

Notes of River Soar, Erewash Canal and Upper Trent  
User Group Meeting - 18 October 2006 - Soar Boating Club

- 1) Apologies were received from Joan Jamieson, NABO
- 2) Notes from the last meeting/matters arising
  - a. Removal of weeds from Thane Road Bridge – weeds will be removed post-November.
  - b. Asian funerals – there is considerable concern surrounding the Asian funerals taking place. Arthur Kenney reported that funerals were taking place of Asian people from a wide area. It was also reported that four funerals took place under the A6 road bridge last Sunday. Caroline Killeavy responded that this is not within British Waterways' remit, and that people should speak to the Environment Agency. John Baylis offered to take comments back to the EA.
  - c. Signage – raised by Beryl McDowall. Kevin Howe, River Soar Supervisor, responded that this has been addressed, all signage is up, and photographs were circulated. Beryl added that the temporary signage at Barrow Deep Lock about Loughborough works could not be read, Kevin Howe responded by saying it would be checked and replaced if necessary. This sign will also be checked in future length inspections.
  - d. Lock clearing – Neil Harvey informed the meeting that locks will be cleared out during stoppages.
  - e. Morris's scrap yard – Marc Ballard, estates surveyor, reported he has concerns over fencing, but the towpath was not being encroached onto.
  - f. Angling Forum – a concern was raised re the short notice given to parties interested in attending the inaugural Angling Forum and that Quorn Angling had not been informed. Stuart Walton, Leisure Development Manager, responded that the information had been sent out by Savills, so any feedback should be directed to them.
  - g. EA Flood Alleviation scheme, River Soar – John Baylis commented he has made his concerns known to various British Waterways managers, and that the EA seems to have washed its hands of the scheme. Neil Harvey, Asset & Programme Manager, commented that British Waterways now has a full survey of the river and Leicester is now a priority for dredging.
- 3) Maintenance Update & Stoppage Programme– River Soar
  - a) Completed Works River Soar
    - i) Handrail repairs - replace handrails at Johnsons weir bridge, replaced handrails at over backwater bridge Kegworth shallow lock, repairs to hand rails at Thurmaston and Birstall Lock bridges
    - ii) Signage – replace signs at Soar Junctions (directional), Mountsorrel (flood warning), Bishop Meadow (information), lock names x 5, installed 4 leaflet boxes for IWA at Kings Lock, Castle Gardens, Thurmaston Lock and Bishops Meadow Lock

- iii) Access repairs – Thurmaston Lock access from car park to bridge, Birstall regraded ramps to bridge, Old Junction replace broken handrails and replayed paving sets on bridge access, Wreak End Bridge replace broken handrails, Sibley Lock repair broken handrails
- iv) Obstruction removal – between Loughborough and pillings, removed 4 motorbikes, 6 push bikes and several shopping trolleys, North Lock removed pallets and bubble wrap on numerous occasions
- v) Fitted stile gates – Silby Zouch and Ratcliffe
- vi) Kegworth Deep Lock – replaced manhole covers and grills, replace paving slabs on steps
- vii) Routine maintenance – grass cutting & strimming, greasing paddles, removing graffiti, flooding, adjusting flood marker boards, repair to paddles at Freeman's meadow, installed covers to ground paddle holes
- b) Programmed works River Soar - Lock stoppages at:
  - i) Kegworth Deep Lock top gates – 6 November for two weeks
  - ii) Bishop Meadow Lock top and bottom gates – 27 November
  - iii) Offside tree cutting Jan to March starting Loughborough
  - iv) Birstall Mill Race Weir
  - v) Works to Castle Gardens visitor moorings (improve access repairs to decking)

During Kevin Howe's update various questions were asked:

Arthur Kenney raised a serious issue concerning the bottom of Barrow Lock – a hole, which has been fenced off. Access to the lock is very difficult. Neil Harvey answered and said that this is in the plan to be resolved this year.

