



Report to JMC – 27 February 2014

1. Recent work on the canal

Over the autumn and early winter Canal Society working parties have undertaken the following projects:



- Completion of a landing stage adjacent to North Warnborough lift bridge



- Completion of works on the BCA's weedcutter following an extensive overhaul. It recently passed a safety test and hopefully is now ready to be returned to service



- Cutting up and removal of trees at the Dogmersfield land slip. So far around 19 aggregate bags full of logs have been sold to local people and Canal Society members in exchange for well over £500 in donations towards the canal. There is much more timber still to be cut up and sold.

The Canal Society has now agreed to undertake repairs to the BCA's patrol boat, once work on John Pinkerton II winter maintenance is completed.

Two week-end and one full week visiting Waterways Recovery Group work parties are planned for later in the year. These will be concentrating on bank clearance between Mytchett and Deepcut, general works around Lock 28 and the Deepcut dry dock, and landing stage construction at Brookwood country park.

2. Society workparty efforts

Since the October 2013 JMC meeting to this January, the Society work parties on the canal have undertaken 140 man-days work, or around £12,300 Equivalent Value In Kind (EVIK).

For the whole of 2013, the total was around 670 man-days, or £54,000 EVIK. In addition, the Society contributed £22,000 in cash to canal related works/improvements during 2013.

The total cash sum expended by the Canal Society on the repairs to the weedcutter over this 2-year project was in the region of £4,000. Canal Society volunteers devoted around 190 man-days, or £21,000 EVIK, to the repairs over this period.

3. John Pinkerton 11

(A) The Canal Society's new passenger trip boat, John Pinkerton 11, had a very successful operating season in 2013 generating net income of approximately £35,000. With the exception of some funds retained for repairs and modifications to the boat, the bulk of this surplus will be re-invested in the canal through the Canal Society's work parties. In particular,

funding will be used to finance the purchase of materials and the hiring of plant and equipment.

(B) The John Pinkerton 11 has been booked again by parties visiting the Farnborough Air Show in July. After the Air Show it is hoped that the boat will travel into Surrey and host trips for local authority partners and other supporters on the Surrey section of the canal. These trips will include a visit to Woking.

4. Other matters

The Canal Society has identified several pressing matters which should, in its view, be receiving high priority within the Canal Partnership. These include the following:

(1) Repairs to Swan Cutting, North Warnborough – The towpath movement in Swan Cutting occurred approximately 2 years ago. This has caused inconvenience to the many residents in the area who regularly use the towpath. The slippage on the towpath has also resulted in a shallowing and narrowing of the canal causing difficulties to navigation. In particular, the John Pinkerton 11, which passes through Swan Cutting on its trips to King Johns Castle, regularly experiences problems in traversing the cutting. The Canal Society strongly urges Hampshire County Council to address this problem and to initiate repairs in order to make the towpath and the canal properly useable by the public.

(2) Telemetry – The Canal Society has initiated a project to install a telemetry system on the canal which will improve water management and reduce the demands on ranger time. All the necessary preparatory work for the project has been completed and funding has been set aside. However, the equipment has yet to be ordered and the JMC s urged to press HCC to place the contracts without further delay.

(3) The Canal Society has consistently argued that the District Authorities should (with the support of the Counties and the Canal Society) jointly prepare a planning guidance document for the canal. This would identify, for each section of the canal, planning guidelines to prevent unsuitable canal corridor development. It would also identify suitable sites where canal-side developments could benefit the canal both in terms of improved facilities and increased revenue generation opportunities. The absence of a document of this kind continues to lead to development opportunities being missed. For example, a recent proposed development at Colt Hill, Odiham, which has canal frontage suited to a small boat basin development and which is supported by members of the Canal Partnership, is now proceeding without any benefits being secured for the canal. If future opportunities are not to be missed, it is essential, in the Canal Society's view, for a suitable planning document (along the lines of the document drawn up for the Wey Navigation which has already been circulated to JMC members) should be prepared.

(4) Following the agreement of the JMC to the principle of developing the Canal Centre as a new visitor centre, administrative office for the BCA etc and the upgrading of Ash Lock Depot as the maintenance base and workshops for the canal, the Canal Society urges Hampshire County Council to take the necessary steps to secure the additional land required at Ash Lock. The JMC will recall that the MOD, which owns the additional land, has indicated its agreement, in principle and subject to contact negotiations, to make the land available to the canal. Whilst this opportunity is available the Canal Society urges that it

should be grasped in case other potential users come forward. It would appear to be an appropriate time to pursue this opportunity as the whole area to the west of Ash Lock is the subject of a large housing development which will involve the release by the MOD of much of the surrounding land.

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Chairman
The Basingstoke Canal Society

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