

Joint Management Committee Meeting 18th March 2005**Canal Directors Report****1. General**

- 1.1. New Senior Ranger, Ian Brown, started on 1st January. He will be concentrating on organising the Ranger work force to be as efficient as possible and ensuring standards and performance targets are set and met.
- 1.2. Water levels and rainfall are being recorded daily. It is apparent that the water table is very low and that rainfall has been lower than average throughout Autumn and Winter. We would normally expect water to be running over Farnborough Road Weir by some 50mm throughout Winter. So far water has only actually reached weir height on a couple of occasions since June.
- 1.3. In a response to the vandalism reported last time, a new "CanalWatch" scheme is being piloted in Surrey. This is a partnership between the Canal Authority, John Cale Canal Cruises, Bob Potter Enterprises and Surrey Police. We are aiming to launch for the School Easter Holidays.
- 1.4. BCA attended a meeting of the Woking Joint Action Group to discuss vandalism on the Canal. As well as raising the profile of the issue a number of ideas were discussed including increased Youth work provision in the area.
- 1.5. Generally vandalism has reduced over the winter, reflecting the shorter days. However we have continued to experience quite deliberate and potentially dangerous vandalism at Ash Embankment , where the sluice gates are the target of constant abuse. The local beat officer is now patrolling regularly and local residents who overlook the sluices are in contact with the Officer and ourselves. The culprits are a gang of youths "known" to residents.
- 1.6. We have also experienced a number of problems at St Johns where stones have been catapulted through windows of canalside properties. With the missiles coming from material stockpiled for the Backpumping Project, both the BCA and SHCS were in receipt of complaints by local residents. We have had several site meetings with police and the local crime prevention officer as well as residents. SHCS have carried out works to reduce the supply of missiles. However the real problem is the mentality of those who carry out the crime. We have had no incidents reported in recent weeks.
- 1.7. BCA have applied for an Abstraction Licence (on behalf of Surrey County Council) for the St Johns Backpumping Project. We are still waiting for this to be determined. We are also helping identify routes for the required power cable for the project.
- 1.8. A Heritage Lottery Fund Monitoring Report was completed for the Woodham Backpumping Project in conjunction with Surrey CC.

2. Maintenance and Estate

- 2.1.** The work programme summary showing progress to date and plans for the coming 6 months is attached as Appendix 1.
- 2.2.** As ever, a number of unforeseen jobs have arisen on the Canal which require immediate attention. These tend to be tree related problems. However, structural leaks and collapses (such as at Lock 27) are also occurring. These are being dealt with as they appear whilst research in to longer term solutions is being sought.
- 2.3.** Significant headway is being made on the inspections and assessment of the condition of canal structures, particularly the Deepcut Flight of Locks. This has had a section by section drain down and investigation with a photographic record being made. The more serious issues are being referred to engineers within Surrey County Council for advice and solutions. These will be tackled as soon as is practically possible. The good news is that the Flight does not require immediate dredging, apart from some localised removal of silt build up in some patches!
- 2.4.** Professional engineering advice is also being provided on other structural issues along the Canal, including embankments. Both County Councils are seeking additional Capital funds to tackle some of these structural issues.
- 2.5.** Community Service Volunteers within Hampshire have started working on the Canal for 3 or 4 days a week. This has made significant impact to date, allowing a lot of trimming, clearing of overhanging branches, litter picking etc. To take place. The team are well supervised and have close contact with section Rangers in Hampshire.

3. Dry Dock

- 3.1.** We are enforcing the working practises agreed between Guildford Borough Council, the complainant and the Canal operators and Owners. We have not been made aware of any problems concerning noise over the period of this report. We have had complaints from boaters about the restrictive operating times. However, as far as we are aware everyone who has needed the dry dock has been able to carry out the works required to their boats. Accepting that people have had to book the dock for longer to provide more “noisy activity“ days, prices have been frozen.

4. Mooring Basin

- 4.1.** Extra information plus Reports from the Summer Surveys were submitted to Surrey County Council in October with a view to the Basin Application returning to Planning Committee in December. The aim was to start work this winter.
- 4.2.** However a ‘phone call in December was received from Surrey asking for further discussion with us regarding the application – particularly in respect to sustainability issues. A meeting was held in January at which some suggestions for re-organising and rewording the original application were made. A new Application now has to be submitted as the original has deemed to have expired. We are aiming for the April or May Planning Committee. Realistically this could mean a project start date in Autumn 2005.

- 5. Canal Management Plan**
 - 5.1. Considerable work has gone in to producing what will be a key Canal management document in to the future. A final Draft is being circulated to members of the JMC for consideration. Previous Drafts have been widely circulated to user groups and local authority partners and a number of re-writes have taken place. The plan has also been on the BCA Website.
 - 5.2. It is hoped that Members will be supportive of the Draft and that a final version can be produced and circulated. A small officer level "Scoping Group" will be re-convened if necessary to consider any further alterations.

- 6. Recreation and Visitor Services**
 - 6.1. The main event at the Canal Centre over winter has been the "Santa Cruises". Over 1500 people enjoyed a trip on the Canal and some £6,000 was made. We received some really excellent feedback. The 1500 users represented some 300 groups or families, and we received over 40 feedback forms. These were all extremely positive. Copies of a few have been attached as Appendix 2.
 - 6.2. Bookings for the Clubroom are going particularly well with a variety of business meetings, courses, seminars and functions taking place.
 - 6.3. The Surrey Heath Junior Citizen Scheme ran for two weeks in February and March. 1000 local children attended to learn about safety issues.
 - 6.4. An events programme for 2005 is being drawn up and the initial draft is attached as Appendix 3.
 - 6.5. A major Rally is planned for the Brookwood area in May 2006 in partnership with the Canal Society, IWA and Woking Borough Council. This will be a major high – profile event. More details will follow over the coming 6 months.

- 7. Resources Working Group**
 - 7.1. The group met on 21st February to discuss future funding issues. A report from the group is to be presented as a separate Agenda item.

- 8. Health and Safety**
 - 8.1. Health and Safety Assessments are currently being made regarding a number of issues on the Canal. This includes the Deepcut Lockgate Workshop, general fitting and handling of heavy lower lockgates, volunteer working on the Canal, and general structural safety.
 - 8.2. We are receiving good support from Health and Safety Officers in both County Councils. A liaison meeting to consider the various responsibilities has been held and a number of actions identified.

- 9. Volunteers**
 - 9.1. The Canal continues to provide a valuable resource for many people to enjoy. Much of this is thanks to the many volunteer groups who run the various clubs, societies and organisations that provide opportunities for boating, fishing, canoeing etc.
 - 9.2. We are particularly grateful once more for the support and dedication of the Surrey and Hants Canal Society.

