

Public Document Pack

Grand Western Canal Joint Advisory Committee

Tuesday, 6 October 2015 at 7.00 pm
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 2015/16 (the current Terms of Reference state that the appointment should be made from the Mid Devon District Councillor representation for 2015/16).
- 2 **ELECTION OF VICE CHAIRMAN**
To elect a Vice Chairman for 2015/16 (the current Terms of Reference state that this appointment should come from the Devon County Councillor representation for 2015/16).
- 3 **APOLOGIES**
To receive any apologies for absence.
- 4 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**
- 5 **MINUTES** (*Pages 5 - 12*)
To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the Meeting held on 3 March 2015 (please find attached).
- 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 **TERMS OF REFERENCE / MEMBERSHIP REVIEW** (*Pages 13 - 16*)
To consider the Terms of Reference and Membership of the Committee (please find attached).
- 9 **PROGRESS REPORT AND FUTURE PROGRAMME OF WORKS**
(*Pages 17 - 34*)
Report of the Head of Public Rights of Way and Country Parks (DCC) informing Members of the work that has taken place to date.

- 10 **WATER SOLDIER EXTRACTION**
Committee to discuss recent attempts to clear water soldier from the canal and what the best approach is going forwards.
- 11 **CANAL SITE VISIT**
To receive a verbal report from those who attended the site visit in June.
- 12 **PLANNING ISSUES**
To discuss planning issues as they affect the canal and to consider the approach of the JAC going forwards.
- 13 **CANINE ETIQUETTE GROUP**
To receive an update on the work of the group since the last meeting.
- 14 **TOWPATH CODE OF CONDUCT** (*Pages 35 - 36*)
To review the current code of conduct with a view to making it more readable for visitors.
- 15 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**
To consider any other relevant business.
- 16 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**
Tuesday 1 March 2016 at 7.00pm – Exe Room, Phoenix House.

Kevin Finan
Chief Executive
Monday 28 September 2015

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 to 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

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MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **GRAND WESTERN CANAL JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE** held on 3 March 2015 at 7.00 pm

Present:

Cllr R F Radford	Devon County Council
Cllr D P O Hannon	Devon County Council
Cllr Mrs H Bainbridge	Mid Devon District Council
Cllr M A Lucas	Mid Devon District Council
Cllr C R Slade	Tiverton Town Council
Cllr L Neville	Burlescombe Parish Council
Cllr A Miller	Halberton Parish Council
Mr D Cutts	Sampford Peverell Parish Council
Mr P Kelly	Inland Waterways Association (West Country Branch)
Mr P Brind	Tiverton Canal Co.
Mrs P Brind	Mid Devon Moorings
Mr P Saupe	Tiverton Sea Cadets
Miss J Hall	Inland Waterways Association
Mr A Pilgrim	Holcombe Rogus Parish Council
Mr M Trump	Tiverton & District Angling Club
Mr Z Grochala	Canal Business Group

Officers:

Mr N Sanderson	Head of Housing and Property Services, Mid Devon District Council
Mrs J Clifford	Professional Services Manager, Mid Devon District Council
Mr M Baker	Canal Manager, Devon County Council

Mrs R Mills	Public Rights of way and Country Parks manager, Devon County Council
Mr M Deaton	Planning Development Manager, Devon County Council
Mrs S Lees	Member Services Officer, Mid Devon District Council

1 **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Cllr K Browse (who was substituted by Cllr A Miller), Cllr R Croad, R Crosbee, Cllr N V Davey, R Hodgson, R Jones, T White and Cllr K D Wilson.

2 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no questions from the members of the public who were present.

3 **MINUTES**

The Minutes from the meeting held on 7 October 2014, having been previously circulated, were approved as a correct record and **SIGNED** by the Chairman.

4 **MATTERS ARISING**

The following matters were arising from the Minutes of the previous meeting:

- Adam Pilgrim wished to thank the JAC for the erection of a bench and a plaque to the Canal Awareness Group.
- Cllr Des Hannon thanked the Canal Awareness Group once again for raising the profile of the Canal and in lobbying the necessary people to ensure the future protection of it. He reassured the Committee that this good work would continue with the same enthusiasm.
- The Canal Manager updated the Committee on the situation regarding encroaching hedges and fencing from private properties. Eighty householders had been written to whose properties had hedges between their private gardens and the towpath. The letter had reminded them that Devon County Council owned the Canal and the tow path and that encroachment on to the boundary would not be tolerated.
- Regarding water quality monitoring, the Canal Manager explained that two low cost kits had been purchased and some sampling had taken place but the results had not provided very useful data. More costly equipment and more regular sampling at various locations would be required to generate any useful data, but the funds were not available within the budget and the Rangers were employed on other higher priority tasks. The stage 2 works following the breach had had to take precedence. Discussion took place regarding the possibility of the Tiverton and District Angling Club providing volunteers to undertake this work. There was the possibility of some funding being made available by Cllr Hannon's Devon County Council locality budget on the proviso that the equipment be kept in the hands of the Angling Club. It was

stated that the Angling Club may also be able to put some funding towards more sensitive equipment. It was **AGREED** that the Canal Manager would discuss the matter with the Angling Club representative to consider a way forward after having also sought some advice from the Environment Agency.

5 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman had no announcements to make.

6 FENACRE BRIDGE

Mr Mike Deaton, the Planning Development Manager from Devon County Council, had been invited to the meeting to update the Committee on the water transfer system at Fenacre Bridge (which was designed with the intention of supplying water to the canal in times of drought) and ongoing negotiations with Aggregate Industries at Westleigh Quarry. A brief summary was provided regarding the water compensation scheme and the legal agreement in place. The hydrological consultants Jacobs had been employed to undertake significant data collection and analysis. Aggregate Industries consultants Amec had been commissioned to finalise a new scheme but because of staff sickness this had yet to happen. When the proposed new scheme had been finalised, the Canal Manager, Jacobs and the Environment Agency would be consulted before works commenced. Mr Deaton admitted that events had not moved as quickly as had been hoped, however, Aggregate Industries had complied with the legal agreement to provide a water diversion scheme.

Concerns were raised regarding the following issues:

- Why it had taken so long to find out about the staff sickness preventing the advance of the new scheme.
- The inadequacy of the current kit and the fact that the remedial work had not yet been tested.
- A desperate need for the Canal to receive more water especially given drier summers.
- Despite a willingness to provide a solution there had been no evidence to suggest this was being done.
- An agreed timetable was required as soon as possible.
- Doubts relating to the quantity and quality of the collected data previously collected by Aggregate Industries as part of its Section 106 agreement.
- The 'design' of the new scheme needs to ensure that an appropriate 'volume' of water can be transferred.
- Aggregate Industries had a corporate social responsibility and needed to be seen as a partner of the Canal, however, equally the JAC could be better at engaging with them.

