



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>	