

Canal Managers Update September 2013

Open for Business

- The Canal re-opened to the public on 22 April and since then 60 visiting boats have visited the canal for a week or two week stay, plus 39 boats that came on around the Easter rally. So around 100 boats in total. We also have additional bookings for September including the trail boat rally at the Fox and Hounds.

Works

- Capital Works – D & B are currently working on Mytchett Lake reservoir reinforcement works due to be completed in October. Some snagging work is still to be completed on lock gates in Deepcut.
- A leak at Odiham Bypass bridge was dug out by Rangers (due to the difficult access) and clay filled. A crayfish was found up the hole!
- The navigation was re-opened at the landslip in June and there have been no issues with boats passing this area which was fenced to keep boats away from the bank. Further felling had to take place and timber taken off the bank to a stable area on the a-joining towpath. The rangers continue to measure/monitor for any movement every week and repair the gates and fencing which is regularly vandalised. The towpath remains closed until further notice. The Canal Society will be removing the timber over the next few months.
- The rangers have been injecting the Japanese knotweed along the canal. This is an annual activity to keep on top of this and has been helped by a recent updated invasive species survey of the whole canal by a keen volunteer.

Staffing Changes

- Another Lock keeper, Steve Livsey-Bennett, has been employed on a casual basis.
- The new Visitor Services Officer, Betty Hansell, started in June, she joins us from Hampshire Arts and Museums service and is quickly getting to grips with how the canal works.
- The new Cleaning and Maintenance Officer, Vincent Heaven, started on 11 June and is methodically working his way through the backlog of work at the canal centre/grounds.

Volunteers

- The Tuesday volunteer group continues to be popular and have worked incredibly hard over the summer painting everything in sight and leaving us with a much better looking canal. They have also been removing Himalayan Balsam and started on Hydrocotyle removal around lock 1 as well as the usual removal of litter as they go.
- The Canal Society Lengthsman scheme continues to provide us with regular updates from out on the Canal. Thank you to the lengthsman who have also assisted us with caulking up and helped in moving work boats around for various jobs. We hosted a Lengthsman Workshop on 5 August focusing on water level management which 22 lengthsman attended.

Funding

- Camping bookings and shop sales are up compared to other non-airshow years. (Farnborough airshow years bring in significant additional income)

Higher Level Stewardship Scheme

- Tree works (thinning, crown reduction) in consultation with Forestry Commission and Natural England will begin later in September at yew tree copse and Pillars bridge in Hampshire. These works are match funded by Natural England.

Dredger & Weedcutter

- The BCA dredger underwent refurbishment works at Ash Lock and it has passed its PUWER test.
- The Canal Society has been working on the weedcutter for us and BCA/BCS have funded a new hydraulic pump which has arrived and soon to be installed.

Duckweed

- Emergency weed cutting works were attempted at Lock 1- lock 2 after sudden fish deaths, however this had to be abandoned after a few days due to a continually failing boat. We are still considering methods for dealing with this.

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Upcoming Work

- Malthouse bridge will be having emergency repair works during November.
- A further two sets of lock gates will be replaced this winter, likely to be 5 and 14 lowers. To be confirmed as part of upcoming annual asset inspection.
- A new 200m stretch of mooring will be constructed at the canal centre over the next few months as the first of the new permanent mooring areas. A series of other potential mooring areas have been verbally agreed with Natural England and will be rolled out over the next few years. This includes new visitor moorings. Eighty new timber bollards have also been ordered to start to replace and add to existing moorings on the canal.
- Crayfish Licences have been revoked from existing licence holders and BCA will now be managing crayfish removal through a commercial fisherman who has been working his way up the canal for three weeks during September.

Management Team

- Visits have been made to Farncombe and Guildford boathouses and Galleon Marine and also to John Gibson, manager on the river Wey navigation. Monthly meetings have been held with the Canal Society and BCA have also met with the Angling club. A boaters meeting will be held in November, date to be confirmed.