It was **AGREED** that:

- a. The Chairman would write to Mike Deaton who would liaise with Aggregate Industries stating the Committee's concerns and requesting an agreed timeline for future improvement works to the water diversion scheme.

- b. An update be provided to the Committee via email as soon as the Chairman had received a response and that an item be placed on the agenda for the next meeting.

7 PLANNING CONSULTATIONS

The Professional Services Manager (PSM) from Mid Devon District Council had been invited to attend the meeting regarding the JAC's ability to act as a consultee on planning applications and to provide more information with regard to the Canal's conservation status. She began by outlining the Canal as a heritage asset, a Country Park and the fact that it was very much a material planning consideration. The JAC could provide a view on any planning application falling within its area if it was felt to have a potential impact and it did not have to wait to be formally asked to do so.

The PSM was asked what the planning authority was doing to protect the Canal? She replied by stating that from a policy formation and land allocation perspective the planning authority looked at the potential impact, characteristics, appearance and setting. Reference was made to the Tiverton Urban Extension and the green infrastructure that would be required as well as buffer zones. Stage two of the Local Plan was currently out to consultation and as an example she referred to land not being allocated at Hartnoll Farm because of the impact upon the Canal. There were also policies regarding safeguarding the Canal as a leisure asset and policies in relation to the protection of wildlife. Officer reports always provided an explanation as to why they had reached their decision when making a recommendation.

Discussion took place regarding buffer zones and the need for developers to provide a comprehensive strategy for providing green space in relation to the Eastern Urban Extension. However, currently, as the master planning stage was not yet complete, details relating to 'green infrastructure' were vague. The question was asked, could this mean anything from a protected wildlife area to sports pitches with parking? The PSM stated that this was a very relevant point and that this was a key issue that needed addressing. The second stage master planning exercise needed to provide essential details in relation to the role and function of the green infrastructure within the green swathe identified in the Local Plan. Information was required regarding the management of those areas as well as a consideration of the hydrology issues. Access points would also need to be considered as a part of this process since the Canal fulfilled a leisure function. The master planning exercise provided the JAC with a real opportunity to get involved.

The PSM was asked whether there would be an opportunity for some of the Green Infrastructure area to become part of the Canal Country Park. She stated that this could be considered since developers were unlikely to want the burden of maintaining the green infrastructure.

Further discussion took place regarding consultation with Town and Parish Councils. Adam Pilgrim stated that sometimes a Parish Council's view might not align with that of the JAC and that because of this they ought to be an automatic consultee. The importance of the JAC had also risen in recent years and it was felt that they ought to be automatically made aware of applications having a potential impact on the Canal. The PSM stated that this could be considered but there would need to be some indication of the extent of the Canal's interest in terms of distance from the Canal itself as there would be a need filter out the majority of applications within the vicinity

of the Canal which would not have a potential impact. An agreed set of criteria would need to be achieved. The PSM stated that the planning department did have a spatial mapping system that could assist in identifying applications with a potential impact on the Canal, these could then be referred to Adam Pilgrim as the designated representative on the JAC. It was **AGREED** that the PSM would speak to her colleagues in the planning department and report back to the JAC through the Committee Clerk. It was also stated that Parishes may want to consider the Canal as part of their Parish Neighbourhood Plans.

Discussion took place regarding applications where a strong objection had been made but permission had been granted anyway. It was explained that the Conservation status of the Canal did not 'preserve things in aspic'. The planning authority might not always agree with consultees but it did promise to consider every comment made. It was suggested that the concerns and comments raised at this meeting should be fed into the master planning exercise, the end date for which was 30th March 2015.

Further discussion took place regarding access points and the fact that the tow path was a public right of way with legislation in place to protect it and that the County Council as landowner would need to agree to any easements onto their land. Current maps and land deeds were often vague in terms of showing definitive boundaries. It was possible to serve hedge pairing notices if encroachment could be proved.

To assist the JAC in making a representation it was suggested that the Management Plan contain a character appraisal with a particular emphasis on the heritage aspects. This would help the planning authority in understanding its setting within the locality. The Devon County Council officers stated that this could be something that the historic environment team at County Hall may be able to assist with.

Finally a brief discussion took place regarding whether there were any benefits in setting up a sub group of the JAC to consider planning applications having a potential impact on the Canal. It was felt that this was not a viable option and was not practical given the range of stakeholders making up the membership. It would have the effect of excluding particular interest groups. The feeling was that email exchanges involving the whole group continue to be made with the intention of reaching a consensus view.

It was suggested that one or two representatives attend the planning training intended for Town and Parish Councils after the election in May and that the Committee Clerk circulate the relevant dates nearer the time.

The JAC wished to thank the Professional Services Manager for her time in attending the meeting and for her thorough explanation of planning issues.

8 PROGRESS REPORT (OCTOBER 2014 - FEBRUARY 2015 INCLUSIVE)

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

Arising thereon:

Flooding issues

DCC had undertaken works on Canal land to create a clay bund which blocked off pipes that were previously directing floodwater to the Canal and whilst this had provided a much greater level of support there had still been some overtopping of the bund during January 2015. Further action would be taken to address the increased risk of flooding in this area once further research and analysis had been undertaken by Jacobs, DCC's hydrological consultants.

Tree works

There had been an issue with offside growth down the Manley Straight section which had been an issue for the barge boat. The Canal Manager suggested that this be an area the Committee see for themselves on the site visit.

Embankments

The Committee were informed that an Asset Management Plan was due to be written.

Towpath works

Concern was raised regarding the condition of the towpath underneath some of the bridges. This was a concern especially for people of an older age. The Canal Manager was aware of this and explained that because of the construction of some of the walls this naturally trapped water. He had used an angle grinder on the mortar of some of these walls but this required regular maintenance. There was a need to work with the Friends of the Canal to see if volunteer wardens could be used to help. He suggested including this issue on the annual site visit itinerary.

New weedboat

It was felt that this was a good investment especially given the fact that only one member of staff needed to operate it. A risk assessment would need to be completed in terms of health and safety and protecting the operator. It was confirmed that the depth of cutting would be either 1.2 metres or 1.5 metres depending on which company won the tender. The old weed boat would continue to be used alongside the new one until it was no longer economic to repair.

