

Public Document Pack

Mid Devon District Council

Grand Western Canal Joint Advisory Committee

Tuesday, 1 October 2019 at 7.00 pm
Exe Room, Phoenix House, Tiverton

A G E N D A

Members are reminded of the need to make declarations of interest prior to any discussion which may take place

- 1 **Election of Chairman**
To elect a Chairman for 2019/20 (the Terms of Reference state that the appointment should be made from the Mid Devon District Council representation for 2019/20).
- 2 **Election of Vice Chairman**
To elect a Vice Chairman for 2019/20 (the Terms of Reference state that this appointment should come from the Devon County Council representation for 2019/20).
- 3 **Apologies**
To receive any apologies for absence.
- 4 **Public Question Time**
To receive any questions relating to items on the Agenda from the public and replies thereto.
- 5 **Minutes** (Pages 3 - 8)
Members to consider whether to approve the minutes as a correct record of the meeting held on 5 March 2019.
- 6 **Matters Arising**
To consider any matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting.
- 7 **Chairman's Announcements**
To receive any announcements that the Chairman may wish to make.
- 8 **Miss Jean Hall**
To hear from Mrs Jane Pilgrim about the recent sad passing of Miss Jean Hall and to acknowledge the contribution she made to the Grand Western Canal Joint Advisory Committee.
- 9 **Terms of Reference / Membership Review** (Pages 9 - 12)
To consider the Terms of Reference and membership of the Committee (please find attached).
- 10 **Tidcombe Hall - presentation from the architects and developers**
To receive a presentation from the architects and developers regarding

proposals for the restoration and development of Tidcombe Hall.

- 11 **Progress report (March 2019 - September 2019 inclusive)** (Pages 13 - 28)
To receive a report from the Public Rights of Way and Country Parks Manager (DCC) informing Members of the work that has taken place since the last meeting.
- 12 **Any other business**
To consider any other relevant business.
- 13 **Identification of items for the next meeting**
To identify any issues for discussion at the next meeting.
- 14 **Date of next meeting**
To agree the date of the next meeting as Tuesday 3rd March 2020 at 7.00pm in the Exe Room, Phoenix House.

Stephen Walford
Chief Executive
Monday 23rd September

Anyone wishing to film part or all of the proceedings may do so unless the press and public are excluded for that part of the meeting or there is good reason not to do so, as directed by the Chairman. Any filming must be done as unobtrusively as possible from a single fixed position without the use of any additional lighting; focusing only on those actively participating in the meeting and having regard also to the wishes of any member of the public present who may not wish to be filmed. As a matter of courtesy, anyone wishing to film proceedings is asked to advise the Chairman or the Member Services Officer in attendance so that all those present may be made aware that is happening.

Members of the public may also use other forms of social media to report on proceedings at this meeting.

Members of the public are welcome to attend the meeting and listen to discussion. Lift access the first floor of the building is available from the main ground floor entrance. Toilet facilities, with wheelchair access, are also available. There is time set aside at the beginning of the meeting to allow the public to ask questions.

An induction loop operates to enhance sound for anyone wearing a hearing aid or using a transmitter. If you require any further information, or if you would like a copy of the Agenda in another format (for example in large print) please contact Sarah Lees on:

Tel: 01884 234310
E-Mail: slees@middevon.gov.uk

Public Wi-Fi is available in all meeting rooms.

MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of a MEETING of the GRAND WESTERN CANAL JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE held on 5 March 2019 at 7.00 pm

Present:

Cllr C R Slade	Devon County Council
Cllr C J Eginton	Mid Devon District Council
Cllr S Griggs	Mid Devon District Council
Cllr L K Kennedy	Mid Devon District Council
Cllr R F Radford	Devon County Council and Mid Devon District Council
Cllr Ken Browse	Halberton Parish Council
Mrs P Brind	Mid Devon Moorings
Mr P Brind	The Tiverton Canal Company
Cllr D Cutts	Sampford Peverell Parish Council
Miss Jean Hall	Inland Waterways Association
Mr J Hampshire	Cycling UK
Mr G Moore	Canal Business Group
Mr A Pilgrim	Holcombe Rogus and Burlescombe Parish Councils
Mr P Saupe	Tiverton Unit Sea Cadets Corps
Mr M Trump	Tiverton and District Angling
Mr T White	Friends of the Grand Western Canal

Officers:

Mr M Baker	Canal Manager, DCC
Mrs R Mills	Rights of Way and Country Parks Manager, DCC
Mr S Densham	Housing Development Service Manager, MDDC
Mrs S J Lees	Member Services Officer, MDDC

17 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from:

- Cllr Mrs Heather Bainbridge
- Dion Howells
- Ray Jones

18 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Chairman had received the following public question from Mr William Clarke by email which he read out to the Committee:

“Myself and my neighbours are well aware of the problem of badgers in Wilcombe having lived for 10 years with devaluation and the systemic destruction of our gardens and fences not to mention the ever present threat of flood due to badger activity.

My question is: When are the badgers going to be definitively removed. The Committee seems solely to be concerned with preventing a leak. It ignores the plight of Wilcombe residents and their property for which surely it must have a duty of care. The construction of a barrier will not stop nightly damage in the vicinity nor will it strengthen the embankment being as it is sited water side of the towpath. The failure of the previous barrier proves this point.

Thank you again for accepting my question and associated remarks. I assume they will be presented to the whole Committee. Sir, it is time for the shilly-shallying to stop!"

The Chairman indicated that the comments from Mr Clarke would be addressed when the badger item was reached on the agenda.

19 MINUTES

Subject to the following two amendments, the minutes from the meeting held on 2 October 2018, having been previously circulated, were approved as a correct record and **SIGNED** by the Chairman:

1. The addition of Cllr Ken Browse as a member of the Cycling Signage Working Group.
2. Minute number 8, final sentence amended to read "He responded by saying that **Cycling UK** did not only represent cyclists but also walkers."

