

RCQ Meeting

5th March 2019, White Hart, South Street Exeter 7:30pm

Present

- Peter Nickol (Chair)
- Simon Goddard (minutes)
- Keith Lewis
- Guy Parker

Apologies

- Jane Evans
- John Monks

Action

The committee accepted the resignation of Dominic Houston from the committee, and thanked him for his contribution, especially for his excellent work in helping to set up and obtain seed funding for the Friends of Exeter Ship Canal.

PN will contact the University of Exeter to see if any student is interested in joining the committee.

PN

1 Notes of last meeting held on 1 August 2018

SG to contact Devon Wildlife Trust to see what can be done to control the numerous gulls which are a nuisance on The Quay.

SG

Noted that part of Maclaines Warehouse has now been let to Topsham Brewery on a 3 year lease.

Review meeting with ECS Chairman Peter Wadham to be arranged.

PN

Concern about growth of reeds and vegetation on river between Port Royal and Trews Weir & the millpond to be raised with ECC City Surveyor Michael Carson.

SG

2 Canal Management Plan

GP spoke to ECC Growth & Commercialisation Manager, Victoria Hatfield, for an update on this. The focus appears to be on residential and commercial development of the canal basin and Countess Wear areas with 3rd party investment. GP noted that ECC Director David Bartram had assured him in 2018 that they had no intention of building on the areas used for boat storage.

Arcadis consultants are scheduled to produce their draft report this month. Feedback we have provided to previous consultations included:

- Establishment of a public campsite for tourists
- Piazza Terracina end of Maclaines warehouse not to be built on
- Imaginative link between canal basin and city centre
- Keep canal basin as a working area, not gentrified

Previous plans have been rejected on grounds of creating unacceptable levels of traffic on Haven Road and because the closure of a Public Quay would require a public inquiry. We will need to consider our form of objection if our comments are overturned.

3 Canal charges

Canal charges, e.g. for mooring, pontoons and transit through Bridge Road swing and lifting bridges, should be published online.

PN

4 Water Lane Masterplan – ‘Liveable Exeter’ ECC vision document

The owners of the gas site property have agreed to postpone development plans pending publication of the Canal Masterplan.

Sceptism was expressed in respect of the Liveable Exeter strategy developed by LDA Design recently published by ECC. While its objective is laudable, delivery would require overcoming many hurdles, particularly:

- Water Lane – vehicle access is an issue + existing electricity distribution sub-station may be impractical to incorporate or relocate
- Exe Bridges - existing traffic capacity insufficient, so halving the size of this river crossing would require a very substantial reduction in traffic across Exeter
- Marsh Barton redevelopment would disrupt the businesses there, although not thought to be impossible as the buildings are getting towards the end of their life and ECC is the freeholder with leases there due to expire soon
- Additional canal crossings would inhibit use of the canal and should have a minimum air draft of 2.5 metres so that small vessels could pass under without hindrance, or be lifting bridges operated remotely from the vessel whilst moving

One view was that the document had more of the appearance of a document to support a request for additional central government funding/borrowing by ECC than a deliverable strategy.

KL will feedback to ECC City Development Manager, Andy Robbins, that while it is a great vision, is it realistically going to be implemented in full and what are the next steps?

KL

5 Plot of land near Countess Wear Village lime kilns

Controversy here focuses on a plot which has no registered title at the Land Registry (between DN694660 & DN415951). A nearby resident has attempted to enclose it, but others who objected to this have been supported by the City Council, who have prevented enclosure. The objectors wish the plot to be put under public ownership to protect access.

PN

6 Bridge Road – possible replacement of canal bridges

Bewilderment all round why, having suffered major traffic disruption for the last 2 years while the bridge over the river and its approach was modified, that DCC/DfT are now proposing to replace the swing bridge. Why could this not have been done at the same time?

Any new bridge should be built at sufficient height to allow pedestrian and cyclist access along a towpath under the bridge, allowing removal of the pedestrian road crossing once both bridges have been replaced, which would both make the canalside path more tranquil to use and improve the traffic flow on Bridge Road.