Canal Basin play area

It was noted that funding for this had been raised through money left over from the visitor centre attraction, contributions from Tiverton Town Council and from Cllr Hannon's 'Investing in Devon' budget. The play area would bring a new generation of youngsters to the Canal.

Talks

Both Mid Devon District Council and Devon County Council were thanked for committing to provide the same level of grant funding for 2015/16.

9 **CONDITION OF THE TOW PATH**

The Vice Chairman of the JAC had requested that this item be placed on the agenda, however, since he was not in attendance for the meeting and some discussion had taken place under the previous item regarding the towpath it was agreed to move on to the next item of business.

10 **DOG ISSUES**

Adam Pilgrim stated that the Canal Canine Etiquette Group had met a couple of times since the last meeting. The Canal Manager had been in correspondence with colleagues around the country to see how they approached the problem of dog fouling. At this early stage the Group had felt that peer pressure was the way to proceed. Forcing dog owners to exercise their dogs elsewhere may just relocate the problem. It was felt that approaching other green areas within the locality, such as Knightshays, in a joined up approach might have a more positive effect. In conclusion it was felt that this was a 'slow burn' and the Group would continue to develop a strategy and partnership that had the greatest chance of being effective. It was suggested that Facebook would be good forum to air this issue and to seek the views of others.

11 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The following issues were raised:

- Philip Brind brought the Committee's attention to a plan he had recently bought dated 1947 showing the Canal route as it had originally been proposed. He had thought that the JAC would be interested in viewing this. It was suggested that a copy be taken of it and that this be placed in the Visitor Centre.
- Malcolm Trump suggested that the 2015-2016 'Visitor Information Guide' should have mentioned fish in the wildlife section instead of Otters.
- Philip Brind had attended a 'Visit Britain' event the previous week at Bovey Castle where attempts were being made to attract international visitors to the countryside of Britain not just the cities.
- It was agreed that a site visit take place on a Wednesday evening in June 2015. Date to be confirmed by the Committee Clerk.

12 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

It was **AGREED** that the next meeting be held on Tuesday 6 October 2015 at 7pm in the Exe Meeting Room, Phoenix House, Tiverton.

(The meeting ended at 9.37 pm)

CHAIRMAN

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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 Senior Public Rights of Way Officer;
- 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 Environment and Communities 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 - Devon Branch	1
Tiverton Sea Cadets	1
Canal Awareness Group	1
Sustrans	1
The Tiverton Canal Company	1
Mid Devon Hireboats and Moorings	1
Canal Businesses Group	1
Officers	
Devon County Council – Senior Public Rights of Way Officer (DCC)	0
Devon County Council – Canal Manager	0
Mid Devon District Council – Head of Housing and Property Services	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 6th October 2015

Progress Report (March – Sept 2015 inclusive)

1. Canal 'Stage 2' works and projects

- **Engineer support** – Two engineers from DCC's Bridges and Structures Team have for the last 6 weeks been dedicating approximately half of their work time to progressing various Stage 2 projects.
- **Aluminium stop planks** – The engineers have made some improvements to the Canal and River Trust designs for these stopboards and after negotiating some procurement regulation issues (which led to some delays) they have now placed an order with a manufacturer. When the stopboards are delivered, the Canal Rangers and the engineers will trial them at stop plank locations along the canal to ensure that there are no problems deploying them and to gain experience in using them.
- **Tilting weirs** – The engineers have recently been undertaking detailed surveys of the proposed locations for the tilting weirs in order to design the surrounding civils works. The intention is to install the weirs this autumn / winter.
- **Embankments** – The aim is to ensure that the vegetation that grows on the embankments does not impede visual annual inspections of the embankments, to thus maintain structural integrity and to discourage badgers taking up residence.

The best scenario is a grassy embankment. Next best is an embankment covered by medium-sized trees providing a closed canopy that reduces light penetration and therefore reduces growth of brambles and small scrubby bushes. Provided inspection access is possible under the trees then this is acceptable. The worst scenario is an embankment completely covered with thick scrub or brambles as this prevents visual inspection and may encourage badgers.

Over the coming years, a lot of work will be required to open up and maintain inspection access to embankments along the canal. Work has started with the biggest embankments.

This year the Canal Ranger Service has undertaken works and has also been assisted by contractors at Sellake embankment. Scrub and brambles have been cleared on both the towpath and offside banks. On the offside bank the bramble regrowth was sprayed with herbicide, which has significantly reduced its spread. The offside embankment was then seeded with grass seed and then strimmed on two occasions through the summer to knock back the nettles and encourage the grass to establish. Recently the fence around the offside embankment has been rebuilt with a view to enabling sheep to graze the embankment and thereby suppress the re-establishment of scrub without the need for continuous strimming by the Canal Rangers.

This autumn/winter, the remaining scrub on the offside at Swing embankment will be cut back and burned and the stumps will be treated with 'ecoplug' herbicide capsules to prevent them from growing back.

Major relining works are anticipated along the embanked section of canal immediately to the south of Westcott Bridge. It is anticipated that planning this work will become the main focus for the engineers next year, once the tilting weirs are installed.

- **Trees on embankments** – A large amount of coppicing waterside trees on embankments has already been undertaken in the last two winters in order to reduce the threat of leaks and breaches caused by wind-throw, and once again there will be a great deal of work this winter.



Work has already started on the offside banks below Little Tidcombe (the field next to the Tidcombe Hall field, pictured left).

By far the biggest block of work will be along the offside bank between Tiverton Road car park and Tiverton Golf Course.

A tree management plan has been developed for this significant block of

woodland and works will entail the coppicing of most of the waterside trees and a light thinning of trees on the slope and at the foot of the embankment focussing on removing those trees most likely to fail or those which are impacting negatively on better specimens. It is likely that the works will be phased over two winters. Given the large volume of timber to be felled, a felling licence has been applied for from the Forestry Commission.

- **Black Bridge culvert** – the culverts underneath Black Bridge in Burlescombe which carry the stream that runs parallel to the canal act as a bottleneck during times of high flow, leading to flooding of adjacent land and to water overtopping into the canal. At the time of writing, works are shortly about to commence to increase the capacity of the culvert and reduce the flood risk to neighbours and to the canal. The work has been designed by DCC's highway engineers and is being undertaken by Marine and Civil Solutions Ltd, who won the tender.
- **Canal Asset Management Plan** – It is anticipated that the DCC Bridges and Structures engineers will work with the Canal Manager to draw up the AMP next year once the highest priority works (the installation of the tilting weirs) have been completed.