20 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman had the following announcements to make:

- He informed the Committee that Cllr Kevin Wilson had resigned from Tiverton Town Council and was therefore no longer their representative. The Town Council would appoint a new representative after the election in May.
- Steve Densham had replaced Andrew Jarrett as the senior Mid Devon District Council officer representative on the Committee.

21 MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising regarding the minutes of the previous meeting.

22 PROGRESS REPORT

Consideration was given to a report * of the Public Rights of Way and Country Parks Manager.

Arising thereon:

Tree work by contractors

The largest job undertaken by tree surgeons along the canal this winter had been the felling of two Ash trees near Tidcombe Bridge. Both had been suffering from Ash Dieback.

New information panels in the Canal Basin

Two new panels had been installed in the Canal Basin. At the car park level, near TS Hermes, there was a new orientation panel which provided a map of the Canal Basin and detailed some of the highlights including the kilns. Feedback from the public had been very positive.

Manley silt trap

Beside Manley Bridge there was an ephemeral stream which drains run-off from Manley Lane into the canal. The stream brings in a lot of silt during storms and each spring a large excavator must be brought in to spot dredge the canal where the stream enters, so that the horse drawn barge and other boats don't run aground. The new silt trap should intercept most of the silt before it entered the canal.

Aqueduct repairs

An inspection had been carried out and a number of recommendations made with regard to the repairs needed, however, due to a number of various delays and distractions, the work could not be completed before Easter and so would need to be postponed until the autumn. The repairs needed were not classed as dangerous or critical.

Tilting weir alterations

The Canal Manager did not have complete confidence in the automatic control system described to the Committee in previous meetings and so it had been reprogrammed to offer him the capacity to operate it remotely. This was done by logging into a website and setting the percentage of full capacity he wished the weir to open and close to.

Pond restoration

Over the winter the Canal Rangers and volunteers had spent several days coppicing and winching out trees in and around the pond situated between Boehill Bridge and Holbrook Bridge in order to let more light in and allow more plant life, such as Marsh Marigolds, to establish.

Daffodil bulb planting

A County Council sponsored apprentice is currently working at both the Canal and Stover Country Park and has been very helpful in helping staff and volunteers recently involved in planting hundreds of daffodil bulbs at the entrance to the Canal Basin. This apprenticeship scheme is designed to give youngsters an environmental NVQ qualification and practical experience.

New content on visitor centre touchscreen

Visitor suggestions had included a number of children wanting more touchscreen interactive games in the Visitor Centre. The Canal Manager had become aware of some bat related games that had been developed for use on touchscreen systems and it was felt that the games and information provided would provide a fun way of raising awareness about the amazing lives that bat species lead.

Embankment badger barriers – 2010 case history and future works

In 2010, an application was made to Natural England (NE) to either have the badgers culled or relocated, but this was refused, as the local NE wildlife officer felt that other options which would enable the badgers to remain had not been fully explored. As there were no secondary setts known of in the area the badgers could not simply be excluded and the building of an artificial sett was not thought to be viable at that time due to issues around costs and land availability.

Eventually following lengthy discussions with DCC's engineers and the NE wildlife officer, a plan was devised to use scaffold poles to build a frame through which 2cm thick, 3m long steel rods would be inserted along the canal bank at a spacing of 7cm, thereby creating an impenetrable barrier to the badgers. Insertion through the 1.5m high frame would ensure that the rods remained at 7cm spacings, even at 3m below ground level. A badger licence for this work was applied for and was received in December 2011.

Whilst there had been some local consternation at the cost in money and labour of undertaking these works DCC has a strong case in arguing that it had no option but to act within the law and to obtain the necessary Natural England support and consents in order to carry out the works that were necessary to safeguard the Canal and the town below. DCC had to comply with the rules laid down by the law and Natural England. It was recognised that this was a very difficult situation.

As the badgers have now extended their burrows along the embankment, work will shortly take place to extend the line of steel rods along the whole embankment. The towpath would be closed during the works and a diversion would be waymarked. A Badger Licence from Natural England had been secured to enable the works to proceed.

It was suggested that a possible way of removing the badgers from the embankment would be to build an artificial sett in a nearby locality, perhaps as a wildlife interest with unobtrusive camera recording their activity which might be of interest to some enthusiasts.

Discussion took place regarding how unhelpful it was that a local resident was allegedly feeding the badgers. It was suggested that some publicity be undertaken asking members of the public not to exacerbate the situation by feeding the badgers and that contact be made with the local MP bringing the significance of the situation to his attention. The Public Rights of Way and Country Parks Manager also stated that a contingency plan would be drawn up addressing any potential flooding issues, she also stated that it was important not to cause alarm to the public. DCC was doing all it could and was working proactively with Natural England to provide a solution within the law.

23 **UPDATE FROM THE CYCLING SIGNAGE WORKING GROUP**

The working group had recently met to consider the best way forward with regard to cycling signage along the canal which was specifically designed to insist that cyclists dismount when approaching bridges.

Following discussion, it was felt that a simple visual image was needed designed to grab people's attention rather than a lot of unnecessary words. Two suggestions had been made to the Committee, one showing the horse pulling the barge through a bridge and another with a person in a mobility scooter, both of which may not be seen by a cyclist coming through from the other side. The signs would be A4 in size and mounted on posts.

Ultimately the improved signage was designed to protect the safety of all users of the canal. Examples were provided of dangerous instances in the past.

In terms of timescale, the Canal Manager explained that new signs could be designed and erected between Easter and the summer. Precise wording and images would need to be agreed and posts dug in. The likely cost was in the region of a couple of thousand pounds. The County Councillors present intimated that they could help to fund this through their locality budgets. The Tiverton Canal Company also offered to provide a financial contribution for the new signs indicating the horse drawn barge operating area.

