

Restoration Update

September 2007

Coney Meadow Reedbed near Droitwich Construction Plan

Following several months of ecological surveys construction of the Salwarpe Reedbed has begun.

The work commenced in mid September and is anticipated to last around nine weeks. Before the main construction started, a ten metre wide strip of grass on the southern edge of the site was cut short by DCT staff and volunteers to discourage reptiles entering the site from the hedge alongside the canal during the works phase.

During the early stages of construction, the priority has been to get the equipment to the site. This involved strengthening the road bridge over the river and installing a new bridge across the river into the reedbed site itself. Following this, the work is split into distinct phases:

- Excavating and shaping the reedbed features, including wildlife ponds (no excavated material will be removed from site).
- The construction of the water feed system, with the inlet from the canal and the outlet into the river.
- The planting of the reeds and filling the new reedbed with water from the canal.

Whilst the reeds become established they are susceptible to damage by birds, especially large water fowl. To reduce this, the site will be surrounded by plastic fencing with hazard style tape across the top. Approximately two thirds of the reeds will be planted by contractors and one third by volunteers.

The reed planting carried out by volunteers will take place in the spring of 2008. If you are interested in taking part in the reed planting through your local community group, corporate team or working with other volunteers, please contact Lucy Bowles on 01452 318502.

As the reedbed sits between Droitwich and Salwarpe, it wasn't clear what it should be called. According to evidence from the County Archaeologist, Coney Meadow is an historic name for the site, so it will be called Coney Meadow Reedbed near Droitwich.

Planning Application

The planning application was submitted in April and has been undergoing consultation over the summer. A visit to the Wychavon District Council web site will show the amount of feedback that has been received. Thank you to anyone that has put in a letter of support for the application, your time is very much appreciated.

A number of points have been raised for consideration not least those from environmental organisations such as the Worcestershire Wildlife Trust and Environment Agency. Staff from BW have been meeting with representatives from these organisations to try and overcome the objections before it goes before the Planning Committee. Due to these meetings taking place, the application going to committee has been delayed but it is expected to be determined soon. Updates will be given as soon as details are available

Survey Work

A lot of survey work and more detailed planning has been carried out over the last few months so below is a run through of just some of the information we have gathered from those surveys.

Engineering

A **CCTV** survey of the culvert under the A449 has been carried out by a mini remote control vehicle with a camera on the top driving through the culvert under the road. This was to check the condition of the culvert and for the presence of bats. It will aid the planning of the new bridge.

Although the full report is due after the deadline for this article, from initial feedback the camera has footage of an opening thought to be under the original road bridge, located by ground investigations through the road above.



The remote camera (not taken at Hawford)

Ecological

Newt surveys have been carried out at three sites along the canals. This work can only be carried out by certificated handlers as Great Crested Newts are protected by European law. Results so far results show Hanbury pond and pound below Hanbury Wharf Locks to have a medium population and Porter's Mill pond and Coney Meadow reedbed site to have no newts.



A Great Crested Newt at Hanbury (pic Clare Guy)

Reptile surveys have been carried out at the old depot site by the Rugby Club on the Hanbury Road and at the reedbed site at Coney Meadow. This involves laying out pieces of black roofing felt to give the reptiles a warm place to hide and so be counted. The results have shown a low population of Grass Snakes and Slow Worms in the canalside hedgerow at Coney Meadow Reedbed site and a medium population of Slow Worms and high population of Grass Snakes at Hanbury Road depot.

Bat surveys have been carried out at the Netherwich Tunnels, through Vines Park and sections of the River Salwarpe in Droitwich. This was to establish the flight patterns of bats, particularly around the tunnels. A lighting scheme is currently being devised for the tunnels and it is important that the bats feeding habits are not disturbed.



Bat Watching at Netherwich Tunnels (Pics by Edd Moss and Alan Davey)

A Phase I **habitat and botanical** survey has been carried out around the A449, this survey established what is present and what further work that is required. It identified, amongst other things, the presence of Japanese Knotweed, an invasive species which will need treatment to reduce the risk of it spreading.

Otters - The whole length of the Junction and Barge Canals has been surveyed for signs of otters. Otters are very difficult to spot being primarily nocturnal and having large territories, so surveyors look for the tracks and other evidence that they have been around. Results are expected shortly.

Door Mice – In Body Brook marsh area alongside the line of the new Junction Canal, there are a number of strange tubes hanging in trees. These tubes provide an ideal nesting site for Door Mice allowing the tubes to be checked and their numbers monitored. This survey has another two months to run and, to date, no mice have taken up residence in the tubes.



A door mouse tube (pic Clare Guy)

Volunteering and community engagement

Whilst some of the practical volunteering has been hampered over the summer by bad weather we are getting back on track and getting ready for the winter. From October a regular Thursday volunteer work party will start, focussing on the restoration tasks, sometimes working with DCT's weekday maintenance volunteers. For a full list of the tasks call Lucy 01452 318088 or Adam on 0780 8621 833.

Projects that the volunteers have been getting their teeth into over the summer include extending the culvert outflow at Mildenhall Lock; repairing the parapet of Mildenhall Bridge; and strimming around the reedbed site in preparation for construction. Training has also been high on the priority list with Chipper, Strimmer and First Aid accredited courses being undertaken by many of the regular DCT volunteers.

15 young people from South Worcestershire Millennium Volunteers spent two days painting the pedestrian bridge to be installed by the M5. They showed a great deal of patience on what turned out to be a very intricate job. The bridge has come from the Black Country where it used to span the Walsall Canal. Whilst being replaced as part of a general regeneration of the canal there, this

bridge became available. Being structurally sound and suitable for carrying the towpath across the canal to the immediate east of the M5, it has been delivered to the site, ready for installation next year.



MV's hard at work, before and after (Pics – Lucy Bowles)



This year the DCPR hosted the Worcestershire Wardens Thank You event, giving a tour of the Droitwich to Salwarpe length of canal to over 100 volunteers from across the county. The Worcestershire Wardens is a countywide partnership of volunteering organisations which organises training, events and sets management standards for volunteers. Members of DCT have been on several courses, including 'An Introduction to Greenspace Management'.



The guided walk at Valley Way Bridge

If you have any questions on any of the restoration topics contact the Droitwich Canals Restoration Team on 01452 318 000 or email droitwich.project@britishwaterways.co.uk.