- **New weed boat** – Stage 2 capital funding has been used to purchase a new Conver C485F weed boat. The boat, which cost £61k, was delivered at the start of September following a lengthy trialling and tendering process. Following a training day provided by the distributor, all members of the Ranger Service have spent time using the boat and agree that the boat will significantly increase their ability to keep on top of weed in the canal. The boat has been named *Whirligig*.



- **New tipper van** – In recent years the mechanics who service DCC vehicles had been advising the Canal Manager that the Canal Ranger Service's 2002 LDV Convoy tipper was coming to the end of its working life and would soon be uneconomic to repair. After establishing that Stage 2 capital funding was eligible to be spent on purchasing a replacement to enable reasonable management of the asset, the Canal Manager worked with a colleague in the DCC Fleet Management Team to identify a suitable vehicle. Key considerations



included the tipper function and the payload (for transporting bulky materials and machinery), the wheelbase, width and turning circle (to make sure it could get on, off and along the towpath) and passenger capacity (to enable groups of volunteers and staff to be transported to/from site).

The Nissan Cabstar medium wheelbase double cab tipper was identified as the best fit and fortunately it was also several thousand pounds cheaper than the other tipper vans of its type. The vehicle was collected in June and the Canal Ranger Service is finding it very suitable to deliver their work programme.

- **Snakes Wood coir rolls** - At the end of March, 150m of coir rolls were installed along the eroded towpath-side bank on an embanked section in Snakes Wood.

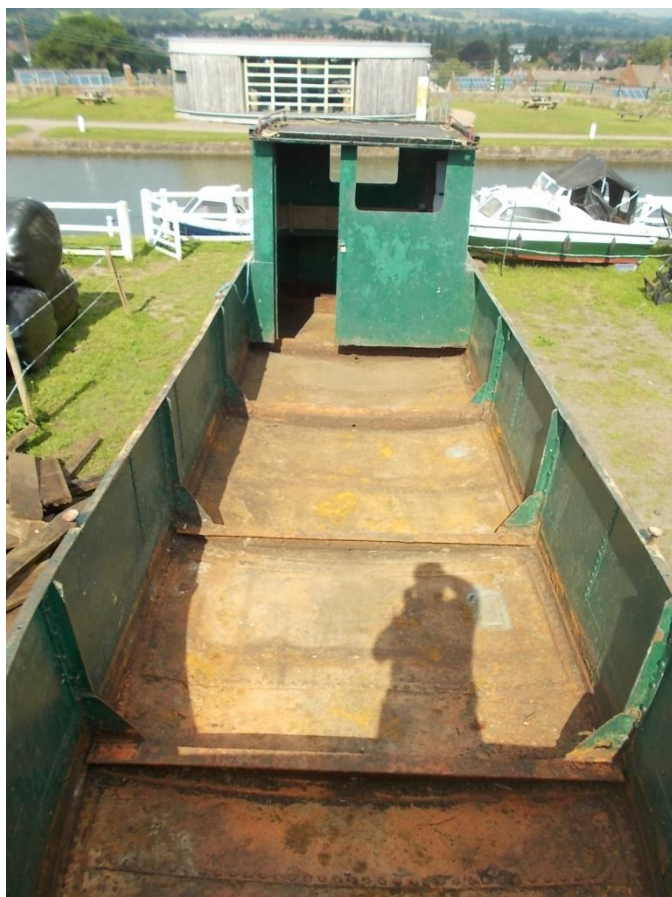


The coir rolls were pre-established with Pendulous Sedge (*Carex Pendula*) which our botanical advisor (Jeremy Ison) agreed would be suitable as it is common locally and is tolerant of shady conditions. Soil was being used to backfill between the bank and the coir rolls.

Ahead of these works, a number of offside Alders had been coppiced and towpath-side trees above the section were crown-lifted in order to reduce the shading that had led to the previous 'naturally-established' vegetation dying out. The plants have almost all survived and should continue to grow and knit together the edge of the bank.

2. Maintenance barge

Following several incidents in recent years in which the maintenance barge has developed leaks and on occasions has even sunk, the Canal Manager felt it was necessary to take the boat out of the water and establish what repairs may be necessary to enable it to continue working safely on the canal. On the same day that Ken Browse used his telehandler to unload the new weed boat from the delivery lorry and lift it into the canal, he also managed to lift out the maintenance barge and transport it back to the Tiverton Canal Co yard.



Philip Brind and a welding contractor he has worked with on several other canal boats in recent years have looked the boat over but feel that the cost of shot-blasting, re-plating and painting the floor of the boat is likely to be considerably greater than the cost of purchasing a new boat.

A further complication is the imminent arrival of a new Work Boat Code, which work boats on UK waterways will need to comply with in the coming years. It is unlikely that the current barge will comply without a great deal of expense. At the time of writing no decisions have been made regarding what works will be undertaken on the maintenance barge, but the most likely target will be to shore up the barge to enable this

winter's tree work to be completed, whilst looking in the medium term for a replacement that will comply with the Work Boat Code.

3. New inspection and minor maintenance boat

In May, the Friends of the Grand Western Canal donated a new Whaly boat and Honda outboard engine to the Canal Ranger Service using funds raised following



the breach in 2012. The Canal Ranger service is very grateful and is sure that the boat will prove to be very useful, particularly in accessing offside banks to undertake works and inspections. The boat has been named *Mayfly*.

Recently it has been used by volunteers from the angling club who were clearing Water Solider from the Canal near Ebear (more on this below).

4. Weed

Weed in the canal has once again been a problem this year and the invasive Water Soldier has continued to both spread (currently extending from Ebear Bridge to East Manley Bridge) and increase in abundance in the previously infested areas.



This has been despite the fact that the Canal Ranger Service has spent more time than ever before clearing weed. The weed harvesting boat has been in operation since early April and has been used over 4 days per week on average since then until the time of writing. After some repairs and adjustments last winter this boat has been remarkably reliable until a week ago (when a fuel pump failed) and so there have been no significant periods of down time awaiting parts as has often been the case in recent years.

Since the new weedboat arrived in early September, it has been used most days and on several occasions both boats have been out working at the same time. It is envisaged that both boats will be used next year in an attempt to keep on top of the weed. Experience to date with the new boat suggests that it will be much faster and more effective at clearing most of the different species of weed in the canal.