It was **AGREED** that the new signs be erected at every bridge along canal. Within the zone in which the horse drawn barge operated, identified by special signs, cyclists would be asked to dismount and walk under bridges. Outside this zone signs will have advisory messages. The trial will take place as soon as practically possible and the Committee will review the situation at their next meeting in October.

24 **BINS ON THE CANAL**

The Vice Chairman reported that he had spoken to officers at Mid Devon District Council and it had been confirmed that the next time the black bins were emptied on the canal a sticker would be placed on them saying 'any bin will do'.

25 **THE COST OF FELLING THE TREES AS OUTLINED AT THE LAST MEETING**

The Canal Manager listed the costs involved in recent tree work. Since much of this work had had to be undertaken as a result of Ash Dieback there was a corporate DCC budget available to facilitate this.

A brief discussion took place regarding ivy growing up trees and the need to tolerate it as it did not take any nutrients from trees. It was also confirmed that the Canal Ranger team were still selling logs created by the trees that had been felled along the length of the canal. This was a useful source of income generation, however, the Clean Air Act might have an impact on this in terms of the weight limits required for the sale of wet wood in the future.

26 THE CONDITION OF THE PATH BETWEEN THE BASIN AND TIDCOMBE BRIDGE (SIZE AND DEPTH OF PUDDLES)

The Vice Chairman had requested that this item be included on the agenda but stated that it had been dealt with under the progress report discussed earlier in the meeting. He had had some concerns regarding this section of the canal. The Canal Manager explained that when the current surface was laid, the contractor hadn't taken enough care raking it out before it was rolled thereby creating an undulating surface. Following a decade of wear and the gradual development of soil on either side, the path had become slightly sunken and held water in all the undulations following heavy rain. The only way of rectifying this was to have it resurfaced. He had recently received an estimate of £9800 to do this work but funding would need to be secured first.

27 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The following issues were raised under this item:

- The badger repairs case study had been published on forums that other navigation authorities had access to so that best practice could be shared nationally.
- The quality of the wall construction at the Canal Basin end was again referred to as being outstanding. The standard of construction was described as being 'second to none'. The Canal Manager and his team were congratulated for overseeing this. Recognition of this on behalf of the committee would be sent to the contractor, Overall Construction, from the Chairman.
- It was reported that the Mid Devon Attraction Association had recently received some funding to promote Mid Devon. This would be used to improve the website which would have a Mid Devon brand and would feature the canal as a top visitor attraction.
- The Committee Clerk would circulate suggested dates for the summer site visit in due course.

28 IDENTIFICATION OF ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING

No additional items were requested to be on the agenda for the next meeting.

29 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

It was **AGREED** that the next meeting take place on Tuesday 1 October at 7.00pm.

(The meeting ended at 8.28 pm)

CHAIRMAN

TERMS OF UNDERSTANDING

Introduction

The Grand Western Canal Joint Advisory Committee (GWCJAC) supports and encourages an active partnership between all the bodies involved in and co-ordinating management across all activities of the Grand Western Canal (GWC). The management of the GWC is co-ordinated by the Senior Public Rights of Way Officer on behalf of Devon County Council.

The Joint Advisory Committee represents the main mechanism for the co-ordination of advice and the collation of local views relating to the management and maintenance of the canal.

The aim of the County Council is “to conserve for the future the integrity of the Grand Western Canal in its setting as a wildlife, historic, recreation and education resource”.

The principle functions of the GWCJAC are to:

- Promote and act as champion for the canal;
- Support the aims of the County Council for the GWC which are to:
 - Preserve and maintain the canal as a civil engineering asset;
 - Develop, conserve and interpret the biodiversity in the surrounding area;
 - Promote the canal for amongst other things – tourism purposes.
- Provide a forum for discussion and information exchange between the different interested parties;
- Provide advice for the County Council on issues of management of the GWC

This will be achieved through providing advice

- To assist the implementation of the Management that supports the County Council's aims for the GWC;
- To inform a review of the Management Plan at appropriate intervals;
- To permit the monitoring of the success and achievement of the GWC Team and the use of the Canal;
- To inform the County Council on the impacts of existing or proposed uses of the Canal;
- To inform the commissioning of special studies of issues if necessary, utilising appropriate forums;
- To inform the local planning authorities about developments which are likely to affect significantly the GWC, its environs and landscape character;
- On the likely resources necessary for effective management;
- on the dissemination of information and by undertaking this through appropriate organisations;
- On the accommodation of new requirements due to changes in legislation affecting the GWC

It should be noted that the GWCJAC does not have executive powers over the funding partners, but acts in an advisory and consultative capacity to the funding partners and others as required.

TERMS OF UNDERSTANDING

- The GWCJAC will meet twice a year;
- The Chairman and Vice Chairman will be elected annually;
- The position of Chairman and Vice Chairman will rotate between the main funding partners of Mid Devon District Council and Devon County Council;
- The secretariat for the GWCJAC will be Mid Devon District Council and the Committee will be run under MDDC standing orders;
- The GWCJAC will be considered quorate when eight representatives are present of whom 3 should be County or District Councillors with 1 being a County Councillor;
- Representatives will be expected to attend all meetings or to send a suitable replacement with prior notice;
- If a representative fails to attend two GWCJAC meetings within the year, without reasonable cause, then their eligibility to attend any future meetings will be terminated with immediate effect;
- Meetings will be open to the press and public with opportunities for the items to be brought in by the public for part of the meeting with prior notice;
- Suggested agenda items and questions should be presented 3 weeks before any meeting;
- Press and publicity must be channelled through Devon Media Services having initially been authorised by the Chairman or Vice Chairman or the Public Rights of Way & Country Parks Manager;
- The membership of the GWCJAC will be reviewed once during each financial year to ensure there is a wide and balanced representation of canal interests;
- New members may be co-opted onto the GWCJAC with the agreement of the GWCJAC following a presentation to the Committee outlining the reasons why they should have representation;
- These Terms of Understanding will be reviewed by the GWCJAC following the agreement of the Chairman with recommendations for change being made to the funding partners;
- All organisations will have equal voting rights should the occasion dictate, with the Chairman having the casting vote;
- The GWCJAC will report to the Cabinet Member for Community, Public Health, Transportation & Environmental Services who will be the County Council's representative on the advisory committee.

