

BASINGSTOKE CANAL JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

SURREY AND HAMPSHIRE CANAL SOCIETY REPORT – OCTOBER 2005

INTRODUCTION

Since March volunteer work has included preliminary site preparation at Brookwood, canal bank side works and reinstatement of a water control facility. Negotiations for electricity supply for the St Johns Pump is continuing. Estimate for the pump installation has been accepted and includes the provision of a flow meter as specified in the Environment Agency Abstraction Licence. Volunteer works will be required in conjunction with and after installation of the pump.

1.0 WORKING PARTIES

1.1 Brookwood

Preliminary works for removal of the old boundary fence between canal and the Brookwood Hospital Site With improved access from the canal commenced in May. The 800 mtrs of fence was removed and transported from site by canal barge, being unloaded into skips for recycling, posts and fencing being loaded into different containers.

The path on the north of the canal, between Hermitage and the Bagshot Road, has been surfaced with road stone, The dry conditions in June enabled 400 Tonnes of Type 1 Road Stone to be delivered onto site over two weekends. Excavators levelled the path, stone was then tipped onto the path using dumpers, levelled and compacted. The hot dry conditions were ideal for moving materials but continual damping of the stone and cold drinks for the volunteers were essential.

The help and assistance provided to the Society and volunteers by the BCA and Woking Borough Council officers, as partners, has enabled the improvements to be carried out, providing lasting benefits for the canal and users of the Brookwood Park complex.

1.2 Lock 6

The original Rive Ditch Pump at Sheerwater pumped water into an outlet above Lock 6 which enable water to be passed downstream or into the Woking Pound, or both.

This facility became redundant with the installation of the Woodham pumps which flow direct into the Woking Pound. The dry summer combined with the Environment Agency reluctance to grant any increase in abstraction rates as applied for in March, resulted in low water levels for the Woking and Woodham sections of the canal.

Concerns that the houseboats would bottom out at their moorings with sewage contamination possible if soil drainage connections failed, the BCA passed water down from Woking by operating lock paddles.

The BCA requested the provision of a pipe linking the Woodham pump outlet with the original facility so the pumped water can be directed as operationally required.

Society working parties provided the link in August.

1.3 Bank Protection

Some sections of the canal are now almost dry; the section below lock 8 had considerable off bank erosion. A section of piling has been provided and the bank reinstated. The material for back fill was reclaimed from the canal bed using machine and dry dredge techniques. Extensive tree roots in the bed of the canal were removed before piles could be driven.

1,4 Vandalism

Efforts to involve the police in pro-active action have evolved, with the support of Woking Borough Council, to a working group reporting direct to the Joint Action Group (J.A.G.). Direct communication is now possible with the Police who have recently introduced a mobile community based group for reducing anti social activities as and when identified. The group will be able to direct resources at activities similar to those we experienced during the past year. The Canal Authority and Society can now alert the police if vandalism escalates in the future. .

2.0 RESOURCES

Volunteer details for the period March 2005 to September 2005

SHCS WORK PARTIES 117 days

VISITING GROUPS 125 days

TOTAL VOLUNTEER INPUT 242 days

3.0 FINANCE

3.3 CONTRIBUTIONS

Society direct costs 1st Jan 2005 –August 2005

Work Parties	£ 3,092	
Back Pumping	£21,452	
Insurance	£ 2,520.	
Maintenance	£ 739	£27,803
Contribution in kind September 2004 – February 2005		
242 Volunteer days at £50 per day		£ 12,100
Contributions for period		<u>£ 39,903</u>

3.2 BACKPUMPING

The Environment Agency finally granted an Abstraction Licence for St John Pumping in May, some five months from when the London Gazette advertised the application in a December issue. The licence requires the retrospective fitting of a Flow Meter in the pipeline, discussions with the pump installers indicate the most cost effective device is an Ultrasonic Flow Meter.

The flow meter can be installed at the same time as the pump installation and the provision has been included in the revised estimate for pump and controls. An underground chamber will be required for the flow meter to be fitted to a straight section of pipe and a cable duct provided from the flow meter to the control cabinet. Volunteers will construct the underground chamber at a time agreed with the pump installation contractor.

The estimate for pump installation has been accepted and an order issued

Correspondence for an electricity supply with EDF Energy continues, we are now into details of requirements (stage three) but so far no estimates or dates have been provided.