During the winter when the stems and leaves of the fringing reeds have died down and their weight is reduced, we will test the effectiveness of the new weedboat in cutting back and removing the root mats of the fringing reeds where they are encroaching on the canal channel.

Following the annual Wildlife Advisory Group site visit in July, it was agreed that the treatment of Fringed Lily between Rock Bridge and the Golf course should recommence. This work was undertaken by a specialist contractor in August and seems to have been very effective with almost all of the plants looking to have been killed off. The WAG will look again at the extent of any regrowth next year before deciding whether further treatment is required.

In mid September, the Tiverton Angling Club conducted a trial beside Ebear Bridge to remove Water Soldier with the help of 15 volunteers for two hours on a Sunday morning. The Canal Ranger Service provided them with a range of equipment to use including the inspection boat *Mayfly*, some lifejackets and some rakes. Prior to the trial the Canal Rangers had been over the area with the new weedboat clearing Water Soldier from the channel.



Representatives from the club reported that a significant amount of Water Soldier had been removed from the section, but that in order to access all of the weed in the margins, they had decided to remove all of the fringing reeds and pile these between the hedge and towpath. The Canal Ranger Service thanked the club for their efforts and following the club's reports on this trial an agenda item has been added for the JAC to further discuss the best way to proceed with the battle against Water Soldier.

5. Fenacre Water Transfer System

DCC officers met with staff from Aggregate Industries in July to further discuss the need for improvements to the water transfer system at Fenacre Bridge. AI indicated their willingness to undertake the improvements. At a following site visit it was agreed that the best solution would be to create a new outfall from the stream below the concrete monitoring weir, flowing into a new ditch which would run diagonally across the AI-owned land and then feed into the ditch running parallel to the road that was excavated by an adjacent landowner prior to the 2012 breach. Work would also be required to protect the ground where this ditch flows down to the canal. By keeping the water in open ditches, it would be far easier to maintain and the angle of the flow (which would be more in line with the flow of the stream) would increase the effectiveness of the system. It was agreed

that care would need to be taken in designing these works in order to ensure that the flood risk to the canal is not increased.

Since the meeting, AI has prepared some designs and has applied to the EA for a licence to undertake the work. At the time of writing a response is being awaited from the EA. If and when the licence is issued, AI has indicated they wish to proceed with the work as soon as possible.

6. Fenacre Farm – flood risk issue

Following action taken by the landowner and their developer to the fields adjacent to the canal DCC carried out some remedial works. Since then our consultants, Jacobs, has undertaken a study to model the impact of the landowner's activities on the canal. This will inform any legal action the county council may have to take in the future.

7. Swan's Neck towpath resurfacing

In late March and early April, one mile of towpath between Greenway Bridge and the wooded section opposite the golf course on the Swan's Neck was resurfaced using DCC Cycleway Improvement capital funding. At the golf course end the work involved widening the path provide more space for towpath users and to enable our maintenance vehicles to safely access this section.



In general the width of the surfacing is a bit greater than is usually undertaken, as repairs had to be made to ruts created by the dumper which ferried hundreds of tonnes of stone along the section. A dozen or so gullies between the towpath and the water were also filled in using large rocks and soil.

The dust content of the stone as supplied by the quarry proved to be quite variable and as a result the section from Sellake Bridge to the golf course ended up with a lot of loose stone chippings on the surface. In order to resolve this issue a contractor with an angled power brush swept the loose stone to the side of the path.

8. Battens Bridge ramp

Having received many complaints over several years about the difficulty of access up and down the ramp and steps beside Battens Bridge, the Canal

Ranger Service have recently organised improvement works to create a new ramp.

The ramp forms part of National Cycle Network route 3, this being a point where the route joins/leaves the towpath. On this basis, DCC Cycleway Improvement capital funding was secured for the works. After establishing that the works would be permitted development and would not require planning permission and after receiving the support for the project from Sampford Peverell Parish Council, a 20m section of hedge and one small ash tree were removed and a medium sized Ash was coppiced. This work was done in the presence of a DCC Ranger from Stover Country Park who has his Dormouse-handling licence – a requirement of the method statement supplied by the County Ecologist.



Contractors then used an excavator to re-profile the hedge bank and create the ramp, and then surfaced the ramp with limestone scalpings and compacted them with a vibrating roller. A handrail was also installed. A post and rail fence along the field boundary is due to be installed by a fencing contractor in the next week. The Canal Ranger wishes to thank the adjacent landowner, Mr Venner, for his assistance in providing access for the works.

The ramp now provides greatly improved access for all users (including mobility buggy / pushchair / wheelchair access for the first time).

9. Towpath bank gullies

Throughout the canal a number of gullies have formed over many years running from the towpath down to the water. These have either been created by water flowing down, anglers digging gaps to accommodate their boxes, or most typically, dogs scrambling out of the water. Many of these were getting close to the reaching the surfaced part of the towpath and thereby presenting a risk to towpath users.

Last year, contractors began work on filling some of the worst of the gullies near Whipcott Bridge (where the cause is water flowing down from the road above) using gabion baskets. Once constructed, they are covered over with soil and evidence to date suggests that they will be effective in the long term in protecting the bank.

This work has continued this year with gullies being filled in by contractors between Waytown Tunnel and Whipcott Bridge, and in Sampford Peverell. In other areas the Canal Rangers have filled in some smaller or less steep gullies using large rocks and soil.

10. East Manley landing stage

Last winter the Canal Manager discovered that several of the planks decking the landing stage at East Manley Bridge were rotten and that many others were approaching the end of their serviceable life. After informing the Tiverton Canal Co and fencing off the rotten section, plans were made with the Tiverton Canal Co to work together on re-decking the landing stage. The Canal Ranger Service supplied the timber and labour, and the Tiverton Canal Co supplied labour and some machinery (nail gun and mitre saw) which significantly increased the speed of progress.



After removing all of the decking it became apparent that some repairs were also needed to the timber frame underneath. These were carried out and the opportunity was also taken to create a proper step down from the towpath onto the landing stage, thereby reducing trip hazards and grass cutting maintenance. The Canal Ranger Service and the Tiverton Canal Co are pleased with the work which has also attracted lots of positive comments from visitors.

11. Silt bund near Rock Bridge

When work was undertaken in November 2013 to pour a concrete invert under Rock Bridge and seal leaks in the bank, a large quantity of silt was dredged from the canal channel and banded up behind a wall of dumpy bags where it then spent over a year drying out. This spring, work was agreed with the adjacent landowner to use this dried out mud to re-profile the bank on the boundary between his land and the Country Park. The bank was then seeded with grass and a hedge will be planted along the boundary this winter.

