



River Soar & Grand Union Canal

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE RIVER SOAR AND GRAND UNION CANAL
PARTNERSHIP
WEDNESDAY 10th November 2018 AT 10.00AM
The Dock, Pioneer Road**

Present:

Mrs Christine Radford CC (CR) - Chair, Leicestershire County Council
Cllr Adam Clarke (AC) – Leicester City Council
Louise Davis (LD) - Leicester City Council
Anne Provan (AP) - Leicester City Council
Fiona Walker (FW) - Leicestershire County Council
Claire Install (CI) – Leicestershire & Rutland Wildlife Trust
Sylvia Wright (SW) – Charnwood Borough Council
Vikki Candlish (VC) – Environment Agency
Ian Underwood (IU) – Trent Rivers Trust
Andy Oughton (AO) – LOPC/British Canoeing
Andrew Shepherd (AS) – Inland Waterways Association
Michael Handford (MH) – Melton & Oakham Waterways Society
Peter Williams (PW) – Leicestershire & Rutland Ornithological Society

In attendance:

Helena Edwards (HE) – Leicestershire Local Access Forum (observer)
Hayley Hudson (HH) - Leicestershire County Council (minutes)
Jon Vann (JV) – Riverscape Environmental Consultants (presenting)
David Beale (DB) – Leicester City Council (presenting)

1. Welcome and introductions

CR welcomed everyone to the meeting. All attendees made their introductions.

2. Apologies for absence

Cllr Eric Vardy – Charnwood Borough Council
Matthew Bills – Harborough District Council
Alex Ward – OWBC
Phill Turner – Blaby District Council
Simon Papprell – Canal & River Trust

3. Approval of the minutes from the previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting were accepted as a true record of the meeting.

4. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.



5. Leicester's Waterside Development

DB introduced himself and gave a presentation on Leicester's Waterside Development (attached to the minutes).

DB began with a summary of riverside developments achieved so far, including improvements to the towpaths through the city, and enhanced facilities for boaters, such as the moorings at Friar's Mill and Memory Wharf. He went on to explain the progress of the Waterside development and the developers that are on site. He explained that the development will include a 'super crossing' similar to that at Leicester Railway Station that will give better walking and cycling links to the area from Highcross. He detailed the variety of residential properties, leisure facilities and public space and explained that the redevelopment of the Great Central Station building will help connect the waterside area and provide a clear route..

He also showed plans for the Space Park that the University of Leicester will be building as a centre for space technology. It will create around 300 jobs and provide education for 150-200 students. This will be an important part of the national space structure.

DB also showed the layout of the new Cardinals Meadow environmental enhancement scheme, which will see an area adjacent to the riverside become a public green space and protected wildlife area.

DB said that there is £250-270m of development under contract/construction and that there will be a massive change along the river corridor in the next 5 years, especially around access to waterways.

PW asked what the term 'super crossing' meant and DB explained that it is a very broad crossing that gets people across in one go, giving pedestrians a comfortable environment to cross.

PW then asked if there are any plans to include swifts into any of the developments discussed. DB advised that the city council's work in the Waterside development includes a comprehensive wildlife strategy which will include swift/bat boxes. DB was unsure if the private developments would include provisions for swifts. AP said that they have two environmental officers in their team and they fully consider aspects such as these and include enhancements where possible. CR asked if AP could check and confirm whether swift boxes are being included for the projects, as they need to be considered in the first stage of the process. FW and PW confirmed that swift bricks need to be built into the design and aren't something that can be added afterwards. CI pointed out that LRWT's offices are located within the Waterside Development area and they are keen to help with environmental improvements that can be made through the development.



PW stated that he thought the Space Park looked intrusive on the surrounding area. AP reassured that the development will be contained within the raised area and won't be intrusive; it's completely separate.

As there are residential properties within some of the developments, SW asked how they plan to link cycle routes and what else has been built in for leisure and sports etc. DB advised that there is a clear strategy which sets out where youth and cycle access is, making it easy for people to get from the city centre to the site. SW asked if some of these were natural trails and AP confirmed that they are.

Rally Park is currently underused and with the development included around 3000 households, they expect that usage will increase significantly. CR questioned whether the development would include affordable/social housing and DB stated that the LCC Phase 1 project is actually slightly exceeding the affordable housing target. The private led developments are not under any obligation to provide affordable/social housing and will instead focus on build to rent properties.

CR asked what the timescale was and DB explained that Brexit may have an impact but the first stage of construction is due to begin in a few months' time.

