



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>	