12. Canal Basin play area

As has been previously reported to the JAC, over several years the Canal Ranger Service has secured funding contributions for a new play area in the Canal Basin from a number of sources and a budget of £50k is now available. Throughout the spring and early summer a consultation was undertaken regarding the type of equipment local children and families would like to see installed.

The next stage is to draw up tender documents and to invite tenders for the supply and installation of equipment. The target date for completion is Easter 2016. There has been a delay in progressing the procurement process as the Ranger who is leading on this project – Jo Roberts - has had to spend far more time this year mowing and strimming the towpath, filling in for the other Ranger - Craig Saunderson – who has had to spend more time on the weed boat.

The writing of the tender specification and assessment criteria isn't straight forward as we have to find an objective way of making what could be quite a subjective decision: what style and arrangement of play equipment best fits the Canal Basin landscape and will provide the best experience for its users? Once it is written and published we are then more or less beholden to follow it through wherever it may lead us, and so it is important that we get this right.

13. Emergency Response Plan

The Canal Manager has drafted a new Emergency Response Plan for the Canal, and has been consulting with key agencies, including the emergency planning teams at DCC, MDDC, Devon and Cornwall Police as well as DCC teams that may be involved in responding to an emergency. At the time of writing a response is being awaited from Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service. It is not intended to be a public document and so will not be appended to this report, but the Canal Manager will bring a copy to pass around at the JAC meeting so that members can pass it around get a feel for its scope and detail. Key partners along the canal will be involved in the process at a later date once the emergency response agencies have all provided feedback.

14. Green Flag Award

The Country Park has once again been successful in retaining its Green Flag Award. As we received a high percentage score following a judging visit last year and have held the award for more than 3 years, we are now in the top bracket of parks that are only fully judged every other year and are 'mystery shopped' by a judge at some point in the intervening year. This year was a mystery shopper year, but as yet we have received no feedback from any mystery shopping that may have taken place.

15. Photo Competition

Since February we have been running a photo competition. Hundreds of entries have been submitted, including around 20 -30 high quality images that may prove

difficult for the judges to choose between. The competition closes at the end of November, with the winners to be announced mid December. More details can be found at www.devon.gov.uk/gwcpphotos

16. Canal Management Plan

The Canal Manager has recently begun the process of reviewing and redrafting the Canal's Management Plan. He feels that the current format, whilst being very thorough and logical in its demonstration of how broad objectives become specific actions, is unwieldy and unlikely to be read or referred to very much if ever.

Given that a new Canal Asset Management Plan is due to be written next year, which will focus on the key infrastructure of the canal, the Canal Management Plan can become a sister document which focuses primarily on issues such as visitor experience, visitor management, recreational use, wildlife, landscape, and such like.

An approach which the Canal Manager has seen successfully adopted at other country parks, where wildlife conservation is not the overriding priority, is to use the Green Flag Award criteria as the key headings within the body of the plan. These are:

- Signage and welcome
- Provision and standards of facilities
- Visitor safety
- Heritage and nature conservation
- Environmental sustainability
- Community involvement
- Marketing and publicity
- Overall management

With some introductory sections about the canal and the strategic policy context (DCC and MDDC strategic plans, UK waterways policy, biodiversity policy, economic policy etc.) and a section on recreational uses, the Canal Manager feels a more succinct and readable plan could be written. He plans to draft the plan during the winter and then circulate to JAC members ahead of the March 2016 meeting for discussion at that meeting. At that meeting the plan could hopefully be endorsed subject to any amendments that are agreed.

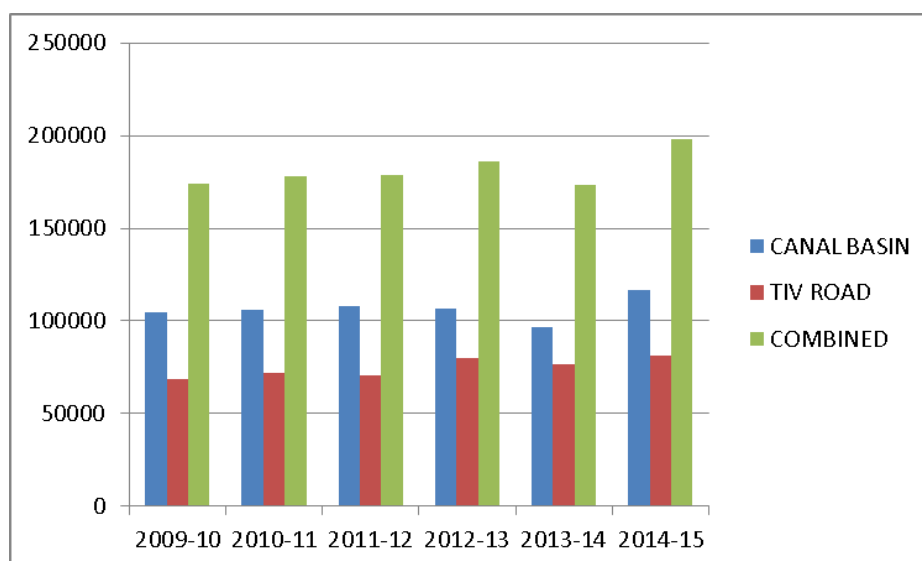
17. 2015 Visitor Survey

Throughout the summer and autumn a Canal visitor survey has been conducted. The same forms as used in the 2010 visitor survey have been used again in order to save on printing costs and to enable direct comparisons to be made. At present around 150 questionnaires have been completed. Volunteers have interviewed canal visitors in Sampford Peverell and at Tiverton Road car park, and respondents have filled in forms stocked in the visitor centre and downloaded from the Canal website. The results will feed in to the review of the Canal Management Plan and will be reported to JAC members.

18. Visitor Numbers

Trends in estimated visitor numbers are based on data collected by vehicle counters installed in the Canal's two main car parks at the Canal Basin and Tiverton Road Bridge. Last year's estimate for the total number of visitors to the Country Park was 260,000.

The annual figures for 2014/15 (measured from August to July annually) have shown a 20% increase in vehicle numbers at the Canal Basin and a 7% increase in vehicle numbers at Tiverton Road car park since last year. Taking an average of the increase in numbers at the two car parks of 13.5% this provides an estimate of total visitor numbers for the 12 month period of 295,000.



