

Industrial Communities Cross Party Group

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Industrial Communities Cross Party Group held on 6th July 2022 via Microsoft Teams

1. Present

Vikki Howells MS (Chair); Julie James MS, Minister for Climate Change; Robin Lewis, Office of Vikki Howells MS; Peter Slater, ICA Wales; Steve Fothergill, ICA National Secretariat; Chris Whitwood, ICA National Secretariat; Phil O'Mara, ICA National Secretariat; Cllr Gareth Jones, Rhonda Cynon Taf CBC; Cllr John Spanswick, Bridgend CBC; Cllr Tim Bowen, Neath Port Talbot CBC; Cllr Anthony Hunt, Torfaen CBC; Cllr Lee Parsons, Blaenau Gwent CBC; Danny Grehan, Office of Heledd Fychan MS; Helen Parfitt, Office of Peredur Owen Griffiths MS; Jordan Griffiths, Office of Luke Fletcher MS.

2. Apologies

Apologies were received from: David Rees MS; Delyth Jewell MS; Llyr Gruffydd MS; Huw Irranca-Davies MS; Cllr James Pritchard, Caerphilly CBC; Cllr Emma Dunning, Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC; Cllr Michelle Symonds. Merthyr Tydfil CBC.

3. Welcome

Vikki Howells MS welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced Julie James MS, Minister for Climate Change, who had kindly agreed to address the group on the issue of coal tip safety.

4. Coal Tip safety: Address by Julie James, Climate Change Minister

Referring to the proposed Bill on Coal Tip Safety, the Minister described how its purpose would be to introduce a consistent approach to the management, monitoring and oversight of disused coal tips. She went on to explain how the Bill will provide a new supervisory authority to ensure a consistent approach towards the management of disused coal tips. This would be underpinned by the production of management plans for disused tips and the development of a new 'National Asset Register'. She continued with a summary of the action taken to date, which included the allocation of £44 million of grant aid over 3 years to assist local authorities in maintenance work. The meeting was also informed that the fourth round of tip inspections was about to start, and that technologies to monitor tips continued to be trialled.

The Minister also emphasised the importance of using engagement events to reassure communities following incidents such as the Tylorstown landslip. She concluded her comments by urging everyone to respond to the current consultation exercise, which closes on the 4th

August 2022, adding that the hope was to introduce legislation in the Autumn session of the Senedd.

The Chair thanked the Minister and opened the discussion with a question on the community benefits, especially employment, arising from the maintenance and remediation programmes. The Minister confirmed that in addition to creating jobs, there was also the potential to create new land uses following full remediation, especially for amenity a recreational purposes.

Steve Fothergill, ICA, questioned the role of the Coal Authority in the process, given its responsibility for legacy issues, and asked how the financial liability for coal tip safety had come to rest with the Welsh Government. In response the Minister stated that the Government was insisting that it was a Welsh Government responsibility, and that she had to take action to protect the public. She also emphasised that the Westminster Government's attitude was not a credible position, and that every opportunity would be taken to taken to press for a change of view.

The discussion concluded with a further question from the Chair on the use of the planning system to protect communities from wind farm proposals located near coal tips, in response to which the Minister referred to the pre-planning procedures and the associated environmental and safety assessments.

On behalf, of the meeting the Chair thanked the Minister for her address on the important issue of coal tip safety and for taking part in the subsequent discussion.

5. Minutes of the AGM held on the 14th July 2021

The minutes of the AGM held on the 14th July 2021 were confirmed as a true record.

6. Annual Report

The contents of the Annual Report were noted.

7. Election of Chair

Vikki Howells MS, was elected Chair of the Group.

8. Election of Secretary

Peter Slater, Director, ICA Wales, was elected as Secretary of the Group.

9. Membership of the Group

It was confirmed that requests to become a member of the CPG should be forwarded to the Secretary.

10. David White and Graham Thomas

It was agreed that the Secretary should write to former councillors, David White (Bridgend CBC) and Graham Thomas (Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC), thanking them for their valuable contributions to the CPG over the years.

11. Topics for Future Meetings

It was agreed that a joint meeting between the CPG and the UKSPF APPG (Chaired by Stephen Kinnock MP) be explored and that Vaughan Gething MS, Minister for the Economy, be invited to attend to discuss the implications of the current impasse between Westminster and Cardiff Bay on the roll-out of the UKSPF.

Other possible topics for consideration included the decarbonisation of the steel industry, the hydrogen demonstration project in Bridgend and transition to the green economy (Cllr John Spanswick) and young people and the labour market (Vikki Howells MS).

Peter Slater

Secretary

12th July 2022