

Michaelston Le-Pit and Leckwith Community Council

Response to the Natural Resources Wales Dinas Powys Draft Outline Business Case (DOBC).

1) This is the Michaelston-Le-Pit and Leckwith Community Council's response to the NRW's most recent consultation regarding the measures proposed to prevent flooding affecting properties in Dinas Powys. Our Community Council appreciates the efforts made by the NRW's officers to explain the NRW's approach to this issue and wish to thank, in particular, the contributions made by Mr Gavin Jones and Mr Tim England during a number of meetings and in correspondence.

2) We acknowledge that the risks of potential flooding from the River Cadoxton for the community of Michaelston-le-Pit is much less severe than the ones which could affect parts of Dinas Powys. Our community has two locations vulnerable to flooding i.e. the dip in the lane below "Y From Oleu" and a short part of the lane, below the stone bridge across the River Cadoxton (close to the entrance to the Bullcroft), where the drains on the roadside seem incapable of coping with water flowing from nearby fields during periods of heavy rain. These two "pressure points" have been drawn to the attention of NRW Officers and we have been assured that the measures the NRW is contemplating will not adversely affect these two areas. In addition, we are also aware that the owners of two properties in Michaelston-le-Pit (Felin Dawel and Lower Barns) have been in contact with the NRW regarding potential risks to their land from flooding caused by the construction of a dam and, again, they have been assured that what the NRW is proposing would not adversely affect their properties.

3) In relation to the shortlisted options in the NRW's DOBC our Council would strongly recommend and support the utilisation of nature friendly measures (NFM) to slow the flow of water from the upper reaches of the River Cadoxton, thereby reducing the volume and speed of water reaching Dinas Powys during periods of heavy rainfall.

4) We have noted that the recent period of high rainfall for South East Wales has been, according to the Meteorological Office, the highest rainfall recorded for February since 1862 for this area and yet only a small number of people's gardens in Dinas Powys, close to the river, were affected and no homes were flooded. During the same period the flow of water from the gullies and streams feeding the River Cadoxton, in the Cwrt-Yr-Ala basin in Michaelston-Le-Pit was the heaviest experienced in over twenty years. This situation clearly reinforces the potential benefits of measures designed to slow the flow of water into the river's main course and well before the river reaches the built up areas of Dinas Powys.

5) The NRW's "Option Three (Upstream flood storage on Cadoxton River) , commonly referred to as "the dam", to be constructed across the River Cadoxton on the Woodland Trust site, is located within the boundary overseen by our Community Council. The site is accessed daily by a number of our residents and is a greatly appreciated amenity. We are also aware that the site is the most visited Woodland Trust property in Wales and many families have chosen to live in the adjacent area because of the benefit this amenity provides for their quality of life.

6) Our Council is concerned that Option 3 ("Upstream flood storage on Cadoxton River") would have a number of negative consequences including;

- i) the industrialising of the main gateway to the Woodland Trust site, arguably its most significant part.
- ii) the loss of ancient woodland and its dependent eco-systems that have taken centuries to develop into their present condition, rich in a diverse range of flora and fauna.
- iii) the effects on the area's amenity value to the local community. The site is heavily used by the local community and makes a significant contribution to the community's sense of well-being. Indeed we have much anecdotal evidence that many individuals' physical and mental health have benefited greatly from this facility. It should be noted that this view was articulated and fully supported at the 24 February public meeting at the Dinas Powys Parish Hall, where the many who completed the pro forma distributed at the meeting were 100% against the construction of a dam, with a majority supportive of a NFM+ approach to prevent flooding affecting homes in Dinas Powys.
- iv) overdevelopment. The construction and ongoing maintenance of a dam would require an additional roadway in an area already under strain from increased traffic. A dam would also encroach on land owned by private individuals which presumably would need to be purchased. Such an arrangement is likely to be resisted and in at least once instance would include litigation.
- v) limiting public access. The owners of the site most directly affected by the dam, the Woodland Trust, have explained, in a public meeting, that following any flooding deliberately caused by a dam the Trust would have to close the site to the public and would only re-open the site once the water had receded and the footpaths, bridleways and wooden bridges deemed safe to use. This would inevitably result in this popular amenity being closed to the public for significant periods.