GRAND WESTERN CANAL JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MEMBERSHIP

Group Represented	Votes
Members	
Devon County Council - Executive Member for Environment and Communities	1
Devon County Council – Member for Tiverton East	1
Devon County Council – Member for Willand and Uffculme	1
Mid Devon District Council – Portfolio Holder for Environment	1
Mid Devon District Council – Members for Cranmore (3 councillors)	3
Mid Devon District Council – Member for Halberton	1
Mid Devon District Council – Members for Canonsleigh (2 councillors)	2
Tiverton Town Council	1
Halberton Parish Council	1
Sampford Peverell Parish Council	1
Burlescombe Parish Council	1
Holcombe Rogus Parish Council	1
Friends of the Grand Western Canal	1
Devon Wildlife Trust	1
Wildlife Advisory Group	1
Inland Waterways Association	1
Tiverton and District Angling Club	1
Devon Bird Watching and Preservation Society	1
Tiverton Sea Cadets	1
Cycling UK	1
The Tiverton Canal Company	1
Mid Devon Moorings	1
Canal Businesses Group	1
Community Patrol Boat	1
Officers	
Devon County Council – Public Rights of Way and Country Parks Manager	0
Devon County Council – Canal Manager	0
Mid Devon District Council – Land Management Officer	0
Mid Devon District Council – Member Services Officer	0
Total	27

Each organisation may register a deputy to their representative, which must be approved by the GWJAC in advance.

The GWCJAC will be advised by the Senior Public Rights of Way Officer and Canal Manager and other officers as required.

We endorse the above Terms of Understanding for the GWCJAC and hereby agree to represent, to the best of our ability, the interests of the GWC. We understand our role is to act as an ambassador for the GWCJAC and further its aim to conserve, for the future, the integrity of the Grand Western Canal in its setting as a wildlife, historic, recreation and education resource and to be supportive of sustainable economic activity and tourism in the area.

Organisation.....

Named
representative.....

Position.....

Date.....

Signature.....

Contact Details

Address.....
.....

Tel.....Fax.....
.....

Email.....

Named
Deputy.....

Date.....

Signature.....

Contact
Details.....

Address.....

Tel.....

Fax.....

Email.....

Grand Western Canal Joint Advisory Committee 1st October 2019

Progress Report (March 2019 – September 2019 inclusive)

1. Horse-drawn barge zone signs

In response to concerns expressed by the Tiverton Canal Co about increasing number of near misses in recent years whereby towpath users have acted dangerously around the horse that pulls the barge, new signs have been developed informing visitors that they are entering the Horse-drawn Barge Operating Zone. These signs use photos and text to demonstrate some of the hazards and the safe behaviour requested of towpath users in this zone.

The signing is in response to reports from people involved in incidents or near misses that they were not aware that they may come across a horse on the towpath. In one case a cyclist with a child strapped in a child seat almost ran into the horse under a bridge and nearly fell in. The new signs should reduce the likelihood of such incidents and ensure that the horse-drawn barge can continue to operate safely on the Canal.

Two smaller A3-sized version of the signs are fixed to the gates near Tidcombe Bridge and Manley Bridge, so that visitors entering at these access points are also made aware.



2. Cyclist signs at bridges

A JAC working group was set up last year to review the existing signage and after taking advice from Devon County Council's Safer Travel Officers (who are involved with multi-use trails around the county) and from the Tiverton Canal Co a new approach was developed and then agreed at the JAC meeting in March 2019.

It was recognised that a large proportion of cyclists do not dismount and walk under the canal's bridges, and that this is unlikely to change significantly whatever signs are put up. As there is no legal or physical restriction that can be called upon to force cyclists to dismount, it was agreed that the best course of action was to focus on explaining to cyclists the dangers they can pose to more vulnerable towpath users in the hope that they will slow down, give way and take more care. DCC Councillors Colin Slade and Ray Radford have funded new signs and posts using their locality budgets.

Instead of being required to dismount, walk and remount at 19 of the canal's bridges, the instruction to dismount is now only being made at five bridges in the horse-drawn barge operating zone and the two bridges on either side of Sampford Peverell, which are generally quite busy and have had several incidents in the past. The signs at these seven bridges have red and orange backgrounds - the other signs have the standard DCC

blue/green shaded background. At these other bridges the messages are to slow down, take care, give way and don't cause an accident.

These A4-sized signs replace the existing A5-sized signs and are mounted on new 4" square posts. The old posts have been removed and where possible the new posts have been located a little further away from the bridges to give cyclists more notice to slow down / dismount, and to make the signs visible from further away.



One of the key design choices was to make the signs photo-based so that even if cyclists and other users don't read the text, a glance at the photos should get across the idea that they can meet someone, or something head on under the bridges.

The horse which pulls the barge was used on most of the signs in which it operates, and several volunteers were found to represent a range of more vulnerable towpath users on all the other signs. These included a mobility buggy user, an older gentleman with a walking stick, a dog walker, and mothers with children in pushchairs. The variety of users that could be impacted by inconsiderate cycling cannot be effectively encompassed in just one sign, but through representation in several consecutive signs, cyclists should realise that they could come across a range of other towpath users that they could scare or hurt if they don't slow down and take extra care.

Another design choice was to take the photo in each sign at the bridge, to be tailor made for where the sign was to be located. Although this made the job of creating the signs more complicated and expensive, it was felt that the message would be more pertinent and meaningful, represented this way than if a generic bridge was used at all the sign locations. The variety of subject matter on the signs was also felt to be beneficial in terms of engaging cyclists and keeping their interest. This variation was continued in terms of the range of different messages used in the text and through the use of different layouts.

