffic north of Canalside but there is a prospect of a licence agreement **GS** said that SBC had made some proposals to the landowner which may help resolve the situation and that because of its amenity value it was desirable that the canal is reopened before the summer.

- **Swindon New Eastern Villages-**

KO said that the new road (Southern Connector) is now under construction with the intention that the canal is built on a route alongside it subject to resolution of some outstanding technical issues. **GS** said it would be helpful to understand the practicalities of the next steps for the canal planning consent bearing in mind the potential survey costs. **GO** said that the project is planning for a £700k allocation of funds for this work which needed to be raised to enable progress. **GS** said that a number of promoters of the different parcels of land were now advancing delivery of the schemes and are seeking to maximise land values. **KO** noted that the project had engaged with the planning process and had sought to include allocation of land to enable future construction of the canal and that the

	<p>project was relying on the resilience of the planning process and the Local Authority to avoid situations that had occurred previously where insufficient land had been set aside to construct the canal. GO said the local WBCT team were continually monitoring the situation to ensure this did not happen. SP asked how many houses were planned- GS said it was likely to over 9000.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pewsham Land transfer/lease GO said that 550 metres of the canal had been transferred by way of lease from Wiltshire Council at Naish Hill near Lacock and WBCT is very grateful for this. Survey work has started to put together a plan for canal clearance that conforms to environmental requirements. KO commented that both Swindon BC and Wiltshire Council have resolved to transfer land in their ownership where it is required for projects to restore the waterway 	
7	<p>Partners Reports and Issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposal to form M.P.s group for the Wilts & Berks project NN said the previous attempt to host an online event had resulted in response from only one of the MPs and therefore we were attempting to tackle this in a slightly different way with a planned date for early October . It would be probably more effective if WBCT could help using any existing communication channels. GO said that they already have contacts with Michelle Donelan, James Gray, David Johnson and Robert Buckland and would be pleased to help in any way they can. KO and GO will work in a plan to contact the MPs in the most effective way possible. NN said it would be helpful to have an agreed objective with partners as alongside briefing and information sharing there is an opportunity to be more creative and perhaps consider an all-party Parliamentary group for the Wilts & Berks Canal – this approach seemed to receive a favourable response from the North Wessex Downs AONB MP’s. GO queried whether ministers could be part of all party groups- NN said he would check but his understanding was that they could be affiliated but not ‘officers’. KO noted that the IWA already worked with a national Parliamentary Waterways Group chaired by Michael Fabricant MP and it might be possible for a sub group to be set up for the Wilts & Berks. Cotswold Canals –update John Allan submitted the following written report The Phase 1B restoration between Stonehouse and Saul is progressing well, with the most notable item being the formal opening of the new railway bridge at Stonehouse by the Chairman of Network Rail and the bridge is now officially “Ocean Jubilee Bridge” named as such in honour of the Queen’s 70th. AoB MHo said with pre-empting further future discussion he felt that MPs would be more inclined to engage with a vibrant Partnership where all the Local Authorities were actively engaged . The example of Stroud DC on the Cotswold project was an example of such active engagement. NN agreed that this was a desirable aim for local authorities at every level and statutory organisations to be actively engaged . There was a lot of good 	

	<p>news at today's meeting and that aim is not as far away as everyone might think. Progress in Swindon and the Pewsham land transfer were two examples and when things like the Melksham Link are resolved the 'acrimony' will be taken out of the process and there will be a more positive way forward. NN said that as Chair this is certainly his ambition and he hoped that it was shared by Partners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was a further brief discussion about the desirability of further communication between Melksham Link Ltd and the local community 	
<p>8</p>	<p>Date and time and location of next meeting: There was a brief discussion on location of future meetings and whether they should be hybrid or online only. NN asked if partners could let him know their preference along with other thoughts on the future of the Partnership. CG wondered if there was any flexibility to allow key members to be able to attend- KO said that the meeting dates were set 3 months in advance and future ones could also be included JL asked if proposed agendas could be sent out further in advance to allow partner additions</p> <p>It is proposed to change from date announced at the meeting to Thursday 8th September 2022 2pm at Monkton Park Chippenham Future dates : Thursday 8th December 2022</p>	