At Pillings the flood board levels display some variance, a member of the user group raised the question of whether lights could be installed instead. Kevin Howe responded and said he took on board the point made. Caroline Killeavy said British Waterways would look at this and carry out a risk assessment.

Beryl McDowall reported a problem with the channel marker at Proctors below Barrow Deep Lock. Steve Cropper replied he was not aware of any issues but he would have a look.

- 4) Maintenance Update & Stoppage Programme – Erewash Canal
  - a) Completed Works Erewash Canal
    - i) Potters overflow cleaned out
    - ii) Fallen trees below railway bridge at Shipley
    - iii) Dredged bridge holes to get crane boat through
    - iv) Large crane boat up to Shipley
    - v) Repairs to Shipley ground paddle chamber – large hole
    - vi) Vandal locks fitted to some locks
    - vii) Lock signs – no swimming signs put up in various locations
    - viii) Large tree in Eastwood bye wash removed
    - ix) Fishing Championship – hedge & grass cut
    - x) Cut all lock sides
    - xi) Length cuts
    - xii) Replace new gearing Potters due to vandalism
    - xiii) Modify Trent Lock top gate paddles to make them easier for the user
    - xiv) Repair 3 x spear rods at Pastures Lock
    - xv) Strong flow signs have been fitted to locks

- b) Programmed works – Erewash Canal
  - i) Shipley top gates
  - ii) Stensons bottom gates
  - iii) Barkers top gates
  - iv) Gallows Inn bottom gates & steps
  - v) Various trees along the Erewash Canal and at Butterley reservoir are to be attended to
  - vi) Vandal locks to be fitted Trent Lock, Sandiacre Lock, Long Eaton
  - vii) Hedge cutting by hand (contract)
  - viii) Full length grass cut
  - ix) Now that planning permission has been received, hand grips have been fitted to Greens Lock

During Paul Singleton's update various questions were asked:

A comment was made that handrails and posts painted black at Trent Lock should be painted white.

Long Eaton gate paddles – Paul Singleton confirmed these will be repaired.

Paul Singleton confirmed that when cleaning out weirs, weeds are left to dry out before being removed.

John Baylis agreed that people should be able to use gate paddles but commented that some are in fact missing. Paul Singleton said that these could not be repaired until a full stoppage could be carried out.

Re Shipley Paul Singleton confirmed that a dredging survey showed it met the criteria, in response to criticism that Shipley has least water in. This will be tested shortly using the crane boat. Caroline Killeavy added that the SCADA system across the East Midlands is under review.

In response to a comment made concerning the problems caused by cyclists, Caroline Killeavy asked Steve Cropper to liaise.

A question was raised concerning whether Stanton Lock needed dredging. Paul Singleton replied that the Erewash Canal meets the criteria and the crane boat can make it through. Neil Harvey added that British Waterways in the East Midlands would be spending £600k on dredging.

The organiser of the National Angling Championships thanked British Waterways for their help in making the Erewash fit for purpose and commented on the number of people who had said how well the canal looked. Caroline Killeavy was grateful for the comments and said she was very proud of the Erewash team.

- 5) Maintenance update & Stoppage Programme – Upper Trent
  - a) Completed works upper Trent
    - i) Beeston moorings – grass cutting from Meadow Lane to Beeston every two weeks, and Cranfleet to Trent Lock
    - ii) Litter picking – Meadow Lane to Castle Marina minimum of 1 per week (sometimes 3 – 4 times per week)

- iii) Overhanging branches cut back from towpath
- iv) By pipe at Beeston cleared and paddle repaired
- v) Beeston Lock was runner-up in the lock & bridge competition (East Midlands)
- vi) Jack heads on Beeston bottom gates replaced
- vii) Nottingham Beeston towpath has now been completed right up to the nature reserve boundary
- viii) Large tree behind Sawley Sanitary Station removed, with plans to cut some potentially dangerous trees down this winter
- b) Programmed works – Upper Trent
  - i) Castle Lock stoppage – replace both sets of lock gates
  - ii) Cranfleet Lock – replace bottom set of gates & grouting works behind wall (lock), tegular block lock side, new fence and planting areas
  - iii) Weeds to be removed at Thane Road Bridge over winter period
  - iv) Sawley – remove gates old lock from Sawley Meadow, remove more trees and pollard others