All of the signs were installed ahead of the summer holidays and have been well received by the towpath users that have engaged the Canal Manager and Canal Rangers on the subject.

3. Ebear landing stage

The Canal Ranger team and volunteers installed a new landing stage near Ebear Bridge. It is a split-level landing stage with a higher end - level with the towpath and the right height for narrowboats and cruisers, and a lower end - at the right height for canoes and kayaks to be launched and recovered from.



The timber for this landing stage was paid for using funding from Councillor Ray Radford's Locality Budget.

4. Deltalok bank repairs

This year the Canal Ranger Team have been using a new technique for repairing the bank where it has slipped or been eroded. Experience has shown that other techniques for revetting the bank - such as stacking rocks, installing gabion baskets or using geotextile material held in place with posts - don't always work very well. They often end up standing proud of the bank as they get eroded on either side or become undermined and slowly collapse into the canal.

The new approach involves the use of Deltalok bags. These are a bit larger than standard sandbags and are made from a geotextile which supports plant growth through the fibres. The bags are filled with a mix of soil, sand and small pebbles which we mix in a cement mixer. A handful of grass seed (with no rye grass included) is thrown in with each load and incorporated before the bags are filled.



The bags are then used to rebuild the eroded section of bank, with pointed plastic strips placed between each, spanning the joins, so that the bags are all held tightly together. The bags are placed to avoid running joints (like building a brick wall) and are battered to match the angle of the surrounding bank.

The Deltalok wall is then topped off with topsoil and some more grass seed. Within a week or two the grass seed germinates and grow up through the bags, and that over time the seeds of other nearby waterside plants will colonise the bags. This will have the effect of blending the bags into the bank so that they cannot be seen. The root growth will also help to further bind the bags together and into the surrounding bank. Some of the bags that were installed earlier in the year have now blended in completely and look likely to provide a very effective, longstanding solution to these erosion problems. This work will continue through the autumn and winter.

5. Badgers in Wilcombe Embankment

As previously reported to JAC members, Devon County Council aim to reduce the risk of further damage to this embankment by relocating the badgers from the setts in the embankment to an artificial sett built on the land below. After a line of steel rods was inserted along the canal bank in March to provide interim protection for the embankment, agreement was sought and secured from Wilcombe Primary School who kindly agreed to the construction of the artificial sett on their land, subject to certain fencing conditions (to minimise the impact of the badgers on the school grounds). Construction of the artificial sett was completed by an ecologist from Encompass Ecology, with help from an excavator contractor.

During the summer the ecological contractor who built the artificial sett has been monitoring badger activity and has applied to Natural England to exclude the badgers from the embankment. A licence to undertake this work was received in mid-September and so work to clear vegetation from the embankment will now proceed.

Once the vegetation is cleared, one-way doors will be fitted to all the existing sett holes forcing the badgers to use the artificial sett (the most likely outcome) or to disperse elsewhere. After a period of monitoring to ensure the badgers are not getting back into the

embankment sett, the slope will be repaired and netted with mesh to ensure they cannot start tunnelling into the embankment again.



6. Pay and display signs

New signs have been designed to be located beside the Canal Basin pay and display machines. The signs will replace the old ones which are deteriorating and have become out of date but will continue the approach of basing the sign around an attractive photo of the canal and emphasising that all of the car parking income is spent on maintaining the canal. The signs will also highlight the facility for visitors to pay by phone.

Charges

- Payable 7 days a week, sunrise to sunset
- No disabled concessions

Up to 2 hours	£1.50
All day	£3.00
Coaches	£3.00

Pay by Phone option: Tel: 01392 240888

Quoting location
6600 Coaches
6607 All other vehicles

Annual parking permit £24.00
(Purchase online at www.devonpermits.org)

Penalties

The car park is patrolled regularly by Devon County Council's Canal Rangers and Civil Enforcement Officers.

Any vehicle not displaying a valid ticket or oversteering the expiry time may be issued with a Penalty Charge Notice for £50.

Conditions

- No unauthorised overnight camping or parking
- No unauthorised HGV's or trailers
- Coaches to park only in marked bays
- No car parking in coach bays
- Park carefully to keep access routes clear
- Please take your litter home

Devon County Council

Pay and Display

Income from car parking enables the Canal Ranger Service to look after the Canal's stunning wildlife

Charge

- Payable 7 days a week, sunrise to sunset
- No disabled concessions

Up to 2 hours	£1.50
All day	£3.00
Coaches	£3.00

Pay by Phone option: Tel: 01392 240888

Quoting location
6600 Coaches
6607 All other vehicles

Annual parking permit £24.00
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Penalties

The car park is patrolled regularly by Devon County Council's Canal Rangers and Civil Enforcement Officers.

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- No unauthorised HGV's or trailers
- Coaches to park only in marked bays
- No car parking in coach bays
- Park carefully to keep access routes clear
- Please take your litter home

Devon County Council

Pay and Display

All of the income from this car park is used to keep the Country Park a special place to visit

7. Proposed dog waste and litter bin collection charges

Mid Devon District Council's senior officer leading on waste management has met twice with DCC's Head of PRow and Country Parks and the Canal Manager to discuss a proposal to charge DCC £12k pa for the emptying of the litter bins and dog waste bins along the Canal. This would take effect in 2020/21 and would take the form of a £12k cut to the existing £40k contribution that MDDC makes to the Canal maintenance budget.

The two DCC officers have argued against the proposal, but it looks likely that this will be one of several options for addressing budget shortfalls to be considered by MDDC's cabinet later in the year.

