



Report to Joint Management Committee – 5th June 2013

1. Volunteer Activities

Following the Canal Society's purchase of an historic barn at Colt Hill, Odiham, volunteers have been undertaking repairs to the structure and installing an electricity supply close to the canal. The barn has become the operations base for the John Pinkerton II trip boat. It will be used as a store and workshop. Further work is planned including the construction of an extended mooring for the trip boat and the Society's work boat which is used for maintenance and construction activities.



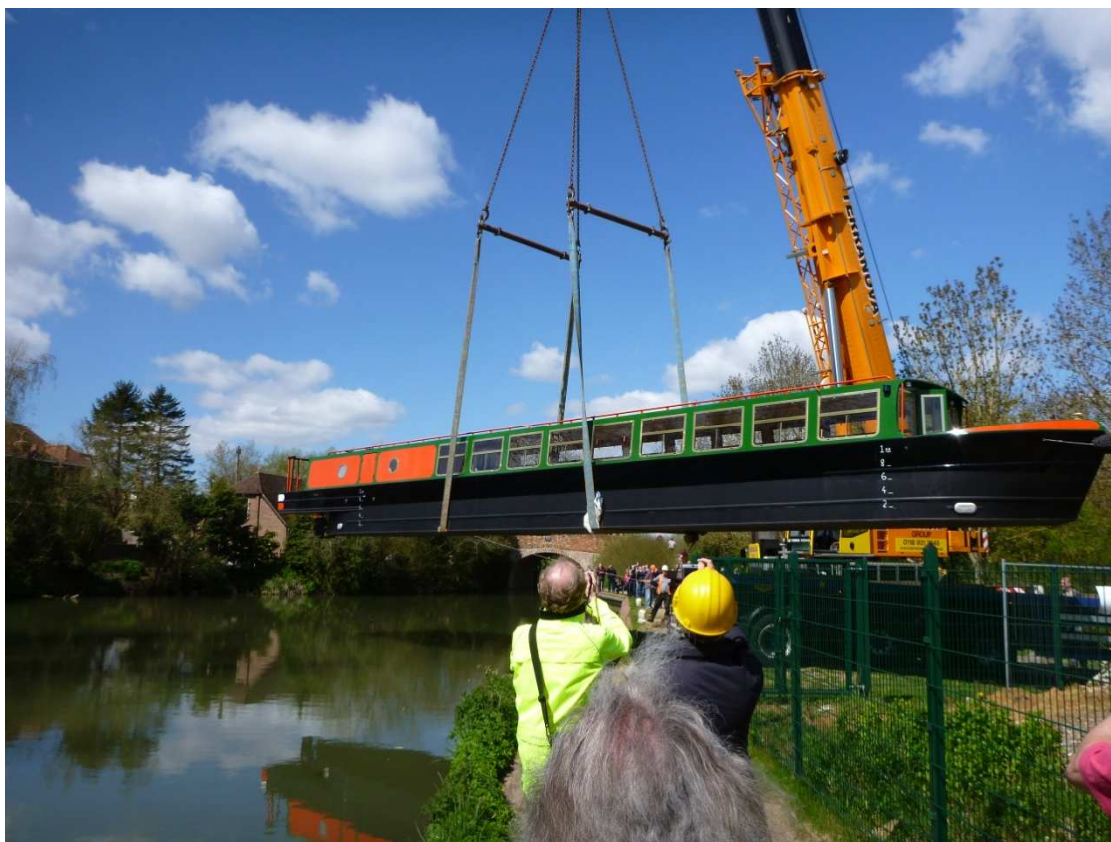
Volunteers have continued to work on the renovation of the BCA's weed-cutter which should be returned to service later this year. Recent work has included procurement of a new cutter blade, refurbishment of the wiring, replacement of several engine

components and paintwork.

Since the last JMC meeting, the Society has expended approximately 160 man-days effort, or about £12K equivalent value in kind, on canal-related improvement works.

2. New trip boat

At the end of April, the Canal Society took delivery of its new trip boat, *John Pinkerton II*, which will replace the original John Pinkerton after 35 years of excellent service. The new boat will offer improved facilities for passengers and a better working environment for the crew, all of whom are volunteers. Following delivery, the initial batch of crews is being trained to operate the new boat and it is intended that the boat will enter service in early June. A formal naming ceremony is scheduled for 2nd June when Sally Taylor of BBC South Today will be coming to Odiham to perform the official formalities. The new trip boat represents a massive capital investment by the Canal Society and demonstrates the Canal Society's commitment to the long term future of the navigation.



In 2012 the Society's trip boat operation produced a net profit of around £28K, all of which will be re-invested into the canal in the form of support for volunteer work parties.

3. Visitor Centres

In support of the Canal Partnership's objective of promoting the canal as a major leisure amenity in north Hampshire and west Surrey and in order to generate additional revenue, the Canal Society is promoting the establishment of visitor centres at various strategic entry points along the canal. Visitor centres can provide the public with information about the canal (including its history and ecology) and can produce

revenue through sales of merchandise and refreshments. In recent years a number of visitor centres have been provided on other canals including centres on the Chichester Canal, the Wey & Arun Canal and the Grand Western Canal in Devon (see photographs below). The Society proposes, as an action from this JMC, that the County Councils, the BCA and the Canal Society form a small working group to identify suitable sites for visitor centres and to develop plans to build centres at various ‘honeypot’ sites. District Council members of the JMC are also asked to support this initiative in their capacities as local planning authorities and in terms of possible funding sources.



The Canal Society would like to see the formation of a working group to examine options for visitor centres and make recommendations.

4. Planning Matters

The JMC has agreed, in principle, that the canal would benefit from the preparation of a document which would set out planning guidance for developers putting forward proposals to develop land in the canal corridor. A similar document, prepared by the National Trust on the R Wey, has already been circulated to JMC members. However, it appears that this proposal is not receiving any attention at the present time. Although the County Councils, the BCA and the Canal Society could contribute to a document of this kind, the District Councils, as the local planning authorities, are in the best position to carry this initiative forward. The Canal Society therefore recommends, at this JMC, that the members from each District Authority accept an action to provide a contact in their planning department who can work with the Canal Partnership in producing the planning guidance document. It would also be desirable if one of the District Authorities provided the services of one of its planners to take the lead in drafting the document.

The Canal Society would like to see a working party established to prepare a document providing planning guidance on developments proposed in the canal corridor, with each District Authority to nominating a point of contact in its planning department and to consider whether it could provide an officer to lead the project.

Although the Canal Society has pressed very hard to secure benefits for the canal from the very large developments that are planned on sites adjacent to the canal in both Surrey and Hampshire, the Canal Society notes, with very considerable regret, that no tangible support has been committed for the canal. These developments include Brookwood Farm, Deepcut (PRB barracks site), the Aldershot Urban Extension and Hatchwood Farm at Odiham. To date only the smallest of these sites (Hatchwood Farm) has offered any promise of some canal-related facilities. Evidence of considerable ‘planning gain’ from water –side developments in other parts of the country has been provided to the relevant planning authorities but there appears to be a marked reluctance to take the initiative, to the detriment of the canal. This is clearly an area where the Canal Partnership could ‘make a difference’

Philip Riley
Chairman
The Basingstoke Canal Society