CR thanked DB for his presentation and said it sounded as though it's going to be beautiful and really put Leicester on the map.

6. EA Flood Management Plan

JV introduced himself and gave a presentation on the EA's Flood Management Plan (attached to the minutes).

JV provided an update on the number of properties at risk of flooding around the River Soar; 2000 in total, and the strategic overview for this. He then detailed projects that had been completed/were currently under construction. These included works along the River Soar in Aylestone, Belgrave and the re-routing of the national cycle route along the river via a flood culvert. This is now due to open 24th October after experiencing delays due to issues with major utilities running through the site.

Upcoming projects include the development of Pioneer Park; flood management work is being undertaken and people won't be able to see the defences as they will be designed into the landscape. There will be a green buffer between the buildings and park.

Another upcoming project is Cardinals Meadow on Abbey Park Road; this is 80% floodplain and therefore not suitable for housing. The aim is to enhance the wildlife and create wetland instead to improve the feel of the area (starting Jan/Feb 19). AO asked if they would be changing levels and JV confirmed that they would be, but the footpaths would be unaffected.



JV then described the upcoming project for Repton Street. This is currently a derelict site where they plan to add a riverside cycle path on a lower level to that of the buildings in order to prevent them flooding (act as a barrier). PW asked if this meant that additional flood pressure would just be moved elsewhere and JV confirmed that was correct. He went on to explain that part of the strategy is to look at how they can create a floodplain elsewhere, such as at Aylestone Meadow. This would be making better use of an already used nature reserve, whilst increasing the flood storage. Work will possibly start around Jan/Feb 2019.

JV informed the group that they were also planning to adapt the levels of the carpark at Marsden Lane, Aylestone to achieve flood protection without having to build a structure.

CR thanked JV for his presentation and asked that he provide a copy of the slides to be sent with the minutes.

MH commented that coming to Leicester by boat was difficult and stated that the back river is ignored and could benefit from dredging. JV said that they had done testing on this and found that it has little benefit. VC added that it wasn't a permanent solution and that they needed to look at more sustainable options as dredging is expensive. AP said that there is still an urgent need to dredge the navigable areas as they are the worst she's ever seen. PW then raised that after a flood, Watermead is covered in debris; a lot of which is plastic, and asked if there were any initiatives to help combat this. JV said that this has been a talking point for a long time and that they have considered litter traps, but this can cause blockages resulting in more flood risk. JV said that they need to come up with a scheme(s) and that it can't just be in one area (e.g. at the end of the system); it needs to be a strategic approach. CI asked that her team be included in the discussions.

AP said that what was good about the projects is that it is more natural work (landscaping etc.) but work on brooks is hard engineering; we need to try and consider more natural solutions.

AC commented that the consequences of not doing the work are higher than the problems encountered in actually doing the work. He said that the Partnership is working well on this.

CR added that they all need to work together to alleviate the problems and encourage people to enjoy these areas. CR thanked JV again and said that when it's all done, it will be beautiful for both wildlife and the public.

7. Feedback from Partners

PW informed the group that the reed bed project has been unsuccessful for WEG funding, with no reason given, but funding should still be available through the



Severn Trent enforcement funding, being administered by the Trent Rivers Trust. He is still waiting to hear about this funding.

CI told the group that their dedicated officer is working on the strategy for the coming years, as well as setting up more partnerships.

In regards to DB's presentation on the Waterside Development, AS suggested that they should incorporate visitor moorings and that he would be happy to help and provide advice on this. AS then went on to say that he has complained about the dredging issue from Foxton to Leicester and the reason given was that the maintenance isn't a high priority due to the low volume of boats that use the route. AS said that this was a vicious circle; people aren't using the route due to the fact that it needs dredging.

IU thanked the committee for inviting him on board. VC thanked JV for his presentation.

FW advised the group that she still has River Soar Trail leaflets available if anybody would like some.

AC and CR advised that they had no update for the partners.

LD informed the group that the River Monster project was very successful. Children collected litter from the river and then designed and constructed the 'monster' to highlight the litter issue. The 'monster' started at Abbey Park, then to the Space Centre and is now on its way to Aylestone. This has received good press and is the start of a micro plastics project with Leicester University.

MH provided an update on the Melton outer ring road and said that there is no provision for a culvert. They are currently briefing a barrister in case it needs to go to the High Court.

AP advised that she had no update for the partners.

