



**MEETING Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> 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>	
<b>NN</b> <b>GE</b> <b>DE</b> <b>CG</b> <b>MH</b> <b>JA</b> <b>CC</b> <b>MHo</b> <b>DM</b> <b>KO</b> <b>PS</b> <b>TW</b>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Attending</b></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 &amp; Berks Canal Trust            Dick Millard Sustrans            Ken Oliver Wiltshire Council (Partnership Officer)            Peter Scatchard Wilts &amp; Berks Canal Trust            Tim Wheeldon Inland Waterways Association</p>	
1	<p><b>Apologies:</b> John Laverick (President), Paul Harris Oxfordshire CC, Cllr Gary Sumner Swindon BC, Cllr Bill Scott Semington PC</p>	
2	<p><b>Notes from the last meeting 6<sup>th</sup> October 2022</b> (pre-circulated) were agreed</p>	
3	<p><b>Chairman's Announcements</b>  <b>Post meeting note</b> 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.  <b>NN</b> noted that the meeting was being recorded to aid note taking</p>	
4	<p><b>Action Items – NN</b> noted that he had a useful meeting with MHo, David Redfern and Rhys Schell regarding engagement with Area Boards in Wiltshire. <b>MHo</b> 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>  <b>NN</b> said that he hoped that this would be as successful as a similar initiative from the AONB's. <b>NN</b> 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. <b>MHo</b> 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. <b>NN</b> 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

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**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><b>CG</b> noted that the Neighbourhood Plan for Melksham was progressing well. <b>CG</b> also noted that the Town Council is funding an update of the feasibility study for the proposed hydro power scheme. <b>GE</b> added that the Town centre masterplan area has been extended to cover the river and adjacent areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Water Resources</b></li> </ul> <p>Wiltshire Council had facilitated a Wilts &amp; Berks workshop to fully discuss strategy on how the restored canal would be supplied with water.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Wiltshire Local Plan</b></li> </ul> <p>Covered in item 4 (Actions)</p>	
6	<p><b>Projects update –</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Swindon Wichelstowe</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Canalside</b></li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>KO</b> 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"> <li>▪ <b>East Wichel- canal leak</b></li> </ul> <p><b>KO</b> 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"> <li>▪ <b>Landowner issue</b></li> </ul> <p><b>KO</b> 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"> <li>• <b>Swindon New Eastern Villages-</b></li> </ul> <p><b>KO</b> 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><b>Partners Reports and Issues</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cotswold Canals –update</li> </ul> <p><b>JA</b> 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. <b>JA</b> noted that current proposals are for both the Abingdon reservoir and water transfer. <b>PS</b> 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><b>Date and time and location of next meeting:</b>  2pm Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2023 hybrid meeting at Monkton Park Chippenham.  Further dates for 2023: 1<sup>st</sup> June; 7<sup>th</sup> Sept; 7<sup>th</sup> December</p>	