

## **BASINGSTOKE CANAL JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

### **SURREY AND HAMPSHIRE CANAL SOCIETY REPORT – SEPTEMBER 2009**

#### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

The Canal enjoyed a very brief period of use this year, late May to late June, after which the Navigation closed due to water shortage and lock gate failures at Deepcut. Once again closure has resulted from lack of capital funding; the data available from the Canal Authority checklists on structures provide condition monitoring, also a prediction of failure. Lack of a published Asset Management Plan with comprehensive structures information is a main contributory factor in this sorry sequence of events.

The structure survey reports, one per lock, commissioned by Surrey County Council are only now becoming available for evaluation. At the time of writing this report the information has just been circulated as a draft, so detailed analysis has yet to be carried out and commented on. In the Society's opinion, the structure surveys should include all data on all aspects of the waterway, locks, accommodation bridges, embankments, culverts, depth profile; a lot of data has been collated, but some elements of information remain outstanding.

The current data on structures are fragmented when co-ordination is essential; identified remedial works need to be prioritised, estimates prepared and capital funding programmes authorised. This has been documented for 2009/10 but not for later years. A hand-to-mouth wish list is not acceptable. A firm policy of renovations needs to be developed, authorised and implemented, and it should be fully endorsed by this committee. The Asset Management Plan provides a base to move forward, but the financial momentum is vague and without substance at present. Capital Funding for priority works in 2010 and later years is essential.

The Society and associated volunteer groups continue to support the canal; our work party report confirms the Society's commitment on works compatible with volunteer programmes.

The owners must, by example, accept their responsibilities for years of deterioration by providing effective repairs recommended in other presentations made today.

#### **2.0 WORK PARTY REPORT**

Working Parties have concentrated on the Lock 22 project and Bookwood, with time off on a token clearing of the worst of Woking Pond rubbish and reeds. The pressure was on for Lock 22 to be usable for the May event cruising.

## **2.1 Lock 22**

With time running out if we were to have a usable lock for the May event, the frequency and duration of working parties was increased. With improving conditions and support from a number of sources the foundation for the extended towpath lower wing wall was achieved; with Premix deliveries, a shuttle of dumpers from Curzon Bridge, excavator and concrete hopper, and a placing team, the foundations were cast by early afternoon. Wall construction was followed by another Premix dumper shuttle and the concrete backfill was complete. Excess spoil was removed from the canal bed and stockpiled to dry out and the bank re-profiled, the sun was shining and the adverse conditions almost a memory.

Shuttering removal, backfill and some coping stones were fitted, but the wall was at water level and artificial coping stones were decided on rather than brickwork. The lock was useable and pre event work was pressing, time to make safe and go to Brookwood.

June and post event period, a start on manufacturing artificial coping stones and preliminary site clearing; all the artificial stones were cast using the Wey and Arun technique. Fitting the artificial stones completed the wall, and bollards and a walkway provide a landing area with safe access onto the towpath. Grading, levelling the spoil and clearing site were completed, with reinstatement of the towpath.

It is a sobering thought that site clearance was almost a year after setting up for the work camp 2008. The moral is “do not take Deepcut on face value” and assume complications will disrupt the work.

The dedication of all the groups involved in this project was outstanding. The appalling conditions through the winter with frequent setbacks were taken in their stride and resulted in an excellent finished product.

## **2.2 Brookwood**

A water supply was planned for the Brookwood event, but the mains connection was not available due to soil analysis data being required by the Water Board. Woking B.C. sponsored us with a temporary supply. Waste disposal was via container and tanker emptying, avoiding the need for site backup.

Site services required minimal work party involvement, with a day for setting up and a day for off hires.

The event was well supported by visiting boats, with a number cruising to Odiham after the weekend.

Post event we had received a copy of the soil analysis from Woking BC. This was sent off to the water company, and standard water pipe and foundations for a tap security cabinet have been installed prior to towpath works by Sustrans. We are now waiting a date for mains connection and completion.

### **2.3 Woking**

A weekend with the dredger clearing some of the growth and silt from the Woking Pound made a start. The usual bikes and shopping trolleys were recovered, along with a considerable quantity of reeds and silt from spot dredging the shallows.

We could have spent weeks on clearing but dredging ceases with the summer growth period.