Please note: The figures in the chart above show total number of cars entering and leaving the car parks. Therefore to get the total number of cars using the car parks, the numbers need to be halved. However, the government's statistical approach to estimating car occupancy for tourism and leisure visits is to assume two occupants per car, and so the chart shows the estimated numbers of visitors arriving at the two car parks by car only.

A further allowance is then added to take into account all of the other visitors arriving at other locations and by other means (on foot or bicycle, in coaches etc...) in order to provide the estimate of total visitor numbers. We do not vary this allowance of other visitors from year to year, but rather just apply the % increase or decrease at the two car parks to the previous years figures. Although the estimate of the total numbers is debateable, the annual trends are fairly accurate.

19. Benches

New memorial benches have been installed at two locations opposite the golf course on the Swan's Neck. Another bench has been ordered which will replace the softwood one beside the gate at Tidcombe Bridge.

20. Offside bank revetments

The Canal Ranger Service has undertaken repairs to the offside bank in front of two properties on Atherton Way, Tiverton, where the bank was been undercut and the land being rented by the homeowner from DCC (under a Garden Agreement) was unsafe to access.

21. Social media

Efforts have been made by the Canal Ranger Service to improve the Country Park's presence on Facebook, Twitter and Tripadvisor. The Canal Rangers have been given the target of posting at least once a week on Facebook at Twitter to highlight events and activities and to show friends and followers the range of work they are involved in. This summer, Tripadvisor awarded the Grand Western Canal a Certificate of Excellence for gaining consistently high reviews.

22. Events

Having spent a great deal of time organising the bicentenary events in 2014, it was decided to scale back the Canal Ranger Service's events programme for 2015 and focus mainly on an increasing amount of practical site management work. We did however, host a number of events organised by other organisations:

- **Age UK event** - Age UK ran a sponsored walk / cycle and fun day along the Canal and in the Canal Basin on 25th April. Feedback suggests the event had only been moderately successful. The Canal Manager will ensure that a member of staff is working should Age UK wish to hold the event again.
- **Clik Walk** – this annual event was once again held at the canal. The new organisers have done a great job in sustaining and building on the success of the previous organiser and there was a good turnout for this year's event.
- **Bat Walks** – In May, the Rangers led a bat walk from Tidcombe Bridge to Snakes Wood, with 15 people attending. In August, the Mid Devon Natural History Society ran a bat walk which started in the canal basin. One of the Canal Rangers opened the visitor centre in the evening, and those attending were given the opportunity to see some live bats that had been rescued by a local bat specialist.
- **Craft Fayre** – In September the Canal Basin hosted a Craft Fayre. The event was organised by a local trader with 15 different stall holders taking part. A donation of £150 was made to the Country Park and a raffle was also held in aid of the Friends of the Grand Western Canal (who also had a stall).
- **Tiverton Walk and Talk** – Rangers have led four Healthy Walks that incorporate the towpath, with a total of 96 people attending.

23. Talks

Since March, the Canal Manager has given talks to Wiveliscombe History Society and the Rolle Canal and North Devon Waterways Society.

24. Volunteers

Between the start of March and the end of September, volunteers will have completed 254 days of work. This has mostly been generated by two men who have been offered Community Work Placements and who have been working four days a week since May. Hedgelaying volunteer days will continue this winter on the second Sunday of each month starting on November 8th.

25. School visits / youth groups

During the same period Jo Roberts has led 9 school visits comprising 232 pupils from Blundells School, Blundells Prep, Wilcombe Primary, Heathcoat Primary, Castle Primary, Rockbeare Primary and Uffculme Pre-school.

Future programme of works

- Cutting back overhanging branches throughout the canal
- Laying several sections of hedgerow
- Using new weed boat to reduce the width of marginal reed growth in areas where it is encroaching.
- Weed harvesting – seeking to collect as much Water Soldier as possible before it sinks
- Mowing and strimming
- Coppicing trees on embankments
- Hedge and bank cutting
- Crown-lifting low branches above towpath and in front of bridges
- Scrub-clearing to enable more thorough inspections of embankments

Major projects for next 12 months

- Progression of Stage 2 capital works as listed earlier in the report, plus preparation for relining works beside Westcott Bridge and capping of embankment between Burlescombe sluice and double culverts.
- Sharing and testing of Emergency Response Plan
- Drafting of Asset Management Plan
- Analysis of 2015 Visitor Survey
- Review of Canal Management Plan
- 2015 Canal Photo Competition judging and publicity
- Procurement and installation of new play area in Canal Basin
- Interpretation panel improvements in Canal Basin and Lowdwells
- Visitor Information Guide update and reprint
- Possible website upgrade

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Wildlife Advisory Group

Minutes of annual meeting and site visit held on 6th July 2015

Present: Ray Jones, Jeremy Ison, Mark Baker

Apologies: Sarah Jennings

Matters Arising

None

Stage 2 works

MB gave a summary of progress to date on Stage 2 works. From a wildlife perspective the most notable works were the sections of offside embankment where waterside trees had been coppiced to reduce the risk of wind-throw. It was generally agreed that provided care was taken with regard to timings and protected species, the creation of more understorey vegetation through the regrowth of coppiced tree and the reduction of shading would on the whole be beneficial for wildlife.

MB informed the group that the next significant compartment of embankment woodland due for coppicing of bankside trees and thinning was the block between the Post Hill depot and the golf course. A management plan for the compartment was being prepared by an arboricultural consultant and an application for a felling licence would be applied for.

Battens access ramp

MB informed the group about plans to improve access at Battens Bridge. The works would entail the removal of 20m of hedgerow and a small Ash tree. A larger Ash tree would also need to be felled, but this would be left to coppice back.

Enquiries with DCC's development control team established that the project would be permitted development, but that a method statement provided by the Biodiversity team would need to be followed. This was written following a site visit and the main issues related to timing (September being the best time from a dormouse perspective) and having a dormouse handler on site to undertake a search for dormice ahead of the work. The work is due to be undertaken in September.

Coir rolls at Snakes Wood

MB confirmed that this project had been undertaken and appears to have been successful. JI had previously advised that of the species available coir rolls pre-established with Pendulous Sedge would probably be most appropriate, as the species is widespread and common and does well in damp, shady conditions.

Management Plan Review

MB flagged up the need for the Canal Management Plan to be reviewed this winter with a draft of the new plan being put to WAG and JAC members for comment in the new year. JI suggested that with regard to canal wildlife, greater reference could be made to the Devon

Priority Species list. Those species on the list which are present at the canal should be identified and any special consideration to their conservation and management be discussed.