7 St James Weir

Noted that leakage of the weir had now reached a critical point, with a significant drop in the river level upstream and its collapse was imminent. Consequently the bottom of the fish ladder recently built at Trews Weir is now out of the water and ineffective, and will continue to become increasingly so as the weir deteriorates further. Frustration that when we have been warning ECC of the fragile state of St James Weir for some time, that such factor was not taken into account in the design of the fish ladder.

Who is responsible for St James Weir’s upkeep is unclear, as while ECC and DCC have responsibilities as riparian land owners, it was built back in history by the Earl of Devon, and it is unclear what responsibility his descendants have towards it. Peter Wadham has written to the current Earl of Devon and has been directed to Miles Webber at Michelmores Hughes Stags in

Totnes who manages the Earl of Devon's Powderham Estate. PN will provide evidence of ownership of the weir to Miles Webber and meet with him .

A reduction in the level of the river downstream of Trew's Weir will put additional pressure on this weir, as well as the possible collapse of the riverbank here. ECC will be asked what assessment they or DCC have made of the safety of Trew's Weir and their intentions for its preservation.

PN

8 Mallison Bridge

The meeting at Exeter City Council on 20 September 2018 with Commercial Operations Manager of Public Realm, Peter Stewart and Landscape Architect, Chris Westlake was informative. They took on board our comments that the design should not be one homogenous strip of decking across the leat continuing in front of the Samuel Jones and Kennaway warehouses, as it was too massive and obscured their separate nature.

Communications with ECS Planning Sub-Committee are improving, although Chris Watson on the sub-committee could be more cooperative. Pamela Wootton, chair of the Planning Sub-Committee has agreed to provide their responses on major developments and Exeter-wide matters to ECS executive herself for scrutiny before issue. She will also copy responses to planning applications to PN.

Unsure whether ECC have actually obtained the funding for this bridge that they said they had in place when we met in September. The bridge is now closed on safety grounds and this crossing will not re-open until the new bridge has been built.

9 Flood prevention works – update

Disappointment with the visual impact of the bollards on The Quay to hold the flood stop logs. Once they are all cloaked with the plastic covers they will look massive.

Concern expressed that the removeable flood barriers on The Quay could actually all be put in place in the event of a flood warning over the next 100 years that they are intended for, specifically:

- What are the lines of communication to ensure they are all put up when required?
- What is the plan of regular practice drills, inspections and testing to ensure that they will continue to be effective?
- What is the repair procedure when an HGV collides with a bollard and bends it, and how quickly can such repair be carried out?

10 FESC

Reported that John Monks wishes to hand over chairmanship in future, and concern that without more new members it could fade.

11 Headweir Mill House – information board

We will approach St Austell Brewery asking them to install the story board outlining the history of the original mill, as requested by us in response to the original planning application for Headweir Mill House. The original mill was demolished and the masonry used to build what is now the Mill on the Exe pub. However they need someone to provide the copy for this. Suggested that ECC Visitor Attractions Manager Dave Adcock based in the Customs House who organises the Heritage Open Days could provide a contact to write this.

PN

Alternatively the Exeter Memories website administrator may be able to help.

12 Exe Valley Way north of St Davids

PN has written to Nick Millington, a Network Rail manager, about this. The railway sidings, which go right up to the river bank, are owned by Railtrack. The sidings are not all required for operations, and it would be practical to provide a river bank path here, but Railtrack are notoriously difficult to deal with.

13 Review day

See above re minutes of last meeting.

We should set up a communication channel with Devon Wildlife Trust for where our aims coincide with theirs.

14 AOB

ECC Sports Strategy does include reinstatement of the Bonham Fields football pitches.

Exeter Civic Society: RCQ Meeting

12 August 2019, White Hart, South Street Exeter 7:30pm

Present:

Peter Nickol (Chair), Jane Evans, Simon Goddard, Keith Lewis, John Monks, Guy Parker

1 Matters arising from the previous meeting held on 5 March 2019

Action

University contact: PN had not yet contacted the University of Exeter to see if any student is interested in joining the group but will do so.

