

## Exeter River & Canal User Group

Minutes of the meeting of the 25 February 2015 held at the Exe Water Sports Association premises at 62 Haven Road, Exeter, EX2 8DP

2015-01	<p><b>Attendance:</b> Cllr Rosie Denham (RD) ECC/ ECQT Sarah Ward (SW) Exeter City Council Colin Acton (CA), Exeter City Council Waterways Dept Andy Cousins (AC), Exeter City Council Waterways Dept Kevin Pearson (KP), Exeter City Council Waterways Dept Chris Green (CG), Halcrow / Environment Agency Murray Palmer (MP), EA Contractors Alistair, EA Contractors Jane Evans (JE) Exeter Canoe Club / Exe Water Sports Association Paul Wilson (PW), Exeter Rowing Club &amp; Regatta Jason Tarr (JT), ExeCalibre Dragon Boat Club Derrick Morrison (DM), 19th Exeter Sea Scouts Raymond Flack, (RF), Exeter Sea Cadets John Caswell (JC), InStep Devon / EA Alison Caswell (AC), Exeter Riverside Parkrun Martyn Laxton (ML), Ride On Adam Golding (AG), Ride On Mitch Bewsey (MB), AS Watersports Ltd Chris Johns (CJ), KayakHub Exeter David Tidball (DT), Phibian.org Steve Barley (SB), Exeter Cruises Guy Parker (GP) Exeter Boat Owners Association Lynn Trout (LT) W.Trout &amp; Son Ltd, Topsham Mike Trout (MT) W.Trout &amp; Son Ltd, Topsham Simon Reader (SR), Retreat Boatyard Vivianne Arendal (VA), Topsham Lock Cottage Ben Hedden (BH) Haven Banks OEC: Stephanie Clark (SC), Exe Estuary Management Partnership Louise Evans (LE), Active Devon</p>
2015-02	<p><b>Apologies:</b> David Parsons</p>
2015-03	<p><b>Minutes and Agenda</b> The minutes were accepted.</p>
2015-04	<p><b>Chairman</b> Cllr Rosie Denham was elected unanimously as Chairman for the forthcoming year.</p>
2015-05	<p><b>Flood defences</b> The EA provided information on the flood defences work. Murray Palmer is the Construction Manager of Phase 1. Chris Green is working on the design of Phase 2. Lowering of the river water levels will take place in March 2015, the canal level will be maintained.</p>

	<p>The EA is not planning to dredge the King Arms sluice.</p> <p>The EA is not planning to cut back the trees 200m below the flood relief channel that cause a strainer at low water levels.</p> <p>The EA are planning to dredge near the sidespill weir but the lowered water levels may achieve the desired result on its own. There is no construction need to dredge.</p> <p>More notification was requested from the EA when changes to water levels are made and lock gates shut so that users can plans their activities and businesses. This applies to reopening as well as closures.</p> <p>JE asked if the Kings Arms Sluice gate could be opened. The City Council replied no, and the gates have been shut since October.</p>
2015-06	<p><b>Review of the Waterways</b></p> <p>Sarah Ward, Asst Director of Public Realm, Exeter City Council, explained the Council's proposals for the review of the waterways. The Council is responsible for the Canal and the river Exe from the city to Exmouth.</p> <p>It had been proposed to have a public consultation. SW had conducted some initial discussions with various parties, some of whom were at this meeting. The message received by SW was that whilst the operational staff are excellent the management team had limited skills in the areas required to run the river and canal. Given the consensus it was decided to consult with the interested parties rather than the public as a whole.</p> <p>The Waterways department currently has a deficit of £170k pa and it is required to break even by March 2017. The budget savings have to be identified by March 2016. The current situation cannot continue as if it does then the services will decline.</p> <p>A strategic review of the canal is required. There is a need for a new approach as the Council cannot do it all. SW is making a proposal to the Scrutiny Committee Economy in a week's time that a partnership of key stakeholders is established. The partnership will look at how the canal and river can be managed for the future, identify what needs to happen and to make the waterways offer to Exeter a positive one and not one of decline. The Council is not withdrawing but the gap between the current situation and what people want is huge.</p> <p>The Canal &amp; River Trust have been to look at the canal and will be speaking at a public meeting of the Council to explain in broad terms what they can do. This might include a wider partnership, a consultancy arrangement or even taking on the canal themselves. The CRT are not interested in the river.</p> <p>It is proposed to have the partnership established by September 2015 and to have reviewed the documents by February 2016. RD was clear that there needed to be proper engagement before the strategy was decided. The Council will do the legwork relating to the governance of the partnership.</p> <p>LT requested that the review looked at what is good practice elsewhere so that good ideas can be taken forward. There is a concern that where users are only partly consulted and this is not followed up decisions are then made without final involvement of the users.</p> <p>GP asked where the money for the new structure will come from. SW said that she did not know. The Council has a strategic plan to 2018. It may be that the users will get more say on how to spend less money. Perhaps the</p>