During Mark Owen's update various questions were asked:

Apparently there had been some difficulty experienced mooring for the IWA Goose Gander. Mark Owen replied he was not aware that this had historically been a problem, and that facilities had been improved.

Nancy Johnson asked whether there would be more visitor moorings on the Nottingham Beeston Canal. Caroline Killeavy responded by saying that British Waterways was always looking to add moorings. John Baylis asked whether more rings could be put in – Steve Cropper and Mark Owen confirmed that additional mooring rings had already been put in.

It was reported that boats have been moored at Thane Road Bridge towards Redfield Road. Mark Owen and Steve Cropper were aware of this and reported that some boats were being stored there temporarily awaiting disposal.

#### 6) British Waterways update

- a) Long Horse Bridge – Neil Harvey reported that the project had gone slower than planned - British Waterways was expecting to be on-site this summer. He confirmed that British Waterways still intended to build the bridge but there were significant land ownership issues outstanding, and it will not be possible to get on until summer 2007. Neil Harvey added that British Waterways hoped to reach agreement with landowners over the next few months.

Caroline Killeavy added that this project has been ongoing for a number of years. British Waterways has gone through significant consultation and has been very frank about its reasons for wanting to carry on with its proposal. Unless anything significant happened British Waterways will continue as planned.

Neil Harvey confirmed that the bridge would be a combined cycle & bridal way, 3.9 metres wide. He added that current construction standards for a footbridge only require a minimum width of 2 metres.

Arthur Kenney asked why the bridge was 140 metres upstream of the original. Neil Harvey responded by saying that, at that point the river is half the width, which would result in savings of nearly £500k. He confirmed that none of the structure would be

in the river, the abutments would be on the bank, and the project would be jointly funded by British Waterways and Derbyshire County Council.

In response to a question concerning British Waterways' share of the cost, Caroline Killeavy confirmed the cost comes from British Waterways' local arrears expenditure, that the new bridge is high up the arrears list, and that British Waterways is keen to get on. The re-siting of the bridge was a straightforward decision when you consider the savings of £500k.

Caroline Killeavy added that British Waterways wants more visitors and that the new bridge caters for everyone.

Mr Cooke stated that he wanted two bridges – one for multi-users and one for horses. He said the local Parish Council is pursuing this with Derbyshire County Council. Neil Harvey responded that financially this would not stack up. Caroline Killeavy added that Mr Cooke has raised this as a complaint with the ombudsman, confirmed that British Waterways had displayed a plan previously, and asked for the minutes to reflect that Mr Cooke objects to British Waterways' plans.

N.B. (17.5.07) : These comments by Mr Cooke were incorrectly noted and should have read 'Mr Cooke stated that horses could be routed over Cavendish Bridge which is already used regularly by horses, and the Long Horse Bridge replacement could then be reduced to 1.8m wide to cater for pedestrians, cyclists and disabled as proposed for a similar length bridge at Matlock.'

b) Property development

i) Memory Lane – Helen Edwards, Planner, updated on Memory Lane, Leicester. Full planning consent has been secured for the redevelopment of the college campus and priming works have commenced. Outline consent has been secured, inc Section 106 Agt, for the residential development on the balance of the site. Subject to securing a developer, the works will include public access to the waterside, a new pedestrian footbridge to the towpath, a boaters' facilities unit, dredging works to the barge arm, waterway wall improvements, new moorings and public realm. The residential development opportunity has been marketed and bids have been received, but no developer has been selected yet.

