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Grand Western Canal Joint Advisory Committee

Tuesday, 4 October 2016 at 7.00 pm

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 2016/17 (the Terms of Reference state that the appointment should be made from the Devon County Councillor representation for 2016/17).

2 ELECTION OF VICE CHAIRMAN

To elect a Vice Chairman for 2016/17 (the Terms of Reference state that this appointment should come from the Mid Devon District Councillor representation for 2016/17).

3 APOLOGIES

To receive any apologies for absence.

4 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

To receive any questions relating to items on the agenda from members of the public and replies thereto.

5 MINUTES (Pages 5 - 12)

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 1 March 2016 (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 approve the Terms of Reference and Membership of the Committee (please find attached).

9 PROGRESS REPORT AND FUTURE PROGRAMME OF WORKS (Pages 17 - 32)

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 SUMMER SITE VISIT AND MEETING WITH AGGREGATE INDUSTRIES

To receive a verbal report from those who attended the site visit and meeting with Aggregate Industries in July.

11 REVIEW OF BOAT PERMIT DISCOUNTS

To consider the current charging scheme for boat permit discounts.

12 REVISION AND UPDATE OF THE TERMS AND CONDITIONS FOR BOATING ON THE GRAND WESTERN CANAL

To consider the removal of the outboard motor Power to Boat length restriction. To also consider a review of the Terms and Conditions to align its terminology with that used by other Navigation Authorities.

13 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

To consider any other relevant business.

14 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 7 March 2017 at 7.00pm – Exe Room, Phoenix House.

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 Council Chamber on 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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Agenda Item 5

MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of a MEETING of the GRAND WESTERN CANAL JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE held on 1 March 2016 at 7.00 pm

Present:

Cllr R F Radford	Devon County Council
Cllr Mrs H Bainbridge	Mid Devon District Council
Mrs P Brind	Mid Devon Moorings
Cllr Mrs C Collis	Mid Devon District Council
Mr Z Grochala	Canal Business Group
Mrs J Hall	Inland Waterways Association
Mr R Jones	Devon Birdwatching and Preservation Society
Cllr A Miller	Halberton Parish Council
Cllr L Neville	Burlescombe Parish Council
Mr A Pilgrim	Holcombe Rogus Parish Council
Mr P Saupe	Tiverton Sea Cadets Corps
Mr M Trump	Tiverton and District Angling Club
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 N Sanderson	Head of Housing and Property Services, MDCC
Mrs S Lees	Member Services Officer, Mid Devon District Council

17 APOLOGIES

The following members of the committee had sent their apologies for the meeting:

- Philip Brind (Mid Devon Moorings)
- David Cutts (Sampford Peverell Parish Council)
- Roger Croad (Devon County Council)
- Cllr Chris Daw (Mid Devon District Council)
- Cllr Sue Griggs (Mid Devon District Council, Chairman of the Grand Western Canal, Joint Advisory Committee)
- Cllr Des Hannon (Devon County Council)

As the Chairman had sent her apologies, the Vice Chairman, Cllr Ray Radford, took the chair.

18 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

Mr Melvyn Lucas stated that he had recently been involved in an incident involving 12 cyclists as he and his wife had approached the Whitnage Road bridge with their dogs. The cyclists had not dismounted and it was only by sheer luck that a serious accident had not occurred. He questioned what more could be done to avoid this persistent problem with cyclists refusing to dismount but accepted that it was

extremely difficult to police. He wondered if it would be possible to contact other canal's or tow paths around the country, where cyclists were permitted, to ascertain how they tackled the problem. The Chairman indicated that discussion relating to this item would be dealt with later on in the agenda.

19 MINUTES

The minutes from the meeting held on 6 October 2015 were approved as a correct record and **SIGNED** by the Chairman.

20 MATTERS ARISING

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

21 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman had no announcements to make.

22 PROGRESS REPORT AND FUTURE PROGRAMME OF WORKS

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

Arising thereon:

Stop planks

The update in the report regarding the new aluminium stopboards was noted. It was explained that in terms of their life span, they were made of an extremely sturdy metal which should not corrode and should last for a very long time. A licence agreement had been provided by the Canal and Rivers Trust.