Such a major cut to the Canal's budget could only be sustained by one, or a combination, of the following responses:

- Reducing the number of bins along the canal
- Reducing the frequency of collections
- Seeking to increase income by raising Canal Basin car parking charges

8. Green Flag and other Awards

The Country Park has been successful in retaining the Green Flag Award for the 11th year running. This year the Canal received a one-hour mystery-shop by a single judge rather than a full day's judging by two judges. The park will be fully judged next year.

On the 17th September, the Canal Manager led a judge from the RHS South West in Bloom, accompanied by Tiverton Town Councillor Wally Burke for a tour of the Canal Basin. Councillor Burke has for the last few years entered the Canal in the Pride in Parks Award. Last year the Country Park achieved the highest grade of 5 stars.

The Canal Manager has also been working with Jeremy Salter of the Tiverton Civic Society on an application to a competition run by Civic Voice to find England's Favourite Conservation Area. This year the Civic Society is entering the Canal Conservation Area in the competition, and if shortlisted, the Canal Conservation Area would be part of a public vote to find the country's favourite.

9. TS Hermes renovation

Renovation of TS Hermes, home of the Tiverton Sea Cadets has been completed inside and out and the Canal Manager has congratulated the Cadet leaders on a great job. Not only do the Sea Cadets now have much better facilities, but canal visitors in the Canal Basin car park are greeted by a far more attractive building.

TS Hermes is built on land owned by Devon County Council and the Sea Cadet lease this land. The lease will soon be due for renewal and Devon County Council have agreed to offer a much longer lease than usual in order to help strengthen the case for the fundraising and investment that has been undertaken by the Sea Cadets.

10. Graffiti incident

Sadly, the Country Park suffered a serious case of graffiti one Saturday night in June. Four youths used spray cans to spray swastikas and other symbols and words on bridges, benches, gates, signs and trees between the Canal Basin and Manley Bridge.

Fortunately, the horse-drawn barge was out on an evening trip and the skipper contacted the canal manager to inform him of the graffiti and the fact it was still fresh. A description of the likely perpetrators, who had just passed the barge, was also provided. The Canal Manager and one of the Canal Rangers were quickly on site and as well as finding, challenging and photographing the culprits, they also managed to pressure wash off almost all of the graffiti before it set. The photos were passed to the police and the Canal Manager gave a statement, but it is not known if any further action was taken.



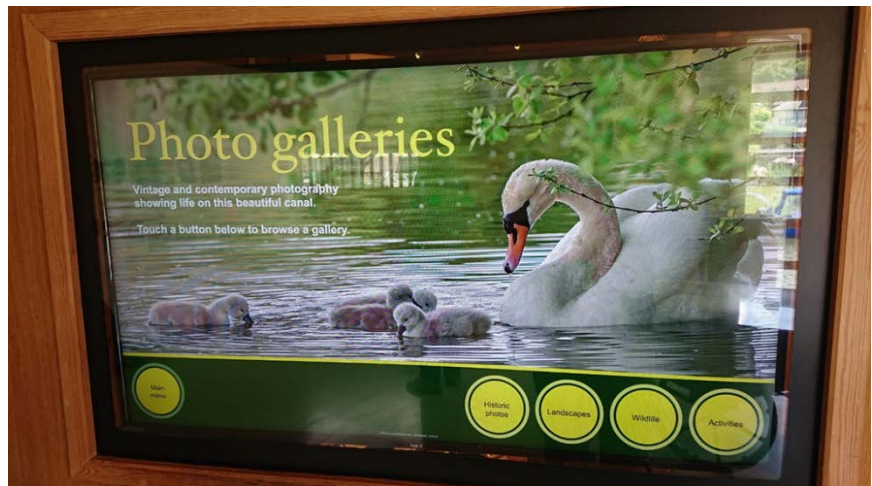
11. Visitor Centre touchscreen photo galleries

When the displays were developed for the Visitor Centre, one of the advantages of the touchscreen system was that it provided the opportunity to continue adding and updating content as time and budgets allow.

The last Progress Report discussed the addition of new bat-related games and identification information.

This summer and other new section – a photo gallery – has been added. Photos are organised into four categories:

- Historic Photos
- Landscapes
- Wildlife
- Canal Activities



There are 24 photos in each category, most of which have been taken by local residents and canal visitors. Many came from the Canal photo competition held in 2015.

12. Devon Bat Survey

In the spring, the Canal Manager was approached by the Devon Greater Horseshoe Bat Project to see if the Country Park could host one of 21 automatic bat detectors located at centres around the county, which can be booked out by members of the public. Once collected, the person borrowing the detector puts it out in their garden and leaves it for three nights before returning the detector to the centre and posting an SD card from the detector to the project HQ. A few weeks later they receive a report listing the species detected.

As well as engaging the public and giving them interesting details about the species of bat in their garden, the project is also generating large quantities of reliable and geographically well-spread data which will help conservationists looking to protect bats.

The detector based at the canal has been booked out by members of the public 20 times to date, and on 10 occasions when it was not booked out, the detector was deployed at locations along the Canal, providing a real insight into the species present in the country park.



13. Boehill slipway parking

When the boat-launching slipway was built, agreement was reached with the owners of the nearby Minnows Touring Park for them to provide parking for boater's vehicles and trailers for a small fee, as there is no parking space beside the slipway. The new owners of Minnows say that their insurance does not cover this and that they would not be able to accommodate boaters' vehicles and trailers.

Agreement has been reached with the owner of the allotment field halfway along the slipway track for vehicles and trailers to be parked in the field near the allotments for a small daily fee, payable in advance at Minnows. The gateway to the field has been widened to accommodate the long trailers that boats use to tow their boats.

14. Weed-cutting

As in the last few years, the Canal Rangers have operated the weedboat for four days a week in most weeks between April and October. This has largely prevented blanket weed and Water Soldier from completely choking the Canal along most of its length. However, at the time of writing it is apparent that there is still a lot of Water Soldier on the bed of the canal in some sections and work to clear as much of it as possible will continue into early autumn.

