

Canal Management Report



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Operational Report

The BCA Canal Manager reports that:

BCA Maintenance & Inspection Works

- Upper and Lower gates replaced at Lock 22 and associated works to replace cills etc
- Winter cut started and already completed between Ash wharf bridge and Claycart bridge Farnborough
- Summer towpath cutting completed several full cuts (64miles/cut) and also mowing and strimming of all lock tops
- Water levels were an issue this summer after a dry spring and Deepcut and Brookwood lock flights had to be closed for 7 weeks between 23rd June and 14th Aug. An indicator of how dry it has been is that it is still more than -100mm down even now in October, which has meant only 64 visiting boats so far this year. (40% less than would be expected)
- Investigation works into seepage at Sycamore Crescent, Fleet
- Japanese knotweed injection in August
- Himalayan Balsam pulling Deepcut and Crookham areas, staff and volunteer sessions
- Repair of large towpath washouts near Greywell
- Towpath and lock top collapse at lock 4 repaired
- Annual Lock inspections completed

Events/Visitor Services

- Santa cruises sold out
- Staff and volunteers attended the River Wey festival with the Canal stand at Dapdune wharf in Guildford.
- Attempted break-in thwarted at canal centre. After improvements to security of doors last year after previous break-ins. We found that our new improved systems had worked and they hadn't managed to gain entry and broke their tools in trying. Nothing of great value is kept on site anymore anyway but it was still quite satisfying.
- A very busy summer on site with record takings for Rosebud trip boat with her new cream tea trips going down very well. The unpowered boat business also had a record year helped by all that hot and dry weather and additions to the fleet of boats.
- We now have 2,281 followers of our facebook page and a post last month regarding santa cruises received our biggest ever audience of 23,653 people. Many concerned over our lack of online booking facilities.

Volunteers

- Successful volunteer summer BBQ social held at the canal centre with food and games and over 40 people.
- Floating pennywort clearance over many sessions from lock 7 down to the River Wey. Massive impact on controlling this invasive species and keeping the navigation open to boats.
- Four volunteers and a member of ranger staff from the Tuesday group undertook a 6 week canoe course, completing their BCU 1 star award. Thus enabling them to use canoes to get at the smaller sections of floating pennywort. Another group will hopefully complete the same course in the spring.
- Already starting the winter sapling cutting currently working on sections between lock 2 and lock 4 in Woodham.
- Rosebud was fully crewed and skippered by volunteers and further training planned for the spring as new skippers are required to keep up with the hectic rota for the trip boats.

- Farnborough road car park has had a volunteer session by Aspire who came for a corporate day and helped to reorganise the car park layout and carry out cutting back and surfacing repairs. This was followed up by the Tuesday team and the results are quite dramatic with the canal now very visible from the road slipway and providing great natural advertising for the canal.

Management Team

The BCA Canal Manager and Strategic Manager have been working on:

- Update of Conservation Management Plan completed in draft form ready to be discussed at next Conservation Steering Group Meeting
- Drafting of a new **tree management policy** for the whole of HCC Countryside Service, so that in respect of the Canal it also fits with SCC's tree safety policy.
- Concerns have been raised by Natural England regarding boat use on the Canal following the submission of the assent application to build Farnborough Road moorings. The Management Team has been engaging with NE to ensure that all factors are properly considered in NE's decision making processes.

Capital/Strategic Works

The Strategic Manager reports the following works have been undertaken or are planned:

Surrey

- **Woking town wharf** – work was expected to start in September, but during neighbour consultations an issue was raised about possible soil contamination, a specialist has had to be brought in to test samples and offer advice. This has meant that that the contractor's autumn window of availability was missed. Start on site delayed until January 2018.
- **Bank protection** – a prioritised list of sites have been surveyed by the BCA and SCC Engineer for a scheme of bank protection throughout the Surrey half of the Canal. Expected work to start in spring 2018.
- **Heath Vale Road Bridge** – the site has posed a number of complex issues and constraints but the contractor has now commenced repairs of the towpath under the bridge, they will also be doing short sections of bank protection on the towpath side at Ash Wharf and at Deedman's Footbridge whilst in the area.
- **Chobham Road turnover bridge** – the Strategic Manager is engaged with design and consents approvals for a Woking Borough Council / SCC project funded by EM3 to provide a new turnover bridge at Chobham Road, Woking. A planning application is expected at Woking BC imminently. The bridge will be owned by Woking BC under an agreement with SCC as Canal owner.
- **Lock inspections / repair** – the St John's Locks will be drained for inspection and maintenance Nov – March.

Hampshire

- **Dogmersfield landslip** has finally been completed – however time has been expending in dealing with matters around the conclusion of the project, which went considerably over the estimates in terms of contractor's bills and engineering costs.
- With only about £30k remaining in the HCC capital budget a small number of high priority **bank protection** sites will be added to the SCC bank protection contract in the spring.
- **Swan cutting** – the Strategic Manager has instructed HCC Estates to open discussions with the 12 neighbouring properties.