



## Canal Management Report

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### Key Issue

To inform the Committee of actions taken by the Strategic Manager and BCA Canal Manager in managing, maintaining and operating the Canal; and report the work of the Conservation Steering Group.

## Operation & maintenance

### BCA Maintenance & Inspection Works

#### *Planned*

The BCA carried out the following planned maintenance and inspection tasks:

- Santa's jetty replaced, joint project contractor and BCA
- Lower Lock gates replaced at Lock 7
- Winter flail cutting of towpath
- Drain down and fish rescue for principle inspection of Deepcut Lock flight 18- 25
- Support engineer for principle inspection surveys
- Towpath side cutting at Ash Wharf through to Great Bottom Flash
- Re-planking of gates at Lock 25
- Minor repairs to paddles at Lock 11 towpath side and Lock 8 offside
- Handrails replaced on lock tail bridges at locks 1, 2, 7, 18
- Length Inspections, Supplemental Inspections, Reservoir Surveillance Inspections / Reservoir Inspection by the Supervising Engineer, and the Lock General Inspections were all conducted
- Summer towpath cutting, and car park picnic area mowing is all now underway.

#### *Reactive*

- Investigations and on-going monitoring of minor issues at Sheerwater and Claycart and Bankside.
- Very small group of Travellers turned up at Colt Hill car park, but HCC quickly served notice to quit. Only 1 bag of rubbish left. Further reinforcements to height barrier are being made.

### Events/Visitor Services

- Over 2000 people attended Santa Cruise month long event in December.
- We now have 3,932 followers of our Facebook page and 1,683 followers on twitter. We are also now on Instagram @basingstokecanal.
- Two new volunteer skippers were trained for *Rosebud* and the Boats were all prepared for boating season ahead with *Rosebud* undergoing a full repaint thanks to the volunteers.
- Canal navigation fully re-opened following winter works on 22<sup>nd</sup> March following timely completion of works programme.
- Improved CCTV system installed at Canal Centre to help prevent further break-ins.

- The Canal Centre businesses had a great start to the year with a booming Easter holidays with boat hires, trips and Easter trails flying out the doors.

## Volunteers

- The Patrol Boat carried out 51 Patrols of the canal this last year covering all areas between lock 28 and the castle, fully skippered and crewed by volunteers. As well as clearing litter and tree debris they are also the eyes and ears of the water, checking boat licences and acting as a mobile information source for the public.
- A new 'mini' Patrol boat (called *Bumblebee*) is being set up and will be based in Odiham allowing more frequent checks through this busy area of the Canal. This will utilise a small boat that was kindly donated by Fleet Boys Brigade a few years ago. This boat will also be volunteer led.
- The Workboat based in Woking is now kitted out for volunteers and carried out over 10 independent volunteer led trips last year clearing *hydrocotyle*, and rubbish and carrying out minor works through this area which included a full clean and de-weed of the lock gates and chambers through the Woodham lock flight.
- 30 volunteers regularly attending every Tuesday. This group is now full and running a waiting list. This group spent the winter tackling towpath side vegetation cutting throughout the canal. Deepcut lock flight and Deepcut cutting in particular were "blitzed" with over 8 weeks spent in these areas, clearing back the vegetation through the lock flight and re-coppicing the side of the cutting.
- **Volunteer numbers for 2018-19 BCA and BCS were 23,982 hrs. This is the equivalent to £239,820 (using HLF standard rate of £50/day for unskilled volunteers, based on them working a 5 hour day).** In reality many of our volunteers are now carrying out skilled roles so this could be seen as an underestimate.
- Two canal volunteers were presented with awards (as well as many others being nominated) at the recent HCC Volunteer Award Celebration. Mike Gordon (Head Lengthsman and Boat Manager for *Rosebud* and Patrol Boat as well as Lead Skipper) won the coveted Chairman's Award. Ken Sankey (Tuesday volunteer member, Volunteer leader and committee member for the BCS) received special recognition (runner up) for the Volunteer of the Year Award. Our Canal Ranger - Steve Livsey-Bennett also received a special recognition (runner up) for the Volunteer Leader Award.

## Capital Works Programme

The following works from the capital works programmes of Surrey and Hampshire County Councils have been carried out from 2018 programme:

### Surrey

- **Woking town wharf** – Completed with opening ceremony on 31<sup>st</sup> May.
- **Bank protection** – a prioritised list of sites was worked on in conjunction with similar works in Hampshire - mainly in the St Johns and Hermitage areas.
- **Lock inspections / repair** Deepcut Locks 18-24 were drained for Principle Inspection by the SCC Engineer. A contractor immediately carried out the key items of maintenance identified.

### Hampshire

- **Swan "cutting"** – HCC engineers are now about to contact residents to request further access to properties to carry out further monitoring works to help come up with a long-term solution.
- **Bank Protection** - a prioritised list of sites was worked on in conjunction with similar works in Surrey – mainly west of Crookham – Barley Mow.
- **Crookham Deeps** – postponed to due to permissions and permits required; Strategic Manager, BCA and SCC and HCC Engineers all employed in preparing for this project to be delivered in winter 2019/20.

The regulatory framework for a protected site such as the Canal is a very significant factor in the ability to deliver big projects such as Crookham Deeps. The amount of preparatory work to make a successful application for Planning Consent or Environmental Permits is a very significant drain on staff resources.

## Management Team

The Canal Manager and Strategic Manager have been working on the following matters:

- **Canal Centre Campsite Redevelopment** – Planning permission was received in March from SCC. Crowper Griffiths Architects have been re-employed to complete the detailed design, which should have been completed and issued to contractors to price shortly before the JMC.

The Architects cost estimate has gone up, especially for the landscaping works, but conversely we have been given to understand that the grant giver would be in a position to cover the increased capital costs, providing our grant application is successful.

We have also been informed that the grant giver has extended their final deadline for submission of grant claims by 12 months, however we still have to get the stage 2 application in before the end of September at the very latest. There is still a lot of work before to do but we hope if the grant is successful then we may see contractors on-site before the end of this year with the campsite up and running for next season.

- **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 has now been granted by Woking Borough Council. The bridge will be owned by Woking BC under an agreement with SCC as Canal owner.
- **Water Environment Grant** – We were unfortunately unsuccessful in our application to the Water Environment Grant (WEG) managed by Natural England. The work would have provided a quarter of a million pounds of tree thinning and invasive species removal. This work is now unlikely to take place. Although the canal society have offered to try and plug away at the Rhododendron areas.
- **Abstraction Licensing** – Following from the issue of abstraction licensing raised previously, the Strategic Manager instructed SCC Legal Services to investigate the legal position and obtained Counsel’s opinion on the matter. Counsel concluded that the EA had erred in law with their view of the County Councils not being “navigation authorities” within the statutory definition for water resources. The Strategic Manager wrote to the EA – who have reversed their previous stance and agreed with Counsel’s advice. This means that the County Councils can avail themselves of the concessions available to navigation authorities. The Strategic Manager is now resolving the licensing issues which this raises, assisted by John How and Martin Leech of the Canal Society.
- **Conservation Management Plan** - Natural England “Assented” the Plan which has now been adopted for next 10 years.

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