In respect of the proposed Soar Island, AO said that this is a good opportunity to provide portage points for canoes. AO then advised that the Outdoor Pursuits Centre had their first autumn open day that around 600-800 people attended, paying £1, to do activities on the river. AO went on to explain that they've experienced issues at Watermead with rangers denying access to the open water and said that he hopes to talk with someone regarding this soon.

SW stated that she was very impressed with the level of partnership working and that she was looking forward to 'diving in' and getting more involved. CR said that SW was welcome to come along to future meetings as they're interesting and worthwhile.



JV didn't have any further updates for the group.

SP was unable to attend the meeting but sent the following update:

SP reports that following a restructure of the regions, the River Soar and Grand Union Canal fall within an enlarged East Midlands region (previously Foxton fell under our South East region) headed now by a new Regional Director Phillip Mulligan, with a new Regional Advisory Board Chaired by Anil Majithia, who also sits on the Leicester & Leicestershire LEP.

Projects

- A bid to the Arts Council is being made to extend the waterside arts engagement project Hinterland (part of the national Arts in the Waterway programme) which the Partnership had a presentation on at the last two meetings
- An initial €200,000 bid submitted for European 'EAFRD' funding to upgrade the towpath between Aylestone and Kilby Bridge, has been approved for progression to a full submission this December. SP has secured some match funding to contribute to the bid but the endorsement of the Partnership is equally important. Also through discussions with Everards relating to a canalside development in Glen Parva, a figure of £50,000 has just been agreed with the Canal & River Trust for access rights over Blue Bank Bridge which will be utilised for towpath improvements and incorporated into the EAFRD bid.
- SP had submitted a £949,000 bid for a Fish Pass on a weir at Ratcliffe on Soar, to DEFRA for a Water Environment Grant. This has got through the next stage of approvals, and is now being supported by £12,000 of funding from the Trent Rivers Trust for education, interpretation, and promotion work.
- Work is being done to resolve utility connections to provide facilities at the newly developed Memory Lane Wharf moorings by the Arena, which is now also home to the Council's Green Life Boat
- The surfacing work on the Phase 3 towpath scheme by Belgrave is now complete and bank work being undertaken, additional mooring rings requested by the Inland Waterways Association (IWA) will be installed too

Engagement

- Year 2 of the Leicester Young Ecology Adventurers programme successfully completed with c20 young people from Leicester's Somali community gaining the John Muir Award following a programme of activities centred on the waterways in Leicester. The group (SOCOPA) are now looking for funding to continue the programme in future years
- Diwali Day at Limekiln Lock – the lock will be closed from 3pm on 7th November as part of our "Lighting up Limekiln Lock" event. We will be floating boats made at the switch on event, and other sculptures created by the local community to encourage Diwali visitors to the waterway
- Presented closing speech at Voluntary Action Leicestershire's annual conference and been liaising with Leicester City Council's walking & cycling team regarding events, and the health & wellbeing strategy team over opportunities for promoting the waterway corridor to link activity sites
- There are 'Stoppages' planned on the waterway at Kings Lock from 05/11/18 - 14/12/18 and Kilby Lock from 05/11/18 - 14/12/18
- SP adds that there's certainly no lack of activity on the Waterways! Any queries please feel free to contact him.



CR confirmed that the dates for the next meetings have been provided and asked that any offers of venues be sent to FW.

AP asked for suggestions of future agenda items. She said that a regular update from EA would be worthwhile. AP also said that she and FW were looking at the Action Plan for 2019 onwards and would report back on progress.. AP then explained that the Urban Buzz project is about pollinator habitats; currently in Leicester City but looking at developing a new project along the river and canal corridor. AP went on to say that the River Soar Trail leaflets were a starting point and they needed to think about what further work could be done to develop the River Soar Trail; add as future agenda item. Boating opportunities and tourism potential along the river corridor should also be discussed and added to future agenda items.

8. Date and agenda items of the next meeting

The dates of the next meetings are:

- Wednesday 6th February 2019 (10:00-12:00) – Venue TBC
- Wednesday 5th June (10:00-12:00) – Venue TBC
- Wednesday 9th October 2019 (10:00-12:00) – Venue TBC

Future agenda items:

- EA Update – Funding and flooding consultation
- RSGUCP Action Plan 2019-22
- Urban Buzz Project
- Boating Opportunities
- Tourism Potential

Action Log

Action	By	Status
Identify suitable venues for future meetings	All	Ongoing
Identify future agenda items	All	Ongoing