



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 since the preceding meeting, and look forward work likely to happen in the first half of 2020; also to report the work of the Conservation Steering Group.

Operation & maintenance

BCA Maintenance & Inspection Works

Planned

The BCA are funding the Principal Inspections of Weirs & Sluices, Locks and High Risk Tree zones by qualified inspectors in the final two quarters of the year.

Following discussion with HCC's internal arboriculture team, it has been decided that they cannot resource the inspection of the Canal's High Risk Tree Zones as previously reported; instead it will be outsourced to Atkins. Atkins' proposals and timing are awaited, but is expected that they will have commenced before the end of the Financial Year.

The BCA are reorganising their Ranger team to prioritise some additional hierarchical safety inspections – currently some General Inspections (GI) are not being completed. Engineers have advised that this is leaving a significant gap in the knowledge of some assets due to the interval between Principal Inspections (PI). The Ranger team will now prioritise this work and this may mean that response times for less urgent matters – such as fallen trees across the navigation where they do not cause a safety risk, or vegetation control – will increase.

The BCA have carried out the following planned maintenance and inspection tasks since the last meeting:

- Support for engineers for principle inspection survey of dry dock
- Installation of new gates at the Dry Dock
- Length Inspections (LI), Supplemental Inspections (SI), Reservoir Surveillance Inspections (RSI) and the General Inspections (GI) for Locks were all conducted as planned
- Summer towpath cutting, and car park picnic area mowing
- Spraying & stem injection of Japanese Knotweed
- Re-decked and replaced handrail on Ash Vale stop gates
- Re-establish access at 'The Willows' and install new access gate.
- Ranger team chainsaw refresher courses
- New bin area at canal centre concreted and preparation for fencing
- Repairing broken gates at Hermitage and Frimhurst
- Temporary repairs to mooring platform at Brookwood Country Park
- Drain down of lock 10 for inspection to investigate leak
- Emergency test exercise carried out with BCA team

- Inflow bunds replaced with MOD through Aldershot
- New stove installed in dredger and further works ongoing to prepare it for use

Reactive

- Deepcut Lock flight closed from 26th July due to lack of water
- Clearing up 25 trees that have come down over the last 6 months

Events/Visitor Services

- We now have 4,622 followers of our Facebook page and 1,723 followers on twitter. We are also now on Instagram @basingstokecanal and have 454 followers. This is in total about 1,000 new followers in the last 6 months
- New paddleboard Instructor running courses on the canal
- Good publicity with a short film on the canal as part of ITV Meridian news
- Campers survey to collate information for grants application
- Attended events at Fleet Pond wildlife day, River Wey Festival and Odiham Raft Race
- New vending machine installed at Canal Centre
- CCTV installed at Canal Centre

Volunteers

- Volunteer Garden Party organised by BCA and attended by over 50 volunteers from BCA and BCS as a summer celebration
- Volunteers carried out lock maintenance and painting over the summer and recently have been working in the Up Nately section of the canal and helping out the BCS at Colt Hill with scrub clearance
- Seven corporate volunteer days were organised and run over the summer
- Volunteer training courses were held in hedgetrimmers and mowers

Conservation

- The Strategic Manager and Canal Manager met with and gave a site tour to the new Natural England conservation officer, David Le Grice
- The BCA have conducted a detailed boat use survey which reveals that much of the channel is well below the 1300 powered boat movements limit per year, but that Colt Hill and the Canal Centre are already at around the maximum level of use.
- The Canal Manager has commissioned Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre (HBIC) to carry out analysis of the levels of siltation obtained from the depth survey, against the decline in number of plant species in the channel. This will inform a systematic dredging programme to be funded initially from capital - areas which show both shallowness and loss of biodiversity would become obvious targets to reduce silt load and tree shade.
- The next planned botanical survey for the whole canal channel is in summer 2020. It is expected that HBIC will conduct this survey for consistency reasons.

Asset Management Programme

The following works from the County Councils' "capital" asset management programme are planned for the winter 2019/20 programme:

Surrey

- **Bank protection** – a prioritised list of sites to repair erosion and minor seepage has been prepared by the BCA and SCC Canal Engineer and will be worked on in conjunction with similar works in Hampshire.
- **Lock inspections / repair** The Drydock has had its Principle Inspection (PI) and follow-up works have commenced. Locks 24-28 are also due for PI by the SCC Canal Engineer in late November with any repair works to follow immediately.

- **Weirs & sluices** – Atkins (the professional services supplier for both HCC and SCC) will be conducting the PI of Weirs & Sluices across whole the Canal. Following their inspection repairs will be carried out by the same contractor dealing with the similar works at the Locks.

Hampshire

The HCC capital programme is now significantly behind schedule. This is due to the complexity of the projects being attempted and the regulations surrounding the protected canal environment. The projected completion of current projects has been pushed back until 2023. To combat the slippage the Strategic Manager is in the process of taking on additional staff resource in the form of a part time in-house Project Officer on a fixed term contract for 3 years.

- **Crookham Deeps** – the bed lining project due for the winter of 2109/20 is now delayed 12 months as the planning consent necessary for the silt lagoon has not been obtained, this was due to delays in engineering design.
- **Swan “cutting”** – The Canal Manager and Strategic Manager together with Engineering and other professional colleagues at HCC are working with local residents to gain access to properties to carry out further soil and water level monitoring. This will provide sufficient data to enable a sustainable design solution for the slopes above the canal channel and the towpath. This is a long term project as the design period alone will be 6 – 12 months.
- **Lock inspections / repair** The PI of Ash Lock is scheduled for January 2020 with any repair works to follow immediately, this will be in association with the similar works in Surrey and the PI will be carried out by the SCC Canal Engineer.
- **Bank protection** – a prioritised list of sites to repair erosion and minor seepage has been prepared by the BCA and SCC Canal Engineer and will be worked on in conjunction with similar works in Surrey – this year it will mainly be at the western end of the Canal.
- **Weirs & sluices** – Atkins (the professional services supplier for both HCC and SCC) will be conducting the PI of Weirs & Sluices across whole the Canal. Following their inspection repairs will be carried out by the same contractor dealing with the similar works at the Locks.

Management actions

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 and the grant application was submitted at the end of October. If the grant is successful, then we may see contractors on-site by early February for a 30 week build. During the build it is planned to run the campsite at a reduced capacity for the spring/summer of 2020. Expected full operation of the new site will be around October 2020.
- **Chobham Road turnover bridge** – Woking BC are building a new “turnover” footbridge near the Lightbox. Works to this bridge are due to start on 1st November and will result in a 1500m section of the Woking Pound being out of water for most of the winter.
- **Planning Guidance** – the Strategic Manager has been working with BCS volunteers to finalise and send out the consultation draft of Planning Guidance reported at the last JMC. Consultation responses are expected before Christmas and the final document will be submitted to the JMC for approval at the next meeting.
- **Development and Infrastructure Strategy** – HCC have procured the services of Trilobyte Land Management Services as a consultant to develop a list of infrastructure and development projects that will enhance the Canal in the medium term. This work will also look at how projects might be funded, their potential for generating income and the contribution they will make to the management of the Canal. The work will engage with key stakeholders and the Business MRG at a series of workshops throughout November and December. As well as a list of projects the discussions with stakeholders will look future direction of the Canal and key themes for the future - this will feed into a revised Canal Strategy in 2020. It is expected that a second part of this work may be required to undertake more detailed business cases as required.

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