Beryl McDowall stated that she had originally opposed the plans, although there were things she liked and things she didn't. She mentioned the proximity of the footbridge to the lock as being a worry. Helen Edwards replied that the precise location of the bridge has not been determined.

ii) Beeston Weir Cottages – Marc Ballard, Estates Surveyor, provided an update on a range of proposed options for the cottages.

Beryl McDowall commented that with other developments, the presence of shops have helped bring more people into an area.

iii) Loughborough Wharf – Neil Harvey provided an update on the redevelopment of Loughborough Wharf.

Caroline Killeavy reported that Sawley Meadows are currently with an agent and British Waterways is testing the market for expressions of interest, hence the involvement of a land agent. However, Caroline did point out that there are access and planning issues.

- c) Beeston towpath improvements – Simon Hopkinson, Marketing & Communications Manager – gave an update on the works completed on the Nottingham Beeston towpath.

Beryl McDowall raised the issue of conflict of interests between different users of towpaths. Caroline Killeavy responded that British Waterways has looked at safety of users and will continue to do so.

- d) Change in note format – the members of the user group were asked whether they were in favour of the newly adopted note format and the answer was a resounding no. Therefore, these notes follow the format used previously.

#### 7) Issues raised by user group members

- a) Erewash Canal lock gates and paddle gear (Mike Harrison) – Caroline Killeavy invited users to go through lock gates with maintenance team.

John Baylis stated that there used to be equipment to measure the force needed to open lock gates. Caroline Killeavy said British Waterways would look into this.

John Baylis also commented that timber is falling off gates on the Erewash Canal. Paul Singleton said this had happened since manufacturers started using spruce. The screw gets snapped when boats hit.

- b) Loose/missing timber rubbing strakes at Redhill visitor moorings (Rob Asprey) – Kevin Howe responded that British Waterways would be looking at this during November.
- c) Impact of Defra funding cuts on local waterways (Rob Asprey) – Caroline Killeavy explained British Waterways is looking at the proposed structure of the East Midlands business unit and how to populate. She added that it is likely redundancies will occur amongst professional staff, not bank staff.

John Baylis added he was concerned what effect the cuts might have on restrictions on waterway recovery on the Grantham Canal.

Caroline Killeavy responded that safety policies applied to everyone and that whilst British Waterways was grateful for volunteer support, this should not be at any cost. She added that, as far as lobbying was concerned, it is important people should be aware of all the good things that have happened in the East Midlands region.

- d) Floating pennywort and other invasive plants (Beryl McDowall & Alan Snow) – Beryl McDowall commented that British Waterways had not received the support it needed at a recent meeting in Leics to discuss pennywort.

Kevin Howe responded that on Monday 30 October British Waterways will be clearing pennywort between Sibley and Cossington, ahead of planned stoppages.

Neil Harvey added that British Waterways needed to find out the most cost effective means of clearing pennywort. Kevin Howe commented that British Waterways has approval from the EA to spray off the weed. Caroline Killeavy added that British Waterways has been caught on the hop by pennywort this year, and that whilst it could not be totally eradicated, it was important to clear as much as possible.

- e) Towing path from Pillings Lock through to scrap yard bridge, Loughborough (Alan Snow) – problem is one of confrontation between users. The towpath is impossible to pass on in places.

Kevin Howe responded that British Waterways cannot cut the hedges back in the summer and said that he had cycled the towpath to inspect it. He added that the hedge will be cut pre-March, and the grass will be cut pre-February.

- f) Swing bridge at Langley Mill – the swing bridge is deteriorating and is the only one left in the East Midlands. Paul Singleton commented that British Waterways is aware of this, there is a notification in place and engineers are due to inspect it.

John Baylis asked why the swing bridge needed a hand rail. Caroline Killeavy commented that the bridge was not on the agenda but that British Waterways would look at it and contact John.

- 7) Date & Time of Next Meeting – the next meeting is set for Wednesday 21 March 2007 at Soar Boating Club.