MEETING Thursday 6th October 2pm
Online meeting via Microsoft Teams

Item	<u>Notes</u>	
	Attending	
JL	John Laverick (President)	
NN	Cllr Nabil Najjar Wiltshire Council (Chairman)	
GE	Cllr Graham Ellis (Melksham Town Council)	
MH	Cllr Mark Harris Melksham Without PC	
BS	Cllr Bill Scott Semington PC	
JA	John Allan Cotswold CC	
IE	Izzy Edwards Environment Agency	
MHo	Martin Hollis Wilts & Berks Canal Trust	
PH	Paul Harris Oxfordshire CC	
DM	Dick Millard Sustrans	
GO	Gordon Olson Wilts & Berks Canal Trust	
KO	Ken Oliver Wiltshire Council (Partnership Officer)	
RS	Richard Shackleton WBCT	
TW	Tim Wheeldon IWA	
1	Apologies Cllr Colin Goodhind Melksham Town Council; Cllr Gary Sumner Swindon BC; Chris Clark Wiltshire Council; Steve Petty Berryfield Residents, Cllr Duncan Enright OCC	
2	Notes from the last meeting 9th June 2022 (pre-circulated) were approved Introductions IE was introduced as new Upper Thames Catchment coordinator for Environment Agency	
3	Chairman's Announcements NN noted that the meeting was being recorded to aid accuracy of note taking	
4	Future Purpose of the Partnership Proposals received and proposed actions NN said that there had been 3 submissions following discussion at the June meeting. He intended to summarise the anonymised proposals and discuss the way forward for those proposals that could be accommodated. Several asked about a renewed commitment from Wiltshire Council to the Partnership and specific projects . NN said that the Leader of the Council Richard Clewer, Cabinet Member for Planning Nick Boterrill, Parvis Khansari – Corporate Director Place, Nic Thomas -Chief Planning Officer & Sarah Valdus-Assistant Director Environment and myself met the Melksham Link project team (John Laverick, Paul Lenaerts, Ian Briton) NN said that following this useful presentation KO had a further update . KO said that he had had a follow up meeting with Parvis to understand	

how we could progress matters. **KO** said that he was instructed to continue the works of being the focus within the Authority to liaise with other officers. He said that there had been a discussion about whether the wording or the Core Policy 53 could be strengthened to reflect support to deliver the project. Parvis thought that as the Local Plan (Core Strategy) was principally about land allocation this might be difficult- **KO** would have further discussions with Spatial Planning colleagues to see what might be possible. **KO** also reported that there is intended to be a Melksham officer group set up by the Economic Development team which he hoped to join. **KO** hoped that this demonstrated Wiltshire Council's continuing commitment to the project. **KO** further added that it might be prudent for WBCT to consider an alternative funding strategy other than the single source funding from development to give the deliverability of the Melksham Link scheme more credibility. **JL** asked if there could be more clarity about the difficulty of the Council supporting the scheme. **KO** said that he needed to refer to spatial planning colleagues but what he said reflected the nervousness of Parvis to the Council being able to provide anything other than land allocation (i.e. route protection) in the forthcoming Local Plan revision. **MHo** was concerned in the context of the canal restoration spanning three Local Authority areas that if commitment could not be assured by all of them then the project was at risk. **NN** said that there were two issues – support for the Partnership and support for specific projects. There should be no doubt that Wiltshire Council is fully committed to the Partnership and continues to fund officer resources and will be augmenting this with other help like engagement with Area Boards . In terms of support for specific projects then the Authority is constrained by local and national policy and rules. The recent Melksham Link meeting of senior officers and councillors went a long way to increase awareness and understanding of the project. The challenge will be in supporting the level of housing envisaged via the Local Plan process. There appears to be general support for the canal part of the proposal but how it might be funded is a separate piece of work. In reality if third party funding (like the National Lottery) was available it would be a much easier to get engagement. The full attendance of senior officers and Councillors was a demonstration of the general commitment to the Partnership

NN said that one of suggestions submitted was closer working with Council's Area Boards. He said he would be pleased to facilitate this and provide a Councillor's briefing as it had worked well with a good attendance and better engagement with the AONB's.

[Post meeting note : For the canal route this would be Royal Wootton Bassett; Calne; Chippenham; Corsham; Melksham Area Boards]

GO confirmed that WBCT trustees had been looking closely at the funding model for the Melksham Link and following an audit would look at whether there could be alternative funding models.

