

SURREY AND HAMPSHIRE CANAL SOCIETY REPORT – MARCH 2006

INTRODUCTION

The winter period has produced a mix of weather dry and cold sometimes wet and cold. Brookwood Country Park and the canal between Hermitage and Brookwood has some very exposed sections and on two occasions, bad light was a very good reason to put away the tools and clean up. Volunteers from HSBC Bank and also teams from Swingbridge Community Boat have been working on the project, mainly on clearing undergrowth.

1.0 WORKING PARTIES**BROOKWOOD**

The new jetty construction will be a permanent facility for the canal and Country Park, it is constructed to Canal Authority specification of wood and steel fabrication.

The wood has been supplied by the Canal Authority, sourced from their Deepcut felling project and milled at the workshops. All timber has been treated prior to use.

Decking top boards allow drainage and reduce potential for path materials being carried onto boats.

Coir Rolls have been used as bank protection and reeds from the jetty location transplanted into the coir rolls in an attempt to stabilise the reed margins. Work was agreed with English Nature as part of the consents for the jetty.

ST. JOHNS BACK PUMPING

Estimates for the electricity supply for the pump at St Johns have been delayed following a policy decision by EDF Energy not to accept County Council Orders. This policy was not communicated at an early stage, only when enquiries were made. Hampshire agreed an alternative method of payment, EDF Energy would not commence design work until they were advised the payment had been cleared. The delay may prove critical as standard lead times for completion of the supply are some 12 weeks. We are pressing for an earlier completion date.

Contingency plans for a temporary generator are being investigated.

2,0 RESOURCES

Volunteer working parties for the period October 2005 to March 2006 continued on a regular 2-week cycle. HSBC and Swingbridge Community Service teams have also assisted on the projects, volunteer days are;

SHCS WORK PARTIES	149 days
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VISITING GROUPS

HSBC	6 days
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SWINGBRIDGE	126 days
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TOTAL VOLUNTEER DAYS	281 days
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3.0 FINANCE

3.1 CONTRIBUTIONS

Society direct costs as at end December 2005

Work Parties	£ 2,556
Backpumping	£ 520
Insurance	£ 2,675
Maintenance	£ 2,126

Contribution in kind - September 2005 to February 2006

281 Volunteer days at £50 per day	£ 14,050
Contributions, direct and in kind	£ 21,927

3.2 BACKPUMPING

The recent decision not to move County Hall to Woking has resulted in ringfenced Section 106 contributions for the project being cancelled. We now need to seek alternative funding opportunities for completion.

Expenditure to date £ 117,361

Expenditure to complete.

Pump Installation and Flow Meter	£ 12,500
Flow Meter Chamber and ducting	£ 900 (materials only)
Assessment of Electricity supply	£ 20,000
Towpath enhancement works	£ 8,000

Less Woking Local Fund Grant £ 3,000

Shortfall £ 38,400

4.0 CANAL FUNDING

The society has been campaigning, over a number of years, for Riparian Districts, where appropriate, to fully restore their contributions to the canal revenue budget. We have not been successful, indeed we have seen the slow erosion of contributions as other Districts have voted for reduced contributions. The decline in available revenue has inevitably reduced the canal authority maintenance capacity and a significant amount of urgent repairs works have been identified on Deepcut locks

At the very time when capital investment for this repair work is urgently needed, a Partner County Council who is part owner of the canal proposes significant cuts.

At the October meeting the committee authorised a study into options for achieving a sustainable future for the canal. The society and our partner organisation, the Inland Waterways Association, are very disappointed that offers of support and expertise have not, at the time of writing been accepted. We have not been involved in any responsible dialogue and almost six months have passed without visible progress.

We as a society, supported by the waterways movement, advocate that a moratorium on implementing the proposed cuts is imposed. This will enable the options to be fully explored and a full report with recommendations of the study to be considered, and if appropriate ratified by this committee. Any premature decision could precipitate a negative and damaging reaction, possibly resulting in the slow degradation of a unique leisure and wildlife amenity.

Members will by now be aware that constituents and general public support the canal and our view that the canal should be enjoyed by all and protected for future generations. Other organisations are also actively lobbying County Council members requesting they support the Canal Options initiative and the structured and democratic way forward in achieving a sustainable future for the canal.

5.0 WATER SUPPLY

The notification process for extending the abstraction licence pumping from September to April period has been completed. The issue of the appropriate consents is now waiting E.A. action.

6.0 CAMPAIGN RALLY

The predictions for low winter rainfall and summer restrictions have made water management a key issue for the rally. The River Wey and Basingstoke Canal management have agreed an extended licence period for the event, This will allow visiting boats to arrive and depart over a longer time period, allowing maximum use of the agreed lock times. A booking system is proposed for arrival and departure, boaters co-operation will be requested, making maximum use of the water available.

The rally theme is threefold

- a. Raise public awareness of the need to achieve a sustainable future for the canal.
- b. Officially open the St. Johns pumps, recognising the sustained volunteer input to the project.
- c. Recognise the support provided by Woking Borough Council over many years.

The weekend also celebrates the Societies 40th Anniversary and the Inland Waterways Association 60th Anniversary.

Waterside displays and land side stands and attractions are worth a visit, all members are invited, please come and enjoy the event.

Peter Redway
Chair SHCS
March 2006