### **2.4 Work Camp**

Waterway Recovery Group have completed two weeks of camps from 27<sup>th</sup> June to 11<sup>th</sup> July. This year the camps carried out the provision of lock landings at Woodham, enhancement work on the locks rather than restoration.

Four landings have been completed, each 10mtrs in length and constructed in sheet piling with channel section reinforcement and back anchor piles for stability.

Three bollards have been provided per landing with Compacted Type 1 Road stone surface. The water depth allows normal narrow boats to tie alongside.

The camps endured extremes of weather; excessive heat during week 1 and showers / thunderstorms during week 2. The shade on the towpath side was very welcome on both counts.

The Camp Leaders achieved an excellent standard of work from their respective teams. My thanks to all who attended the camps and the SHCS support team.

Accommodation was at Brookwood Pavilion and sponsored by Woking BC. Waterway Recovery Group arranged for their Plant Transporter to be available, enabling daily transport of equipment, which if left on site would have been vandalised.

### **3.0 RESOURCES**

Volunteer support for the period February 2009 to August 2009 includes a work camp and visiting groups for some weekends; the volunteer support for this period is:

SHCS WORK PARTIES	307 days
WORK CAMP	196 days
TOTAL VOLUNTEER INPUT	503 days (6 month period)

## 4.0 FINANCE

### Contributions

Society contributions March 2009 to August 2009

Fuel	£ 900
Work Parties	£ 1,850
Insurance	£ 1,500
Maintenance	£ 5,000 (Replacement Vehicle)
Projects - Lock 22	£ 7,250 ( £22 K Cumulative )
- Brookwood	£ 2,538

Contribution in kind for 6 months ended August 2009

503 Volunteer days at £50 per day	£ 25,150
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<b>Total contributions for 6 months</b>	<b>£ 44,180</b>
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## 5.0 WATER SUPPLY

The BCA have re-commissioned the Frimley Pump, data on available supplies from Frimley will be used in evaluating the next phase of water supply and its location.

Water shortages and low levels have a knock on effect on structures and their stability. We need to progress sustainable water supplies for maintaining a viable, diverse and attractive waterway.

## 6.0 NAVIGATION ISSUES

### 6.1 General Comments

The canal is recognised as a multi user asset, benefiting the population along the canal corridor and a substantial number of visitors. A wide range of leisure interests is catered for by the canal. The value for the money invested by local authorities is considerable and discussed in detail in the “Value for Money” publication.

Activities contributing towards health and wellbeing, environmental, SANG and leisure targets are provided by the canal and should be included in any evaluation on capital expenditure pay back.

### 6.2 Structures

Feedback on reports of the Structure Survey indicates that some repairs will be required and the good news that remedial works on lock gates will be carried out is welcome. Continued closure of the canal is not, in our opinion, an option. That some long standing repairs are possible in this financial year is also very welcome news.

This committee should now study the condition survey report and recommendations made for a recovery programme, endorse the need for capital funding and fully support a budget application for 2010.

I anticipate that recovery will involve capital expenditure into future years; programme priorities should recognise this and be fully funded.

The Society recognises that continued support is essential; the voluntary sector has invested considerable resources in repairing the lower wing walls of lock 22, an effective partnership with the BCA. We expect this commitment to be recognised with appropriate action by the canal owners.

Future projects for volunteers should recognise that work will take longer than a contract; we will consider projects which allow a degree of flexibility in completion.

I recommend that members fully support the Capital investment required for the Canal in 2010 and any subsequent years

### **6.3 Events**

Ecological condition reports following the Brookwood event were favourable and assents for future events at this venue and others will be confirmed by Natural England and included in the Conservation Management Plan.

The perception that the Basingstoke Canal is closed during the accepted cruising season is widely held and unless this view is changed then boating within the agreed movements will not occur.

In order to promote the canal as a navigable waterway, the Society will be organising events and cruises within the parameters of this year's successful event at Brookwood. The canal needs to become recognised as an attractive sustainable waterway well worth a visit. This in turn will bring additional income for the canal.

Venues will vary as more of the same can create stress on a given locality and varied venues create visitor interest.

We will be considering next year's events in the near future and consulting as appropriate.

Peter Redway  
September 2009