



**MEETING Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> December 2019 at 3pm**  
 Wichelstowe Project Offices Mill Lane Swindon SN1 7BX

Item	<u>Notes</u>	
	<b>Attending</b>	
<b>JL</b>	John Laverick (President) Meeting Chairman	
<b>KO</b>	Ken Oliver Wiltshire Council Partnership Officer	
<b>GS</b>	Cllr Gary Sumner Swindon BC	
<b>JA</b>	John Allen Cotswold Canals Trust	
<b>SP</b>	Steve Petty Berryfield residents & Melksham Chamber	
<b>BS</b>	Brian Stovold WBCT	
<b>RW</b>	Russell Weymouth Swindon BC	
<b>1</b>	<b>Apologies</b> Cllr Yvonne Constance Oxfordshire CC; Cllr Fleur de Rhe Philipe, David Morgan CRT, Chris Brown Oxfordshire CC Richard Broadhead Wiltshire Council Tim Wheeldon IWA' Cllr Richard Wiltshire Melksham Town Council, Domininc Lamb VWHDC	
<b>2</b>	<b>Notes from the last meeting Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> September 2019</b> (pre-circulated) The notes were agreed with one minor amendment. <b>JL</b> noted that the action requested for further updates between meetings had not happened. <b>KO</b> said that had not been appropriate to circulate the information available (monthly report to WBCT) but he would have another look at how this could be used for a Partnership update. <b>JL</b> felt the gap of 3 months between information being given to partners was too long and it was essential if organisations at the eastern end of the project are to be encouraged to actively participate. It would have been useful for instance to note that this venue in Swindon had been secured for the meeting. <b>KO</b> apologised for not having achieved this aim. In response to a further matter arising from the last meeting he also apologised for not having contacted Semington Parish Council and would do so as soon as possible.	<b>KO</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Chairman's Announcements</b> There were none other than apologies from Fleur who was unable to attend. <b>JL</b> expressed his disappointment that 'eastern end' organisations were not represented at the meeting. <b>KO</b> reported that Dominic Lamb had been appointed as the officer contact at Vale of White Horse DC and had been in contact to apologise for non-attendance and hoped to be a future meeting. <b>BS</b> said he would make further efforts in Oxfordshire to generate interest in the project.	
<b>4</b>	<b>Partnership Officer Report-</b> <b><u>M4 Crossing Highways England Designated Fund Application</u></b> <b>KO</b> reported that discussions are continuing between Highways England and WBCT and its consultants. The brief to the consultants is being agreed between all parties and the aim is to submit a first stage funding application for feasibility and design within the next month. The scope of the application has been changed in that HE has now confirmed that they will	

not undertake construction as originally planned. The final brief for the construction phase funding will need to include delivery by a third-party organisation. **KO** said he had informally approached Swindon BC officers to see whether there would be any possibility of Swindon BC taking on this role. **GS** confirmed that finance resource and risk would determine whether SBC could contemplate this. It was agreed that when the first stage had advanced further, it would then be more appropriate to deal with this issue. There was a brief discussion around the delays in delivering a proposed improvement scheme at J15 on the M4 (not directly related to the canal crossing)

#### **Local Plan**

**KO** reported that the Swindon Local Plan review had been presented to SBC Cabinet the previous evening. **GS** noted that the actual process involved a special committee of the Full Council which was meeting that evening and if agreed the Local Plan would go to full public consultation on Dec 17<sup>th</sup>. The previous Partnership meeting had been concerned about the proposed wording of the Canal Policy, particularly as it related to Swindon Town Centre. The Partnership, and some of its members and particularly WBCT had responded to SBC and it would seem that the concerns have been addressed in that the proposed Local Plan includes route protection and a desire to define the route width to 30m where possible. **JL** initiated a brief discussion on the merits of the canal restoration in the urban environment. **GS** noted the particular difficulties around encouraging land owners around the proposed route of the canal to invest in the necessary infrastructure to achieve increased land values in Swindon. The current policy proposals note the contraction of the retail area of the town centre. **GS** thought that in the longer term over 10 years this situation might resolve itself. **GS** added that the investment in the canal in Wichelstowe had probably been more than the normal infrastructure costs but had produced very worthwhile results. When developers are looking at the big picture, as in the New Eastern villages, although the canal corridor is reserved, construction is unlikely due to the likely low return on the investment. **KO** noted the recent positive engagement with the Foxbridge developers in providing a canal design fully integrated into the project (although not going to be constructed).