NN noted that via the planning system the Authority had agreed to work closer with the Environment Agency to find resolutions to outstanding issues. **MHo** asked if a meeting with EA had been arranged. **IE** said that she was not aware if this issue but would be happy to take it back to her team.

KO confirmed there was a meeting scheduled for 10th November.

NN said that he wanted to move on to the structural recommendations for the Partnership :

KO
KO

GO

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further engagement with the wider Council network and Area Boards. NN said this would be actioned as soon as possible but this would be in the New Year as December agendas would already be set • Frequency of Partnership meetings – suggestions ranged from the status quo to monthly .NN asked for any reaction from the meeting. GO said that he would favour there being a ‘working part’ of the Partnership that met for regularly and executed action items. NN said that by observation political colleagues from other authorities struggled to attend even 3 monthly meetings. He said that setting up monthly working groups could be a good compromise. MHo said he would support this proposal where other Partners and perhaps WBCT engineers for instance could be invited to attend where they had specific input. Action: Partnership meetings to be retained quarterly and KO/NN to work out how the working groups could be set up • Levels of funding for a full time officer- NN said that Wiltshire Council’s funding is already strained and the Authority is not in a position to contribute any further. He asked if Partners were able to suggest alternative funding sources. MHo noted that although the project officer work is very useful it is only one day a week as KO has other functions within the Wiltshire Council. This work is effectively funded by a WBCT annual contribution. MHo said that by observation other canal restorations like the Cotswold project fund four officer posts, and it is therefore difficult to see how progress can be made without such additional resource. KO noted that historically the post had been also funded by Swindon BC, Vale of White Horse DC, Canal & River Trust and other Partners from time to time. Over the years these funds have been cut as priorities have been re- assessed. KO also noted that such funding and resourcing from Local Authorities is much easier when, like the Cotswold project, substantial Lottery or other funding is in place. When the Wilts & Berks is in a similar position then it is very likely that the relevant Local Authority would reconsider what resource it could make available. GO noted that the WBCT volunteers recorded 32000 hours of work on the project equating to something like £620kp.a. He said that in view of this he would like to see some re-alignment of what the Partnership is doing to Wiltshire’s green-blue infrastructure policy. To run the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust efficiently a paid CEO is required and WBCT is seeking funding from all three Local Authorities to make this happen. JL said that the key to obtaining funding for the Melksham Link is a determination of the planning application which left Wiltshire Council as the organisation which could make progress happen. NN said that when the application is determined it might be more appropriate then to return to the issue of funding. JL said that he hoped that the IWA Waterways for Today document circulated for this meeting could be made available to the senior members and officers at the recent Melksham link meeting. 	<p>NN</p> <p>NN/KO</p> <p>KO</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rotation of Chair between Local Authorities NN said that as host Authority for this role with associated financial commitments Wiltshire Council would not be able to support this idea unless the other Authorities would also take on the hosting responsibilities. 	
5	<p>Partnership Officer Report-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • M4 Crossing National Highways Designated Fund – further funding application : MHo reported that WBCT are still waiting on a decision from National Highways • Melksham Link- all matters were covered under Item 4 • IWA Report Waterways for Today (pre- circulated)-KO asked that members circulated this document within their own organisations. MHo suggested that pages 12 44/45 were ‘must read’ sections. DM noted that there was much emphasis on the use of the towpath particularly for cycling and how beneficial this had been to connect communities. JA noted that from earlier discussions at the Cotswold Canals Partnership this document crystallises they many community benefits of restoration 	ALL
6	<p>Projects update –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Swindon Wichelstowe <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Canalside- KO noted that there was now rapid building progress on site. The next phase of build will include the linking section of canal from East Wichel and WBCT are currently commenting on designs before they are submitted to planning ▪ East Wichel- canal leak- contracts believe they are close to completion of repairs to the leaking sections of the canal. KO also noted early-stage discussions with Thames Water on the concept of using the redundant reservoir at Wroughton for canal water storage. ▪ Landowner issue- no further update and a section of the canal north of canalside remains closed. • Swindon New Eastern Villages- KO reported that the WBCT team continue to liaise with developers. The canal project should be cognisant of the delays being caused to the Southern Connector Road due to continuing archaeological finds during construction • Questions and other Partner updates MHo asked at what point would a Local Authority consider Compulsory Purchase for a section of canal where there was an uncooperative landowner. KO said the only example so far on the Wilts & Berks had been the Cricklade Country Way where North Wilts DC resolved to take CPO powers in the event of a successful capital bid. KO also noted that it was not just the LA that could apply for CPO powers as WBCT could achieve this with a successful Transport & Works Act Order. MHo also asked about how Chaddington Lane bridge project could be moved on regarding technical specification KO said that Chris Clark(his manager) is going to set up a further meeting with Wiltshire Council colleagues provided that there is an opportunity for compromise on the current required construction design. MHo thought that this was the kind of issue where perhaps the 	

