

Surrey County Council
Report to Joint Management Committee
8th April 2009

Basingstoke Canal Structures

Lock 15

Works have started at Lock 15. Early excavations established that there is a much larger void beneath the block work than first thought. We expect the repair of this void to add a further 2 weeks to the completion of the task but we anticipate that all the works will be completed well before the Boat rally at the end of May. The drainage works (by-wash) should be complete by the end of March.

Asset Management Plan –

Surrey County Council is progressing well with its obligation to the condition survey. Lock inspections are continuing and 16th March saw the start of CCTV inspections of by-washes, and diving to inspect the condition of the lock structures from waterside.

Houseboats

Surrey County Council's Estates and Property Management Team manage the houseboats. There was a substantial period of time when there was no officer in post for the management of the houseboats. A new appointment was made in 2008 and the post is within the Estates and Property Management Team (EPM). Substantial progress has been made, meetings held with houseboat owners (both Hermitage and Scotland Bridge sites) and the BCA. The officer is resolving a number of the houseboat owners' issues including car park usage, car park security, and path and embankment protection. In return it is expected that Houseboat owners will comply with the conditions of their leases.

During the time when the houseboats were unmanaged, the physical environment deteriorated and the tenants and houseboat owners operated independently of the County Council. Rent increases went unpaid; leases were not properly transferred and in some cases no rent was paid. In addition there are two houseboat owners who either have or are in the process of building a second storey. The County Council is now taking a strong line and has issued a stop notice on the current construction of a 2nd storey on a boat at Hermitage. Action will also be taken on an earlier 2-storey construction but in view of the lack of enforcement action taken by the Borough Council (under planning legislation), action by the County Council may take longer to result in a successful outcome. When the lease is given up this houseboat will have to leave the canal.

Some Houseboat owners have constructed structures on the bank, which do not conform to the requirements of the lease, nor are they in keeping with the general environment. As it will be difficult to insist on demolition of these structures at this stage we anticipate that non-conforming structures will be demolished as houseboat leases are transferred to new owners. New leaseholders will be expected to construct structures that meet the terms of their lease.

The houseboat issues are numerous and complex; they involve legal, property, and environmental matters. In addition some matters (e.g. planning) are the concern of the local borough council.

The amount of outstanding rent for each mooring is being ascertained, and each lessee or occupier will be issued with a personal account of arrears. Quotations are being sought for CCTV in the car park in an attempt to reduce vandalism to resident's vehicles. Quotations are being sought to improve the bank and path. New leases and associated terms will be drafted to reassure residents. Some residents owe substantial amounts of rent and payment plans are being organised.

All of the residents' concerns are being addressed. However this needs to be reciprocated by the residents accepting their responsibilities.

Deepcut Landslip

Some of the funds originally earmarked for this task were transferred to allow the works at Lock 15 to take place. The current position is that an ecological review must be undertaken prior to a design of the repair. A BCA ranger is undertaking this review.

The BCA will undertake the repair works on the towpath and are presently costing the materials and labour required for this task, which Surrey County Council will fund. These works can take place in advance of the landslip repair.

Rose Younger
Countryside Contracts Manager
30th March 2009