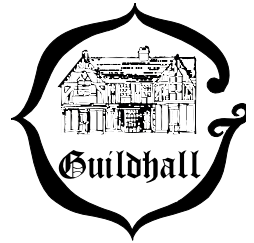


# Newport (Shropshire) Town Council



## MINUTES OF A SPECIAL MEETING OF THE TOWN COUNCIL

held on

Wednesday 16 January 2008  
at  
The Guildhall, High Street, Newport

**PRESENT:** Cllrs: Glyn Gratton – Town Mayor  
Adam Stanton – Deputy Town Mayor  
Daniel Ashley  
Eric Carter  
Brenda Flowers  
Tony Forrester  
Tim Nelson  
Phil Norton  
Bob Unwin  
Siân Walker

**IN ATTENDANCE:** D. L. Halliday – Town Clerk

**APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** were received from Cllrs Adrian Meredith and Roy Scammell.

### **259/07-08 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no Declarations of Interest.

### **260/07-08 NEWPORT & SHREWSBURY CANAL TRUST**

The Town Mayor welcomed Mr David Adams and Mr Bruce Crawcour to the meeting to brief members and take questions on the proposals to re-open the Newport Town Wharf to Forton Bridge section of the Canal as detailed in the Initial Development Appraisal. The document formed Appendix 'H' to the Minutes of the meeting held on 14 November 2007. Mr Adams introduced Mr Crawcour as the Project Finance Manager to the Trust responsible for costing the project and obtaining the funding for its completion. He went on to give an overview of the whole project to reopen the 25 mile former canal from Norbury to Shrewsbury. The engineering design has been completed with the project being broken down into 41 packages, one of which is the Newport / Forton stretch.

The whole scheme has the support of all the major councils whose areas it runs through. Shrewsbury & Atcham Borough Council are active participants wishing to tie this in with the restoration of the Flax Mill. Staffordshire County Council fully support the stretch from Norbury to the Newport By-pass and the new administration at Telford & Wrekin Council are fully committed.

The object and the mandate of the Trust is the restoration of the Canal. Everyone now needs to work together to achieve this aim.

The full scheme will cost £100 million but it will bring economic and social benefits to the whole area.

During the questions and answer session the following major points were raised.

Cllr Tim Nelson acknowledged that putting a section of the canal back into water creates a potential for a better economic future and additional employment. Improved economics are more likely to arise in a market town from tourism than building industrial units. Since the public survey revealed that 90% of respondents expressed an interest in walking the canal, there was concern that a working canal does not present the same visual amenity for walkers as the current closed canal. It was acknowledged that the SSSI which enhances this image would have to be relocated but restoration also involves tree planting and can enhance the habitats for wildlife.

Cllr Tony Forrester and Cllr Brenda Flowers expressed concern regarding the provision the town has for coping with large visitor numbers, particularly those using cars rather than boats. Parking already presents a problem and in achieving this proposed phase there is also the potential to lose more informal green space.

Cllr Eric Carter speaking from the Telford & Wrekin Council perspective stated that Market Drayton, Bridgnorth and Shrewsbury are successful because they are connected to water. He gave assurances that Victoria Park would not be removed, indeed £1 million is being made available for regeneration of the High Street and the Canal Basin / Victoria Park area. A great deal of tourism and economic benefit is created by people using the canals and waterways and connecting to the national network ultimately opens up tremendous opportunities. Issues such as car parking can be addressed particularly as the positives outweigh the negatives. This project would put Newport on the map and make it a tourist destination like Ellesmere and Market Drayton.

The Canal restoration is now written into the LDF Core Strategy with the full backing of Telford & Wrekin Council. There are major hurdles to overcome, particularly crossing the Newport by-pass, but the opportunities are there.

Cllr Bob Unwin was concerned that opening a very short stretch with no measurable boat usage could jeopardise the public perception of the project and felt that the Norbury to Newport stretch must be the main priority.

Cllr Adam Stanton queried the economics of implementing this phase with the disproportionate cost of crossing the by-pass and suggested it might be more cost-effective and yield greater use to open the stretch from Newport through to Wappenshall. This was supported by Cllr Carter who emphasised that this could then tie in with the plans of Shrewsbury and Atcham Borough Council. He also stressed that new housing in Plough Lane is needed to enable the development, an area currently outside of the parameters laid down in the LDF.

Cllr Daniel Ashley queried the involvement of British Waterways. It was stated that whoever operates the canal in future can only derive income from boat licences, it may need a spectacular feature such as the proposed inclined plane to attract public prepared to pay to visit such an attraction. British Waterways cannot support disjointed projects but could act as managers ultimately.

Cllr Glyn Gratton queried the time frame for the Newport proposals. In response Mr Crawcour whilst unable to give a definitive date thought it unlikely that the Newport section would be in water before 2013/14 .

Cllr Siân Walker echoed the Trust's view that the people of Newport want an active canal and will benefit from it, and was supported in this by Cllr Phil Norton.

The Trust representatives thanked everyone for their views and questions and hoped they had given full answers. They took away with them the alternative suggestion to open the Canal at Newport westwards, initially ignoring the need to cross the Newport by-pass.

---

Signed .....

Dated .....