	<p>Partnership might be able to influence and support</p> <p>MHo asked about the access to Pewsham Locks KO said it might be useful for a separate discussion about this issue- currently access is by foot or cycle via the cycleway from Pewsham Way. There is currently no public car access. This may change when/if the new southern bypass is constructed – there are active discussion between Wiltshire Council project team and WBCT about this issue.</p>	KO/MHo
7	<p>Partners Reports and Issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposal to form M.P.s group for the Wilts & Berks project- IWA has offered to make their Waterways for today presentation available . – A new date has yet to be confirmed. • Cotswold Canals –JA said that Phase 1b is progressing a bit more slowly than anticipated and that is providing a new set of challenges against a background of rising costs. At the eastern end Inglesham Lock was formally opened in the summer . JA noted that CCT had just acquired a mobile bookshop and they hoped to repeat the financial success of the static shops at the western end. 	KO
8	<p>Date and time and location of next meeting: 2pm Thursday 1st December 2022- Monkton Park/Online via Teams</p>	



MEETING Thursday 1st December 2pm 2022

This was a hybrid meeting -in person at Wiltshire Council Offices Monkton Park Chippenham SN15 1ER – Committee Room D or online meeting via Microsoft Teams

Item	<u>Notes</u>	
NN GE DE CG MH JA CC MHo DM KO PS TW	<p style="text-align: center;">Attending</p> <p>Cllr Nabil Najjar Wiltshire Council (Chairman) Cllr Graham Ellis Melksham Town Council Cllr Duncan Enright Oxfordshire CC Cllr Colin Goodhind Melksham Town Council Cllr Mark Harris Melksham Without PC John Allan Cotswold CC Chris Clark Wiltshire Council Martin Hollis Wilts & Berks Canal Trust Dick Millard Sustrans Ken Oliver Wiltshire Council (Partnership Officer) Peter Scatchard Wilts & Berks Canal Trust Tim Wheeldon Inland Waterways Association</p>	
1	<p>Apologies: John Laverick (President), Paul Harris Oxfordshire CC, Cllr Gary Sumner Swindon BC, Cllr Bill Scott Semington PC</p>	
2	<p>Notes from the last meeting 6th October 2022 (pre-circulated) were agreed</p>	
3	<p>Chairman's Announcements Post meeting note Izzy Edwards Environment Agency has said that she will not be attending further meetings as she felt it compromised her position particularly regarding planning issues. Izzy will continue to be a contact point for both catchments. NN noted that the meeting was being recorded to aid note taking</p>	
4	<p>Action Items – NN noted that he had a useful meeting with MHo, David Redfern and Rhys Schell regarding engagement with Area Boards in Wiltshire. MHo noted that there are 5 Boards along the route of the canal and his initial approach will be to try to raise awareness of what WBCT is trying to achieve. <i>(CG and GE joined the meeting)</i> NN said that he hoped that this would be as successful as a similar initiative from the AONB's. NN said that in terms of actions the second issue was the setting up of project groups which he hoped could be defined by this meeting. MHo thought that perhaps the starting point for the project groups could be fundraising- the Melksham Link and the M4 crossing are of a size way beyond the normal small scale project funding and WBCT would be grateful for a focus on this strategic issue. NN asked if any organisation at the meeting would be able to help with this. There was no</p>	

immediate take up from attendees. **KO** noted that when the time was right for a Melksham group it would be appropriate for Melksham Town Council and Melksham Without Parish Council to be represented with perhaps also Canal & River Trust. **CG** and **MH** agreed. **NN** said that this was probably a good place to start. **KO** noted that a group would be needed for Swindon to Royal Wootton Bassett, and for Eastern projects in the future.