- vi) the need for concrete walls on both of the river's banks leading to the dam's sluice gates, covering a significant length of the river upstream from the dam's location. This would necessitate the destruction of this part of the river's eco system and the numerous trees, including veteran oak trees, that populate this area.
- vii) a health and safety concern which appears not to have been considered in the DOBC. In the summer, in particular, the site is often used by young people for various activities. We are concerned that a dam and the concrete walls leading to the main structure would prove to be an irresistible attraction which could endanger young people's safety.

7) The negative consequences outlined above, particularly the destruction of ancient woodland and its related ecology, would conflict with the Welsh Government's clear policies on the environment, climate change and the well-being of future generations. The amount of ancient woodland left in the UK is reported to be 2% of its original size. To reduce this further, so close to our capital city, when there are alternative measures that could be deployed and evaluated, seems an odd proposal from a national organisation dependent on funding from a body with these strongly worded and widely supported policies.

8) Whilst our Council is strongly opposed, for the reasons stated, to the construction of a dam we would not wish the NRW to simply adopt a "business as usual" approach to the River Cadoxton. As a minimum we would want the NRW to live up to its mission statement and undertake the following;

- i) install a number of new monitoring points on the River Cadoxton to contribute to more accurate measures of the river's fluctuating levels, especially during periods of heavy rainfall. This would provide evidence to enable the NRW to produce plans based on a more reliable data set.
- ii) undertake, in partnership with other organisations, a number of measures to slow the flow of water into the river's main course. (The same measures would also apply to the Eastbrook). The local community has a number of voluntary organisations active in enhancing the local environment e.g. Dinas Powys Wild about Nature, the Action Group's Facebook page which has over 1,300 friends.
- iii) maintain the river's channel more effectively, particularly those sections in Dinas Powys where houses are close to the river. When the river was closely inspected by members of the Save Dinas Powys Woods Action Group in the summer of 2019 several obstructions were identified which would have exacerbated the risk of flooding to people's houses. These

impediments to the river's flow were easily identified and in some instances easily avoided. In some cases too it was clear that localised measures, with the co-operation of residents living close to the river, would also minimise the risk of flooding affecting their properties.

- iv) re-consider the local Action Group ("Save Dinas Powys Woods and Prevent Homes from Flooding") suggested benefits that would accrue from the removal of obstructions around the defunct bridge next to the main Barry to Dinas Powys road - the A4055. Whilst this issue lies outside our area of expertise we would encourage the NRW to seriously consider the removal of this obstacle to the river's flow. Whilst an engineered approach to this particular feature would have a cost and create temporary inconvenience to traffic, the cost would be well below the price of constructing and maintaining a dam. The inconvenience caused by this measure to traffic would be temporary, matched against the permanent loss of precious, ancient woodland.

9) In summary, the Community Council of Michaelston-Le-Pit and Leckwith strongly recommends that the NRW works in partnership with the Woodland Trust and local organisations to utilise nature friendly measures and specific small scale interventions to reduce and prevent flooding from the River Cadoxton affecting properties in Dinas Powys and Michaelston-Le-Pit. Such an approach would be in line with the Welsh Government's policies on the environment, climate change and the well-being of future generations and could prove to be an exemplar of good practice for the NRW, which could be replicated elsewhere in Wales.

10) We hope these comments are helpful in assisting the NRW in determining how it wishes to proceed with this matter and our Council looks forward to receiving, in due course, a copy of the NRW's assessment of its consultation with the communities of Dinas Powys, Michaelston-Le-Pit and Leckwith and with relevant organisations.

Dewi Jones

Chair, Michaelston-Le-Pit and Leckwith Community Council.

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