PN

A 379 – replacement of bridges over the Exeter Ship Canal: JM reported that the bid for funding for the road scheme, part of an overall upgrading of the main trunk route, is with the Department of Transport for consideration. The replacement of the bridges is an opportunity to increase the air draught to allow boats to use the canal without requiring the road to be closed while the bridges are raised. This aspect of the scheme was actively supported by the Friends of Exeter Ship Canal and the Inland Waterways Association, JM said.

Headweir Mill House – information board: PN had pressed St Austell Brewery for a reply to the request to install a story board outlining the history of the original mill, as requested by RCQ in response to the original planning application for Headweir Mill House. He will continue to press.

Exe Valley Way north of St Davids: PN reported there had been no reply from Network Rail about the possibility of using part of the sidings not required for operations for a riverbank path. He will ask Devon Wildlife Trust whether they have access.

PN

2 Canal Management Plan

JM reported that the Canal Friends and the IWA have a meeting arranged with David Bartram and other ECC officers on 12 September on the consultants' final report. It was noted and appreciated that there appeared to be a shift in the council's approach towards listening and taking note of what people had to say.

GP pointed out that provision of boat storage was effectively a continuation of the use of craft on the waterways for sport.

3 Quayside concerns and discontents – bollards, procedures in case of flood, Environment Agency work and the continued closure of Mallison bridge

SG, KL and PN had looked at the Basin and the Quay. SG distributed a paper he had just completed for ECC, ECQT, EA and DCC listing concerns and discontents. JE wished to add Topsham Brewery's storage of empty barrels in the open. PN gave members a week to consider the paper and make comments and suggestions to him and Simon. It was agreed the document when complete should be sent to the chief executive of ECC; head of highways at DCC; the ECQT chair; and the EA project manager for the Exeter flood relief scheme. JM suggested that Historic England should also receive a copy because of their earlier expressed concerns for the historic environment at the Quayside.

PN asked what general measures might be expected, setting aside the detailed concerns. It was felt that as the area was an important tourist attraction and of economic importance, investment was needed to bring it up to scratch. The various authorities should take account of the attractive approaches in other town and cities.

On Mallison Bridge, it was agreed to request a temporary bridge to open up the throughway.

PN

SG was thanked for his work.

4 Water Lane Masterplan

KL reported that ECC have received a grant of £750k to develop proposals for the Liveable Exeter strategy, and agreed to appoint 4 new members of staff to develop proposals. KL had met the city surveyor who thought some other sites could be investigated before Water Lane, but they hope to receive government support to acquire land and then to start building.

5 Countess Wear Village issues

PN attended a meeting where concern was expressed at the flow of water through the channel from the leat. Residents were concerned about two sluices installed by the Environment Agency: one on the Northbrook watercourse which was blocked, and one by Waring Bowen Court which cut off most of the tidal water, resulting in a muddy section opposite the development. Residents will put pressure on the EA.

The section that remains tidal is a wharf for the old lime kilns and paper mill. PN said he was encouraging local people to look after and possibly claim the land for public access. He added that at the end September there will be an exhibition and talk on the industrial heritage of the area.

PN

6 St James Weir

PN reported that Exeter city council may be minded to repair St James Weir. JE said the deterioration of the weir and the new shallowness of the river were deterring visiting canoe clubs which in turn meant visitor income was being lost.

7 Planning – EA amendments

PN said that a recent series of planning applications by the Environment Agency for amendments to the permissions for the flood prevention scheme were mostly retrospective. RCQ would not be commenting on the applications.

8 Friends of Exeter Ship Canal

JM reported that an encouraging first contact had been made with the newly appointed Harbour Master.

Attention was drawn to the forthcoming musical about the history of the canal to be staged by Topsham's Estuary Players in October.

9 Marsh Barton Station

As progress on the new station is at last moving, PN will again try to argue for a cyclists' bridge over the railway to the Valley Park. KL will follow it up with DCC.