Expenditure for project to end 2004	£ 95,909
Expenditure year to date	£ 21,452
	Total £117,361

Estimated expenditure to complete

Pump Installation and Flow meter	£12,500
Flow Meter Chamber and ducting (materials only)	£ 900
Assessment of Electricity supply	£ 16,000
Towpath enhancement work	£ 5,000
Less Woking Local Fund Grant	£ 3,000

Shortfall £ 31,400

4.0 DRY DOCK

Humfrey Malins MP. CBE one of our Vice Presidents, responded to comments made at our AGM and newsletter editorial on the continuing saga of the dry dock restrictions. Our reply set out the historic use of the dock, our restoration work, unrestricted use prior to recent change in property ownership, also our own noise recordings and how we consider use of DIY tools should be unrestricted. A return letter from Humfrey Malins offers assistance in establishing acceptable noise levels for work in the dock. .

5.0 WATER SUPPLY

5.1 Pumping Volumes

The dry summer conditions have confirmed that pumping volumes (as licensed) are insufficient for extreme conditions, this was recognised and increased pumping volumes applied for in March. We are of the opinion that the delay by Environment Agency in granting the increase is unacceptable. That restrictions may be imposed on authorised pumping times following a query on the March Application is bureaucracy at its worst. The need for realistic abstraction consents is essential for a sustainable water supply policy for the Canal, the required increase in pumping consents should be pursued with vigour.

Recent changes within the Surrey County Council have seen the departure of Nick Baxter, responsibility for canal issues within the County has not yet been confirmed. In these circumstances the latest Environment Agency response to the Canal Directors letter of March 2005 and numerous enquiries since is causing operational difficulties for the canal management. The E.A. have now advised that Surrey County Council, as licence holders, should apply for a formal increase in pumping volumes for Woodham and St Johns, a process that had taken five months to obtain the last licence. The operational impact of the E.A. delayed response to the March letters is totally unacceptable to the Society and all waterway user groups. We advocate, as a matter of urgency; Surrey County Council applies for and obtains, in the shortest possible time scale, the required licences for Woodham and St. Johns. Without the ability to pump water, through Navigation ceases, water levels for SSSI is jeopardised and Brookwood Rally planned for 2006 is under threat.

We recommend that this committee actively supports Surrey C.C. in obtaining the appropriate licences in the shortest possible time.

5.2 Inland Waterway Amenity Advisory Committee

IWAAC visited the canal earlier this year, as part of a two-day visit by members, A visit to Deepcut Was followed by lunch at the Canal Centre and a presentation on the canal by Leigh Thornton, society Projects were covered jointly by Leigh and myself.

We were encouraged to register our water supply initiatives for inclusion in the Restoration Review currently being prepared by IWAAC. The four initiatives, Brookwood Back Pumping, Deepcut Reservoir, Aldershot Military Town and Bourley Reservoirs have now been registered. A joint BCA / SHCS registration letter was sent in July.

6.0 BROOKWOOD RALLY

The Society and IWA are organising a Campaign Rally at Brookwood on the Bank Holiday weekend 27-29 May 2006.

The Rally Campaign objectives are 1. To promote a sustainable future for the Basingstoke Canal with improved access from the national network. 2. To recognise the efforts of volunteers in the provision of Back Pumping. 3. To recognise the Support provided to the canal by Woking Borough Council over many years.

The Canal Authority and Woking Borough Council are fully supporting the event in many ways, Waterside facilities and canal improvements together with pledged facilities and funding for specific items during the event are promised by the BCA.

Woking has sponsored improvements in access from the canal and bank into the park in partnership with the society. They have also agreed use of park for land-based events and supporting the provision of other essential facilities.

Planning is well advanced and we intend to put on a good event, it is also our 40th Anniversary year and we intend to include some celebrations during the weekend.

Keep the date clear and come along.

7.0 SHCS VOTING RIGHTS ON JMC

We attended a meeting with John Tickle, Kevin Gardner and Cllr. Chapman, this meeting was requested to confirm what, if any possible options existed for society voting rights being retained.

The VAT position as reported by the Treasurer for the JAC was queried. The County VAT advisor was not at the meeting and we are in dialogue with him on this subject.

8.0 BOAT LICENCE INCREASE 2006

The proposal for increasing boat licence fees for 2006 was raised at the Advisory Group Meeting, on the assumption that a paper will be tabled at the JMC I discussed the subject with local IWA representatives. Subject to seeing the proposals I will respond at the meeting.

Strong support exists for the continuation of the joint River Wey / Basingstoke Canal licence, negotiated for the Brookwood Rally to be available post 2006

Peter Redway
Chair SHCS
October 2005