	<p>new structure will enable money to come in from other sources eg heritage lottery, private sector.</p> <p>GP asked for more information on the finances of the canal. RD will circulate information but it is not very helpful or easy to understand. GP said that the figures would look very different if the income of ECQT was added to the position. ECQT receives the income of many property assets along the canal but does not bear the costs of running the canal. Meanwhile the Council runs the canal but does not receive all the related income.</p> <p>MT asked whether the canal could be passed to ECQT. RD said that she didn't think they have the expertise to run the canal either, but they do have the money. They are an independent charity and cannot be forced to do it. They have to consider the legal responsibilities of being a charity.</p> <p>A question was asked whether the partnership is for the river or canal or both. The Council has a statutory responsibility to manage the river an estuary and it would be obliged to fulfil this responsibility even if the management of the canal was passed to another body.</p> <p>The finances of the river and canal accounts at the Council are not easy to understand. JE has looked at them and despite being an accountant she has not made sense of them. JE was requested to request further information from the Council's accountant to improve the understanding.</p> <p>LT said it is important that any bodies used for engagement relating to the river should not duplicate the work of the Exe Estuary Management Partnership and Forum.</p> <p>The proposals for the waterways review were to be put forward to the Scrutiny Committee Economy on 5 March and 11 June 2015. Later the date of the June Scrutiny Committee was changed to 18 June.</p>
2015-07	<p><b>Active Exeter Summer Festival</b></p> <p>Louise Evans of Active Devon, the County Sports Partnership, is organising a Summer Festival of sport on the piazza for Sunday 19 July.</p>
2015-08	<p><b>AOB</b></p> <p><b>King Arms Sluice</b></p> <p>The silt in the sluice will be sampled to check its toxicity before it can be dredged and dumped.</p> <p><b>Weed</b></p> <p>The Waterways staff have been cutting weed in the middle third of the canal earlier in the year. This timing is based on advice and hopefully will result in an improvement.</p> <p><b>Water quality</b></p> <p>It is not recommended that people swim in the canal. However user groups can do their own risk assessments. Three tests of water quality are done per year. The water quality is better further down the canal.</p>

	<p><b>Pontoon at Double Locks</b></p> <p>JE has submitted a grant application to ECQT for funding for a new pontoon at Double Locks to replace the one that is broken.</p>
2015-09	<p><b>Action Points from Previous Meetings Outstanding</b></p> <p><b>Car park signage in large Haven Banks car park</b></p> <p>Despite being advised that it is permitted to park cars in the coach bays no signage has been put up to explain this.</p> <p><b>Canal Users Good Management Plan:</b> JE said that paragraph 8 states that the maximum speed permitted is 4 knots. Please could this be amended to apply to motorised craft only. <b>Action Exeter City Council</b></p> <p>Paragraph 8 states that the canal navigation bylaws must be complied with at all times. JE had asked for the bylaws be circulated so that the group can see what they say. <b>Action Exeter City Council</b></p>
2015-10	<p><b>Date of next meeting</b></p> <p>Weds 17 June 6pm Exe Water Sports Association, 62 Haven Road</p> <p>This was later changed to Wed 1 July , same time and venue</p>

### Links to useful documents

Scrutiny Committee Economy 21 June 2001.  
Canal Service Review : Item 3 and appendices:

<http://committees.exeter.gov.uk/CeListDocuments.aspx?Committeed=129&MeetingId=1039&DF=21%2f06%2f2001&Ver=2>

Future Role of ECQT: item 19

<http://committees.exeter.gov.uk/CeListDocuments.aspx?Committeed=112&MeetingId=389&DF=29%2f01%2f2002&Ver=2>