PN/KL

10 AOB

Exe Estuary Forum – PN drew attention to the next meeting to be held at Powderham Castle.

Heritage Network – PN attended a meeting as a follow-up to the recent Exeter Day. An important issue raised was the need for Exeter to have a heritage centre after the closure of the West Country Studies Library. KL said the Civic Society was involved in pressing for this.

Parking on the Piazza – Drivers were reported to be abusing the Piazza by ignoring the parking regulations and it was agreed to take the matter up with Exeter city council before the issue became as serious as it had been on the riverside at Haven Banks.

PN

Daubing of yellow paint near Clipper Quay flats – JM reported the paint had been there for many months. It was agreed to include the matter with the other Quayside concerns and discontents.

PN/SG

GP produced a number of books and old photographs of the canal, basin and quayside some of which showed what could still be done today in terms of maritime use if there were sufficient vision and sense of direction for the waterways.

The meeting closed at 9.30pm.

Minutes by JM

23 August 2019

Exeter Civic Society: RCQ Meeting

21 November 2019, White Hart, South Street Exeter 7:30pm

Present:

Peter Nickol (Chair), Jane Evans, Keith Lewis, John Monks, Guy Parker

Apologies

Emily McIvor, a new member of the group, sent apologies.

Quayside discontents: Council's response

PN is disappointed with parts of ECC's letter of response. In respect of Mallisons Bridge it was felt that other than cost there is no reason why the bridge should not be removed. The quality of some of the flood defence works remains a disappointment. Other items were discussed, but considered doubtful that agencies will act on further complainees. Agreed that councillors and appropriate officers should be asked to meet with the group to look at the state of the area and try to get some further action this way.

Consider inviting Visit Southwest, although recognised that they may not wish to be critical of ECC

St James & Trews Weirs

It was agreed to give ECC more time before challenging them again about undertaking reinstatement works.

Canal Management Plan – Report of User group meeting 25 Sept.

It was reported that the User meeting was very positive, and included input from the new Harbour Master. Whilst the Harbour Master is committed to developing a canal management plan it was noted that he has many commitments so this may take a while.

JE raised the issue of diesel found in the canal basin. Whilst initially some boat owners were blamed it was noted that the problem often arises after rainfall, so the oil could be a result of drains discharging into the canal.

JE also concerned about rumours that ECC wish to build on many car parks. If this is the case it will have a negative impact on visitors and users to the river Exe area and should be resisted.

Solar Farm application, and KL correspondence with ECC on Valley Parks Masterplan

JE advised that the application for SANGS status for the River Exe and Ludwell Valley had been unsuccessful. The status of the Masterplan therefore needs to be checked – KL.

Planning

PN highlighted two applications, one for an air-conditioning condenser to the front of 48 The Quay, the other for fencing to the former gasworks site.

It was agreed that it was not necessary to respond to the fencing application, but that the application for the condenser should be reviewed by those present and concerns sent to PN.

AOB

JM advised that the IWA wish to plant a tree to Jean Hall on the Grand Western Canal; other options such as a bench are too expensive. He asked if ECS could also make a contribution

for a tree via a collection or ECS funding. It was agreed that KL will make this proposal to committee. (Subsequent discussion between PN, JM and KL agreed that the Exeter Ship Canal would be a better location for ECS to contribute to.)

JE concerned that ECC's Liveable Exeter plan aims to develop the site of the Range store off Haven Road, the Range car parks, both Haven Banks car parks and the land between the railway line and the canal to provide a total of 7,000 houses. She considered that this will result in overbearing development in the area and restrict the ability of people from across the city being able to access the land near the river and canal.

JE also mentioned that ECC have changed their scrutiny committee procedures which may result in proposals being presented directly to Executive committee. It is essential therefore that committee papers are scrutinised regularly.

GP produced a number of books and old photographs of the canal, basin and quayside some of which showed what could still be done today in terms of maritime use if there were sufficient vision and sense of direction for the waterways.

The meeting closed at 9.40pm.

Minutes by KL

30 November 2019