(DE joined the meeting)

MHo said that WBCT is keen to revive interest in the towpath challenge project to create the canal towpath ahead of the full restoration and it would be useful to consider forming a towpath project group. **KO** suggested that could get started again if a WBCT team leader could be found- it is most likely that there would be support for a project like this from all of the Local Authorities, notwithstanding that the most challenging part of the proposal would be to engage with the landowners. **CG** said that a walking/cycling route connecting Melksham to Lacock would be an important addition to the Link scheme. **DM** said he would be keen to join a towpath group to represent cycling interests.

KO reported that he is currently in discussion with Wiltshire Council colleagues in spatial planning regarding strengthening the current Core Strategy Policy 53 (Canals) and that the Local Plan consultations are likely to take place during 2023. **KO** also noted that Swindon BC Local Plan is following a similar timeline.

KO confirmed that he was now part of the Officer Place Group for Melksham.

KO confirmed circulation of the IWA report.

KO said there had been no progress on the MP's group – **NN** said that it may be wise to await the outcome of the Boundary Commission review as significant changes are proposed for constituencies that straddle the canal.

JA echoed that the proposed changes would also affect the Cotswold Canals area too and maybe there should be some consideration of a joint Cotswolds/Wilts & Berks MP's group when the new constituencies are confirmed. **MHo** said he would support this proposal.

KO said the action to discuss Pewsham had been superseded

5

Partnership Officer Report-

- **M4 Crossing National Highways Designated Fund – further funding application**

MHo reported that sadly NH had declined the request for funding at this stage although they remain supportive of the project- the application was for approx. £1m for a full feasibility technical study. The construction costs are likely to be in the order of £15m. **KO** said that having been in at the start of the discussions with Highways England (as it was at the time) he sensed that some of the reluctance may be caused by the construction costs which far exceeded any funding that may be available from NH. Other projects that have received funding have been in the order of £2-3m and it is most likely that NH would take a more positive view if they understood how the funding gap would be resolved. **MHo** said this would be a topic for any fundraising group.

- **Melksham Link- planning application- update**

KO noted the recent meeting of the project team and EA facilitated by the planning case officer. There are ongoing actions by WBCT and the project manager Paul Lenaerts to respond to the outstanding requirements by EA

	<p>and Wiltshire Council's ecologist. There is an opportunity to create some enhanced habitats in the re-profiled river section alongside the requirements for making a navigable channel. The case officer has confirmed that he will convene a further meeting with the EA when revised and amended documents have been submitted.</p> <p>CG noted that the Neighbourhood Plan for Melksham was progressing well. CG also noted that the Town Council is funding an update of the feasibility study for the proposed hydro power scheme. GE added that the Town centre masterplan area has been extended to cover the river and adjacent areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water Resources <p>Wiltshire Council had facilitated a Wilts & Berks workshop to fully discuss strategy on how the restored canal would be supplied with water.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wiltshire Local Plan <p>Covered in item 4 (Actions)</p>	
6	<p>Projects update –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Swindon Wichelstowe <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Canalside <p>KO reported that the planning application is progressing for the next section of canal and hopefully this major construction work will start in the 12- 18 months.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ East Wichel- canal leak <p>KO said that remedial works are just about completed so subject to further monitoring this will allow retention of water in the whole East Wichel section.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Landowner issue <p>KO noted that WBCT continues to try to resolve the situation with the landowner. Swindon BC have suggested a solution which should be beneficial to the landowner and allow the canal to be reopened.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Swindon New Eastern Villages- <p>KO reported that discussions continue as various planning applications are considered and work continues on the Southern Connector Road, however it is worth noting there have been significant archaeological finds and this will also affect the canal route.</p>	
7	<p>Partners Reports and Issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cotswold Canals –update <p>JA reported that the latest consultation for Water Resources South East is now active and asked members if they could as previously consider commenting favourably on the plan to use the restored Thames and Severn Canal for water transfer rather than a pipeline. JA noted that current proposals are for both the Abingdon reservoir and water transfer. PS said that WBCT has always taken a neutral position about the reservoir but would appreciate some certainty on whether it will be built to allow determination of where the restored canal will be located.</p>	
8	<p>Date and time and location of next meeting: 2pm Thursday 2nd March 2023 hybrid meeting at Monkton Park Chippenham. Further dates for 2023: 1st June; 7th Sept; 7th December</p>	