It was agreed that all members should re-read the wildlife sections of the current management plan <http://www.devon.gov.uk/gwcmanagementplan2009-2014.pdf> and provide MB with feedback by the end of November on any changes they feel are necessary.

Action: All

Wildlife Monitoring / surveys

Birds - RJ reported that the WEBS is ongoing. There are currently no coots on the canal. A notable record was a Lesser Whitethroat.

Dragonflies and butterflies - In general RJ has been doing his casual monitoring earlier in the day and as a result probably isn't seeing as many dragonflies and butterflies. Notable records include two Hairy dragonflies and 2 Scarce Chasers. Damselfly numbers have been low – especially Blue-taileds and Red-eyeds.

Plants – JI reported that he had not been to the canal this year, but that several visits were imminent as he would be undertaking a macrophyte survey during late summer / early autumn.

Invasive species

The group noted the continuing spread of Water Soldier and welcomed MB's report that a new weed-clearing boat had been ordered. Although a native species, it was also mentioned that horsetail appeared to be spreading.

Any other business

None

Site visit

RJ was unable to attend the site visit which followed the meeting, and so this was attended by just MB and JI. They walked a section between Sellake Bridge and Swing Bridge on the towpath and then along Swing embankment on the offside. Key points and actions identified were as follows:

- Fringed lily has spread considerably and it was agreed that MB would arrange for it to be sprayed off with herbicide.

Action: MB

- The ornamental lily that had been put into the canal near Greenway Bridge was to be pulled out (whole) or sprayed off.

Action: MB

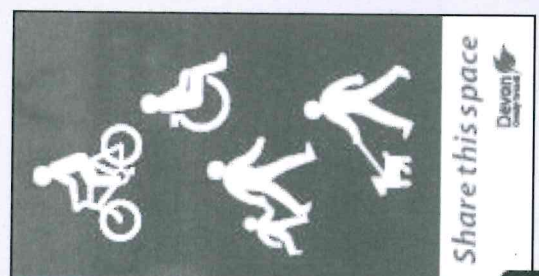
- JI was pleased with the natural recolonization of plants along Sellake embankment and noted several Flowering Rush plants. Prior to the breach, this species was not previously present on the canal, but is native and not likely to be a problem and so does not need to be removed.

Grand Western Canal



TOWPATH CODE OF CONDUCT

Making the towpath
safer for everyone



5 x 8.27 in

Towpath code of conduct for all users

- **The horse pulling the passenger barge has priority over all other users.** Please stop and make way well before it passes.
- **Pedestrians have priority over cyclists** but must not unduly block the towpath when aware a cyclist is approaching.
- **Considerate cycling is permitted** provided this code of conduct is followed.
- **Give way to oncoming users at bridges.** Most of the bridges have poor visibility so check that someone isn't already coming through. Never try to pass oncoming walkers or cyclists under the bridge – there is insufficient width or headroom to do this safely. Cyclists must dismount and walk under bridges where signs indicate this is required.
- **All users are obliged to keep the towpath free from obstructions to other users.**
- **Consider other users and the environment.** The Canal and the land beside the towpath have many historic structures and valuable wildlife habitats that people enjoy. **Please take your litter home with you.**

Code of conduct for pedestrians

- **Listen for Two Tings.** Two Tings is not an order for you to get out of the way. It is to make you aware that the cyclist is looking for a safe opportunity to pass. You should allow passing as soon as it is safe to do so. We advise pedestrians not to use headphones whilst walking the towpath, as you may not hear a cyclist's Two Tings.
- **Allow cyclists to pass.** Allow cyclists to pass as soon as it is safe.
- **Be considerate to cyclists** Remember that cyclists need room to stop and brake. If a cyclist stops or waits for you to pass, thank them and they are more likely to be considerate again next time.

Code of conduct for cyclists

- **Ring with Two Tings.** Use a bell, giving Two Tings when approaching pedestrians, particularly when approaching from behind. Ringing with Two Tings is not an order to pedestrians to get out of your way. If you do not have a bell, politely call out 'excuse me' well before you reach other users. Be aware that some pedestrians and anglers may have visual or hearing impairments and may not hear your Two Tings.
- **Pass people slowly. Give people space.** Slow down when approaching pedestrians and anglers and only pass when it is safe to do so. Extra care should be taken when passing children, less able people and animals. Pass on whichever side pedestrians make open for you. Be patient and courteous. Saying 'thank you' to pedestrians or anglers who move to let you pass will make them more likely to move next time.
- **Ride at a sensible speed.** The towpath is not suitable for cycling fast as there are many other users, narrow sections and lengths with uneven surfaces. Anglers are often difficult to see amongst the bankside vegetation, dogs often pop out of hedges and people may emerge from gateways or linking paths.
- **Cyclists must dismount and walk under the bridges where indicated.** There have been many near misses and several accidents reported when cyclists have ridden under a bridge and met cyclists or pedestrians coming the other way. A very serious accident could occur if a cyclist were to hit the passenger barge horse under a bridge.
- **Dismount and make way for the passenger barge horse well before it passes.**

Please Note: Horse-riding and the use of quad bikes and motorcycles is not permitted on the towpath. Mobility buggies are allowed but must not exceed 4mph (brisk walking pace).

Code of conduct for anglers

- **Anglers are obliged to keep the towpath free from obstructions to other users.** Tackle must be kept off the towpath and rods must be promptly moved out of the way when cyclists or pedestrians approach. Listen out for Two Tings and try to position yourself so as to be visible to approaching cyclists. If a pedestrian or cyclist stops and waits for you to move equipment, they are more likely to be considerate again if you thank them. Anglers must move rods, umbrellas and themselves completely out of the way to the far side of the towpath if the passenger barge horse is approaching.
 - **Take care when casting.** Please take particular care of towpath users, boaters and offside landowners when casting. Please take care not to cast into overhanging trees on the offside as lost tackle is a serious threat to canal wildlife.
- ## Code of conduct for dog walkers
- **Dogs must be kept under control at all times.** They do not necessarily have to be kept on leads at all times, but this is strongly advised in busy areas and when cyclists are approaching. Dogs must always be kept within sight and away from angler's equipment.
 - **Always clear up after your dog.** Dog mess on or beside the towpath can spoil a visit for everyone and poses a serious health risk – particularly to children. Dog mess disposal bins are located at all major towpath access points. It is an offence to leave dog mess behind, with fines of up to £1000.
 - **Do not allow your dog to chase or worry wildlife, other dogs or people.** Dogs must be kept out of adjacent farmland at all times.

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