

**BASINGSTOKE CANAL JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE****SURREY AND HAMPSHIRE CANAL SOCIETY REPORT - .SEPTEMBER 2010****1 INTRODUCTION**

The Canal closure at Deepcut and essential repairs at West Hart Embankment have considerably restricted navigation for this year. The accuracy of Jacobs Structure Survey has been confirmed with predicted lock gate failures occurring. Replacement gates have been made and fitted, reopening the eastern section of the canal for an event at St. Johns.

I understand that the replacement cost of the gates has been debited from the Canal Revenue Account rather than a capital expenditure from allocated structural repair finance. A case for works identified in the structural survey being allocated as capital expenditure should be seriously considered, as the revenue account will not sustain the replacement gate programme recommended in the report. Structure repairs and new gates are required for safe navigation, and as such, replacements should be considered as Capital Expenditure.

Repairs to the Deepcut slip and towpath are now complete, so a concentrated effort on starting structure contracts at Deepcut should now be a priority, with investigatory work on cuttings being carried out as a parallel operation. The recent news that the Term Contract will not be in place until Jan 2011, with works anticipated as starting one year after finance was authorized, is totally unacceptable to this Society.

User group reaction to a Canal Society Presentation at the National Waterway Festival, in which we hoped to achieve a positive message of a canal being repaired and re-opened for through Navigation by end of 2011, was caustic and very basic: “When are you going do something? When you do, we will believe you.”

The only work in progress at Deepcut is by volunteers, a commodity much sought after in the current climate with more work available than overall resources. Volunteers need to feel part of a team, working on well supported and organised projects, which so far we have achieved, but this should not be taken for granted.

Support in the form of owner commitment to initiate structural repair contract work at Deepcut has not yet taken place. As a Management Team, we need to achieve visible progress on the ground, re-establishing credibility with volunteers, potential volunteers and customers, a much more positive message than is conveyed at present.



Volunteers working on Lock 17

## **2 WORK PARTY REPORT**

### **Lock 17**

Working parties commenced repair work at Lock 17 in July, and weekends by two visiting Waterway Restoration groups, Society volunteers and two weeks of Waterway Recovery Group camp have progressed repair work on the Upper Wing Walls.

Draining the canal prior to starting work exposed extensive erosion of chamber brickwork and supporting walls below the water line. Some re-pointing of the brickwork had been anticipated, and it would be prudent to replace the defective original 200 year old brickwork whilst on site.

I expect to complete the wing wall repairs by the end of November, with chamber brickwork renovation shortly after.

### **Brookwood**

The water supply has now been connected for the Brookwood water point. After a considerable delay providing soil analysis reports, standard water pipe was accepted by the water company. Thank you Woking B.C. for your assistance.

### **Work Camp**

The Waterway Recovery Group has completed two weeks of camps, targeted at Lock 17 repairs, very good progress was achieved with demolition of defective wall and provision of new foundations in week 1. The second week concentrated on the offside upper wing wall, completing face brickwork and some concrete backfill.

Some Lock Chamber re-pointing was also completed, but a considerable area remains for follow on volunteer parties.

Changed dates for the camp clashed with the start of the football season, which prevented the use of Brookwood Pavilion. The BCA agreed the use of the field at Mytchett and the Society hired accommodation units and a silent generator for the duration.

My thanks to Ian, Dean, Julia and others for their help and assistance on the accommodation, also Leigh Thornton and Surrey Heath B.C. for the use of showers at Frimley Lodge Park.

### **Work Boat**

The Society Work Boat has been launched. Only minor tasks remain, including the fitting of a hand operated hydraulic crane.

Provisional plans for the Autumn/Winter period include regular deployment on bank clearance, subject to increased volunteer support. The programme, additional equipment and tools are included in our internal proposals but have not yet been ratified by the Society Directors. Numbers of volunteers are a key element in our planning.

### **Resources**

Volunteer support for the period July 2010 to September 2010 includes a work camp and visiting groups for some weekends, and the volunteer support for this period is:

SHCS WORK PARTIES	139 days
WORK CAMP	216 days
VISITING GROUPS	48 days
TOTAL VOLUNTEER INPUT	403 days (3 month period)

### 3.1 Contributions

Fuel	£ 350.00
Work Parties	£ 1,850.00
Maintenance	£
Projects - Lock 17	£ 3,686.22
Work Camp	£ 4,862.66

403 Volunteer days at £50 per day	£20,150
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**Total contributions for 3 months** **£ 30,898**

The Basingstoke Canal has a long association with volunteer support groups who have been a major contributor in achieving restoration to full navigation in 1991. Volunteers have since assisted us in enhancement works including water re-cycling projects, towpath works, bank-side clearing and bye-wash repairs.

Recent projects have reverted to lock reconstruction at Deepcut, initially Lock 22 and currently Lock 17.

Summer camp and weekend accommodation is provided at the Society's expense or sponsorship, and food and transport costs are provided by the volunteers themselves.

The thrust for increased volunteer commitment is real. We, as a Society, wish to increase volunteer working on this canal, so we need to trade on past reputation, whilst improving the range of projects, skills and management.

Volunteers need to achieve their aspirations in the work they carry out, and feel part of an overall organisation meeting its objectives. The delay by the County Councils in commissioning structure repair work has the very real potential for alienating volunteers at the very time we are attempting to increase their numbers.

## **5 WATER SUPPLY**

BCA and Society negotiations on various water supply initiatives continue.

## **6 NAVIGATION ISSUES**

### **6.1 Structures**

The Asset Data Base compiled after the Structural Surveys should be considered a key driver in preparing priority work schedules; it identifies anticipated failure, associated risk and finance assessments.

Data is available for reasonably swift preparation and issue of contract orders on the Deepcut Locks. More complex cutting and embankment failures require detailed study and evaluation prior to work starting.

The delay in starting contract work has rapidly eroded potential user confidence that the canal will become a cruising waterway.

We as Management have not facilitated an early start on visible repair works for this year's funding allocation, and credibility for this canal and Management is currently "on the floor". What action do we intend? What positive publicity can we achieve to change user perception?

### **6.2 Cycling Signs**

At our last meeting, the ongoing issue of inappropriate cycleway signs on the canal estate was raised. Residents Associations, individuals and Society members have made appropriate complaints, so far without an official change in policy. An inspection by the Local Committee is planned following a petition.

The Society considers that a change to signs which follow the Way Mark principles is appropriate for a conservation status area.

## **7 EVENTS**

Preliminary discussions on a major canal event in 2012, the 21<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the re-opening of the canal, have been held between the Society, Canal Authority, Boat Clubs and Surrey Heath BC. A date of May 2012 is possible, based on the canal being re-opened for through navigation and the water supply being satisfactory at that time of year.

We anticipate a range of land and water based events, with an Organising Committee for overall planning liaison and setting up responsibilities

Peter Redway  
October 2010