

Basingstoke Canal Society

Report to JMC – 28th February 2013

1. Recent work on the canal

Since the last report, Canal Society work parties have completed repairs to the towpath and banks adjacent to Frimley Lodge Park and undertaken over-hanging tree clearance in Woking, Odiham and on the West Hart embankment. A potential breach at Horsall Common was also repaired with the assistance of a dredger owned by a Society member.



Another work party has continued with the repairs to the BCA's weed-cutter (*above*) which should be available for service probably during April. The Society will be making a cash contribution of £2000 to this work, which includes the purchase of a replacement cutter blade.

Total effort expended during the period amounted to 230 man days, amounting to £16,800 of value in kind (of which £6,300 relates to the weedcutter activity).

2. Volunteer input in 2012

During 2012 Canal Society volunteers undertook 660 man days of work equivalent, in cash terms, to £55,000. Repairs to the towpath between Norris and Eelmore bridges and the construction of a landing stage at Lock 1 were completed, and a significant programme of repairs to the banks and towpath at



Frimley Lodge Park (*above*) has been undertaken. The Society also made a cash contribution of £19,000 during the year. In addition to this, the Canal Society hosted a week-long Waterway Recovery Group work party which built a piled wing-wall extension at Lock 19 in Deepcut and paved 600m of towpath north of Ash Lock.

3. New trip boat

Work on the Canal Society's new trip boat, which will replace the John Pinkerton in the spring, is now well advanced and is expected to be ready for delivery in mid-March. The structure is complete and painted externally (*right*), and fitting out is in progress. The new boat will



provide a very valuable 'shop window' for the canal by attracting visitors from far and wide and providing immense enjoyment to the public who might not otherwise visit the canal. The cost of the new boat, which exceeds £160,000, represents a massive investment by the Canal Society in the future of the canal and demonstrates its continuing commitment to improve and publicise the value of the navigation.

4. The Aldershot Urban Extension

The Canal Society has repeatedly stressed to the JMC, and particularly District Council members, the importance of securing benefits for the canal from developments along its banks. New developments can be used to provide better boating facilities, much needed new moorings and enhancements to the canal environment to ensure greater public enjoyment of the waterway. A planning application for the construction of over 3500 new houses on former Army land adjacent to the canal in Aldershot has now been submitted to Rushmoor Borough Council. This is likely to be the largest development affecting the canal in recent years and it offers an excellent opportunity to obtain some 'planning gain' for the canal. The Canal Society is still digesting over 250 documents which accompany the planning application but early indications are that, despite earlier promises that the canal-side location would be taken into account in the planning

process, no obvious benefits appear to be available. In view of the size of this development, and its importance to the canal, the Canal Society strongly urges the JMC to press Rushmoor BC and the developers to ensure that the canal and its needs are properly taken into account in the planning process.

5. Signage

At the time of the re-opening of the canal over 20 years ago, signs were installed, at strategic locations, which covered such matters as the history of the canal, local walks, information on wildlife etc. Over the years since the opening, the signs have deteriorated and some have disappeared altogether. This not only creates a very negative impression of the canal, it also denies the public essential information about the waterway, its facilities, history etc. In the Canal Society's view there is an urgent need to provide new signs which could, in addition to the basic material, provide useful information about local businesses (restaurants, pubs, shops etc), points of contact, places of interest etc. As all the communities along the canal have a vested interest in providing new signage, the Canal Society would like to propose that each District nominates a JMC member who will work with the BCA and the Canal Society to design new signs and find suitable sources of funding for them.

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Chairman
The Basingstoke Canal Society

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