15. Fringed lily control

Yellow fringed lily is an invasive, non-native plant and, if left untreated, can completely cover the canal to the detriment of other plant species. However mechanical control by cutting and collecting is not effective as the plants grow back and any fragments which float away can form new colonies.

Every few years a specialist contractor with a purpose-built boat is engaged to spend one or two days at the canal spraying off the plant with glyphosate herbicide. He also secures the EA licence required for this work. Although most of the fringed lily is killed off, there is always some lurking behind reeds and other plants which survives and re-establishes a colony over a period of years. Therefore, this work must be repeated after three or four years.

16. Mowing and strimming

The Canal Rangers and volunteers have undertaken all the usual mowing and strimming along the towpath, car parks and picnic sites. Thanks to a £4k contribution from Tiverton Town Council, a new mower was purchased in the spring which makes a far neater job of mowing the Canal Basin and Sampford Peverell picnic sites.



17. Bank cutting

Each summer a point is reached when vegetation starts to collapse across the towpath and brambles extend out from hedges across the towpath. In mid-July, the Canal Manger spent eight days in the Kubota tractor siding up both sides of the towpath along all 11 miles in order to maintain clear access for towpath users. In most cases the bankside needs two passes and the hedge side needs three or four. As it is just a light cut, the majority of wildflowers remain, as can be seen in this post-cut photo taken near Ayshford Bridge:



The bank between the Canal Basin and Crownhill Bridge is cut completely in the summer each year by a contractor once the plants begin to impede the horse-drawn barge rope and place extra strain on the horse. This year the dry early summer conditions restricted plant growth, and good water levels meant that agreement was reached with the Tiverton Canal Co to delay this cut until early August – a month later than is often necessary - providing time for wildflowers to finish flowering and set seed.

18. Tree management

In the spring a storm brought down several trees along the canal including two very large poplars and a willow near Bamfylde Close in Tiverton.

Clearing these poplars and resetting the root plates proved to be a difficult and expensive task involving a team of tree surgeons, a JCB contractor and a tractor winch contractor.



The two fallen poplars with the frame of a temporary dam (related to the Wilcombe Embankment works) between. The root plates were set back in their original position once the trunks were detached.

Fortunately, we own an adjacent strip of land which we were able to winch the trunks and branches out to. All of the timber (around 15 tonnes) was sold either for planking or firewood and this helped to offset the cost a little. The Canal Rangers and a fencing contractor have undertaken some repairs and restoration of the adjacent gardens and the Canal land has been levelled, rotovated and seeded with a wildflower meadow seed mix.

A few other small to medium sized trees have come down at points during the year, and a couple of large branches have snapped off large oak trees, and all have been cleared by the Canal Rangers and/or contractors. The Canal Rangers have also been crown-lifting trees with low branches above the towpath and canal.

19. Ash dieback

It is clear that this fungal disease is spreading rapidly not only along the canal but throughout the county. Roughly 30% of the Canal's trees are Ashes, totalling several hundred along both sides of the 11 ¼ mile long canal. The latest predictions are that around 90% of these trees will succumb to the disease in the next decade and given that most are within falling distance of the canal and/or towpath, a very large number of ash trees are likely to require felling.

In the last two years several large diseased ash trees have been felled and around 20 more will need to be felled this autumn/winter as they have reached the 50% canopy loss threshold which Devon County Council has set as the point at which diseased trees above highways should be felled.

Diseased trees are increasingly difficult to fell safely as the disease progresses within the tree and many of these trees are in inaccessible locations on the offside banks, such as the one pictured right, located near Whipcott Bridge. This means that greater use will need to be made of Mobile Elevated Work Platforms (MEWPs) and excavator-mounted tree shears. This will require more frequent towpath closures when work is undertaken as this machinery completely blocks the towpath.



20. JAC site visit

This year's site visit began in the Canal Basin, where members were shown the new additions to the visitor centre touchscreen system, and some of the new signs in the Canal Basin. The Canal Manager also updated members on the Wilcombe embankment / badger issue, the clearance of the fallen poplars, the new mower and the new bridge signs for cyclists.

The group then moved on to the Aqueduct where plans for relining this leaking structure were outlined. Finally, the group visited the new landing stage near Ebear Bridge.



21. Sign and noticeboard posts

All of the posts supporting signs, panels and noticeboards within the country park have been inspected and many require replacement, having rotted at ground level. The process of replacing them has started this summer and will continue through the coming months.

22. Spirit of the sixties motorcycle rally

Fine weather welcomed the *Spirit of the Sixties* motorcycle rally which visited the canal on May 12th. The Canal Basin hosted this Westland's Classic Bike Club event in which more than 150 classic bikes joined 75 more marshals at the Basin in aid of the Freewheelers EVS ('Blood Bikes'). Those taking part stopped in Tiverton on a round trip from Yeovil where they are based. The event gave motorbike lovers the chance to see motorcycles of the type made between 1954 and 1976.



John Dodge, organiser of the event and secretary of the Westland Classic Bike Club, said: "This is the 29th event of its kind and the second time we have been to the canal after coming here last in 2011. The canal is always a beautiful place to come. They always make us welcome here."

23. 'Dragons teeth' at Tiverton Road car park

The posts located beside the towpath on the northern side of Tiverton Road Bridge, have been replaced as the old ones were rotting at the base. In stead of 3-4" round posts, banged in by hand, 5" round posts have been banged in by tractor, providing a more secure and longer lasting barrier to prevent vehicles from entering the canal at this point, either intentionally or accidentally.

24. Aqueduct repairs

A Devon County Council engineer has been drawing up plans and designs for repairing the aqueduct this autumn. The channel will be dammed off with portadams, drained and then cleaned back to the previous sprayed cement lining. A butyl liner will then be added to make the aqueduct channel watertight again and this will be protected by a concrete canvas (cement-impregnated fabric) lining. New rubber fenders will be added along the sides and some other repairs will be carried out on brickwork forming the walls and arches of the structure.