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#### **Projects update –**

**Melksham Link- planning application.** Following further work after the last Partnership meeting, WBCT are meeting with Wiltshire Council Head of Planning to see how conditions could be written to overcome the EA objections. **KO** further noted that WC had to have a degree of caution as the EA could chose to challenge if its objections were ignored and could get the application called in to the Secretary of State. **KO** also noted that with the restructuring of Canal & River Trust, restoration was being dealt with at a regional level. **KO** had recently met with David Morgan and Rob Eaton to brief them on the project and following the recent appointment of Mark Evans as Regional Director it was hoped that CRT could review how the project is being dealt with.

#### **Swindon Wichelstowe**

**Canalside** **KO** invited members to walk around the recently constructed adjacent areas including the new canal bridge. The whole section is fully operational, and attention was now being focused on the

next phases of design and construction.

**RW** noted the recent discussions with SBC Head of Property regarding long term ownership and management of the canal. **GS** agreed that this is an ideal opportunity to use the existing work of a licence agreement between SBC and WBCT to deal with issues such as boat licencing and mooring and other potential revenue streams. This work should be done ahead of the completion of the first canal-side houses where there would naturally be an expectation of being able to use the canal. **BS** agreed that there should be an active but controlled use of the waterway. **JL** noted how CRT managed 'end of garden' moorings on their waterways. **GS** noted that the first houses would be on the off side of the canal where there would be environmentally sensitive issues regarding mooring. **RW** noted that careful asset mapping was required to define responsibilities in each section and further discussion would be required with Wichelstowe team.

**East Wichel- canal leak.** **KO** said that works are continuing on leak detection and the second phase of the scheme is being implemented by installing additional bunds. Monitoring work will start in January.

**BS** asked inf there was any progress on joining the two sections of canal **KO** said that there had been no progress on early delivery of this section.

**Swindon New Eastern Villages-** The southern connector road now has planning consent subject to the CPO enquiry in January. WBCT and SBC have agreed a Statement of Common Ground.

**Moredon Sports Hub** **RW** was now less optimistic about further internal highways funding for the proposed linking connection to the Western Flyer cycle route using the route of the canal towpath

**Pewsham Locks** **BS** reported continued low-key work on the site. **KO** reported on helping WBCT in presenting the proposed Melksham to Lacock footpath/cycleway/bridleway scheme to Melksham Town Council Economic Development Committee where the proposal was fully supported. **SP** noted the current discussions about new road links in the area. **KO** said that any crossing of the canal route should conform to Local Plan Policy by providing a culvert.

#### **Questions and updates**

**JA** reported that Cotswold Canals Trust had received funds (£4m) from Highways England and work had just started on the A38 crossing. **KO** noted in the context of the Wilts & Berks application to HE the overall scheme is connecting Royal Wootton Bassett to Swindon with a sustainable transport route cycleway/footpath and it is one of the key deliverables. **RW** noted that there were great opportunities around the canal south of the motorway for tree planting (Community Forest) as part of the overall mitigation for the Wichelstowe development

**GS** reported internal SBC discussions on possible development proposals on land adjacent to the canal at Mill Lane Beavan's bridge.

**BS** outlined the current management structure of WBCT. The Trust is keen to recruit a civil engineer to fulfil the role of Chief Engineer and was also looking for other executive members.

**BS** reported that following the tragic fatality of a volunteer 3 years ago at Pewsham it had now been informed that the Crown Prosecution Service will not be pursuing criminal charges against the Trust. The incident is however still being investigated by the Health and Safety Executive.

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**Wessex Waterways Restoration Trust** **KO** has met the new Chairman Vaughn Welch. After some discussion it was agreed to invite the Chairman

	to attend the next meeting of the Partnership.	
7	<b>Partners Reports and Issues</b> KO reported ongoing discussions with Thames Water for the possible acquisition of the Wroughton reservoir.	
8	<b>Date and time and location of next meeting:</b> Provisional dates for 2020 5 <sup>th</sup> March at Wichelstowe project offices (TBC) 4 <sup>th</sup> June, 3 <sup>rd</sup> September, 3 <sup>rd</sup> December location to be confirmed.	

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