

## **Canal Managers Update May 2013**

### **Open for Business**

- The Canal re-opened to the public on 22 April after a successful Easter boat rally when 33 boats fully tested all the locks.
- Fourteen new boats have now visited the Canal in the first few weeks of being open and there have been lots of other enquiries for the summer.

### **Large Works**

- Capital Works - Coxheath stop plank grooves are now installed. Further Softbank protection works have been carried out and work has now finished at N.Warnborough lift bridge to replace the culvert. D & B have also been assisting with safety works at the Landslip.
- A small yet flowing leak on the embankment near bridge barn was spotted by staff and volunteers working in this section. This was repaired by the Canal Rangers and has now been cleared to allow better monitoring of this area.
- A large landslip occurred on 25 March at Dogmersfield which has closed navigation at this point. Emergency tree works were carried out to reduce weight on the slip and a pipe was installed to maintain waterflow in case of full blockage of the Canal. Further works have now included installation of a system to measure movement and a depth survey of the remaining navigation. Results of these two survey's will indicate if navigation can be re-opened and if so what size of boats will be able to pass. Bore holes have been dug to ascertain the depth and profile of the slip and this information will then go to engineers to start to decide how best to engineer a longer term solution. The towpath which has broken into unstable sections is closed until further notice. A diversion is in place. Larger and more robust signs and fencing have been installed.

### **Staffing Changes**

- A new Canal Ranger Alexander Foy has been employed and started with us on 22 April.
- A new lock Keeper Mark Foster has been employed and started with us on 26 April.
- A new Visitor Services Officer has been appointed due to start in June
- A new Cleaning and Maintenance Officer has been appointed also due to start in June.

### **Volunteers**

- The Tuesday volunteer group is very popular with now up to 16 attendees each week. A second day now also operates for a smaller group working on invasive weed removal in the lower pounds.
- Thanks to the Canal Society Lengthsman scheme for working with us on regular updates from out on the Canal and responding to requests for checks after severe weather incidents. A lengthsman spotted the landslip!

### **Licence Review**

- The new licence charges and associated review of all policies and procedures is now complete and implemented. We will continue to review this. We have additionally decided to pro-rata all licence renewals making everyone renew on the 1 April each year. This will improve effectiveness of issuing licence renewals on time and help us better manage work flow in the office. Feedback from boaters on the new charges obviously raises concern over the increase in cost to boaters. However when spending time to explain the reasons behind the system most boaters understand the need to increase revenue.
- A new debt recovery policy has additionally been written along with updated terms and conditions as we have been criticised for not being strong enough on enforcement.

## **Funding**

- Further presentations have been given to Rushmoor Borough Council, Runnymede Borough Council, Odiham Parish Assembly, Dogmersfield Parish Assembly and Hart District full Council on the Canal and funding. Further talks are booked in for the Hart Association of Parish and Town Councillors.
- Camping got off to a slow start with the cold weather, but bookings are now flying in for the summer.

## **Signage**

- A design brief has been written for the new sign specifications and this has gone out to three companies, two of whom will be quoting for this work.

## **Meetings**

- The asset management meeting was held on 7 March
- The conservation steering group meeting was on 1 May