The work is being funded and supervised by the Devon County Council Bridges and Structures Team and is likely to take around six weeks, starting mid to late October. It is anticipated that the towpath will remain open throughout most of this time, but tendering has not yet been completed and this will need to be agreed with the successful contractor.

25. Canal Basin car park flower bed

This new flower bed was once again sown with a wildflower mix in the spring, once the daffodils had gone over. After the remnants of the daffodils were cut and raked off, the bed was dressed with 1-2 inches of topsoil to provide a good seed bed without disturbing the daffodil bulbs. The bed is still flowering well in late September.



26. Benches

A new oak memorial bench, built and installed by the Canal Ranger Service, has been installed beside the dragonfly panel near Ebear Bridge. It replaced an old softwood bench which was in poor condition.



27. Canal Basin wall

In the summer, vandals removed several concrete blocks forming the top course of the modern blockwork wall supporting the land at the eastern end of the Canal Basin car park and threw them into the garden of the District Council-owned flats below. At first neither Devon County Council or Mid Devon District Council felt they had responsibility for the wall (which dates to the construction of the adjacent flats), but after discussion the district council did accept responsibility and arranged for the top course to be rebuilt with new blocks.

28. Buckland Bridge steps

The rotten wooden handrails beside these steps have been replaced with galvanised metal ones which should last as long as the steps. Although the handrails are quite shiny and currently stand out, they should dull down and blend in more within a year or two.

29. Tiverton Road car park tarmacking

Potholes in the car park and around the entrance have been patched by a tarmac contractor.

30. Volunteers, work experience and apprentice

Volunteers have provided 181 person/days help during this period. These figures include several regular college work experience placements - Joni, Alex, Joseph, Adam and Katie Taylor - from Bicton, Cannington and Petroc colleges each attend one day a week. Joni, Alex and Joseph attended a Brushcutter training course and Adam is due to attend soon, so they are also gaining qualifications as well as work experience.

Two high school pupils each spent a week undertaking their work experience with the Canal Rangers in July.

Throughout the year a Country Park Apprentice Ranger, Rob Daley, has spent four days per week working at Stover Country Park (near where he lives) and one day a week working at the Canal. The placement is funded by a separate Devon County Council budget until next Easter.

31. Schools & Groups

Total = 357 children attended + forthcoming Rainbows group on Sat 21st Sept.

- 19/3/19 **Bickleigh Primary** (Pond dip/Mini-beast Hunt) 17 Reception children
- 1/4/19 **Wilcombe Primary** (Pond dip/Mini-beast Hunt) 33 Reception children
- 8/5/19 - **Stover Country Park** - Jo helped lead Pond dipping sessions
- 17/5/19 - **Heathcoat Primary** (Pond dip/Mini-beast Hunt) 55 Yr 4 children
- 20/5/19 - **Blundell's Primary** (Tree Walk from TRB to Basin & Pond dip) - 25 Yr 3 children
- 22/5/19 - **Kingswood Nursery**, Uffculme - Pond dipping & Mini-beast Hunt - 10 Pre-school children
- 13/6/19 - **Burlescombe Primary** (Pond dipping at their school & Mini-beast Hunt & Tree Walk along towpath) - The whole school - 58 children
- 20/6/19 – **1st Tiverton Cubs** - Pond dipping - 22 children
- 27/6/19 - **Webber's Primary** - Pond dipping (Pond dipping at their school & Mini-beast Hunt & Tree Walk along towpath) - The whole school - 83 children
- 8/7/19 **Kentisbeare Primary** (Pond dip/Mini-beast Hunt) 20 Pre-school children
- 17/7/19 **Castle Primary** (Pond dip/Mini-beast Hunt) 34 Reception/Yr 1 children
- 21/9/19 – **1st Tiverton Rainbows** - Pond dipping - ? children

32. Canal Ranger Service Events

- 20/3/19 - Walk and Talk - Sampford Peverell - 35 people
- 10/5/19 - Bat Walk - 14 people
- 24/7/19 - Walk and Talk - Swans Neck - 33 people
- 14/8/19 - Wild Wednesday - Pond dipping - 23 children
- 21/8/19 - Wild Wednesday - Pirates - 34 children

- 28/8/19 - Wild Wednesday - Butterflies & Fairies - 22 children
- 17/9/19 - Bat Walk - 12 people

33. Other organisations' events hosted at the Canal

- 12/5/19 – Spirit of the Sixties motorcycle rally
- 13/7/19 – Sampford Peverell Society – 1st World War 'Peace day' commemoration sports event.
- 14/7/19 – 26th Clic Sargent Grand Western Canal Walk and Run
- 20/7/19 – Learn to Fish South West – Have a go fishing day

FUTURE PROGRAMME OF WORKS

Management projects

- Complete update of management plan
- Green Flag Award application
- Aqueduct relining
- Badger relocation and embankment repairs
- Ash dieback felling (felling licences, towpath closures & diversions)
- Visitor Guide update, printing and distribution
- Complete update of boating regulations and procedures
- Pond and grassland restoration work at Ebear Pond
- Ongoing Canal Basin signage improvements
- Potential new interpretation panels (subject to funding)
- Potential underwater film for visitor centre touchscreen (subject to funding)
- Exploring potential for Canal Basin public toilet refurbishment (subject to funding)

Practical projects

- All usual tree and hedge management work
- Ongoing sign / panel post replacement work
- Hedge-planting at points along the canal
- Ongoing deltalok bank repairs
- Landing stage extension in Sampford Peverell
- Habitat creation / restoration works at Ebear Pond
- Concreting towpath under bridges with persistent puddle problems
- Annual bank and hedge trimming works
- Resurfacing towpath between the Canal Basin and Tidcombe Bridge (subject to funding)

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