Tilting weirs

There had been a delay in starting construction due to a long procurement process and complex technical issues. It was hoped that work would start after the Easter holidays and the intention was to keep the towpath open throughout the works. The ultimate intention was to be able to get the levels down as quickly and easily as possible during persistent wet weather. The question was asked as to why the tilting weirs needed to be powered and could not be automatic. Jacobs had looked at various options including solar powered weirs. The ones chosen had been their recommendation and they had a good history in other locations. They were able to pre-empt a serious situation and could be adjusted even if the canal rangers were not there. They were also able to be manually opened in the unlikely event of a power failure.

Black Bridge culvert

The culvert capacity had been increased although concern remained regarding the potential for flooding of adjacent land and property.

Embankment tree management

A lot of tree coppicing had taken place over the last few years and the rangers were about to start the next big block of work along the embankment between Tiverton Road Car Park and the golf course. A felling licence had been secured and an arboricultural consultant had helped to plan the works. Work has just started and the felling element was due to be completed by mid March but the timing of the extraction of timber would be dependent on the weather.

Embankment scrub removal

The aim was to keep on top of any regrowth from the Sellake embankment. An adjacent farmer would be grazing his sheep there in order to deter the re-emergence of scrubby growth.

Maintenance barge overhaul

The update provided in the report was noted. It was explained that the barge had historic interest having taken people on tours up and down the canal in the 1970's. The repaired barge would be ready to go back on the water in the next week or two.

Gabions under bridges

Stone-filled gabion baskets had been installed underneath Black Bridge in Burlescombe. There were a few areas that had been prone to crumbling due to erosion and an absence of vegetation.

Water soldier

At the last meeting there had been an agreement to set up a working party. A lot of work had been done to clear away emergent weed and this was now an integral part of cyclical maintenance. There was a plan to start moving towards Sampford Peverell, this would present a more challenging problem in that the next section was thicker, had more wildlife and was more difficult to access on both sides. It was explained that water soldier was a problem that could not be quickly resolved and would almost certainly end up reaching Tiverton at some point in the next few years but regular removal with the new weed boat should significantly reduce the impact.

Tree works

The rangers were planning to fell a weeping willow at Sampford Peverell Bridge which had been falling over into the canal for a number of years. The root plate is large and could potentially damage adjacent walls therefore intervention at this stage was necessary. A replacement specimen tree with much less potential for creating damage and future expense would be planted in its place with a smaller root plate. It was explained that the rangers planted far more trees than they removed.

MDDC funding

MDDC had written to Devon County Council (DCC) stating that they would like to meet to discuss the funding situation going forwards. DCC were still waiting for a formal invitation. The situation regarding funding for 2016/17 and the following year

had taken up a great deal of the Canal Manager's time and had prevented him from taking forward a number of other projects. Cllr Slade stated that the press had blown the issue up out of all proportion, this had not been the fault of Members as they had been against the proposal to withdraw the grant from the beginning. Thanks were extended to all those involved in securing future funding.

Canal play area

This was one of the projects that had been put in hold as a result of the funding issue, however, a tender would be going out in the following week and it was hoped that the play area could be installed before the summer holidays. It was confirmed that a bow top wall fence would be erected that could not be climbed.

Management Plan

The Canal Manager had now started this and needed to have it completed before the Green Flag judges visited which could be anytime between April and July. The Management Plan would come to the committee in October for comment.

2015 Photo competition

There had been 381 entries, many of which had been excellent and could be added to the increasing library of photo's. Cllrs Hannon and Radford had contributed to the prizes from their locality budgets. The canal team were posting two pictures a week on their Facebook and Twitter accounts so that at least a 100 would be seen by others.

Holbrook culvert

Due to some severe storms the culvert had become blocked with rocks and water had been backing up and flowing into the canal. The flood defence team were looking at installing a grill upstream and more work will be done to cut all the debris before it reaches the culvert.

Fenacre Farm

Solicitors had given advice regarding the necessity for a robust legal challenge. The committee would be kept informed as to progress via the clerk.

Fenacre water transfer system

Due to a close family bereavement it had been difficult to get any feedback from the Estate Manager since the autumn. However, there were now signs that Aggregate Industries are keen to progress the proposed scheme. The Environment Agency would need to give approval for any scheme. It was hoped that a meeting would be held in the next two to three weeks. It was **AGREED** that the Chairman of the Joint Advisory Committee write to the AI Estate Manager re-emphasising the committee's wish, in the strongest terms possible, that the scheme be progressed as soon as possible.

Atherton Way

It was explained that whilst water run-off from the hills into the drains of Atherton Way had several times overwhelmed the drainage system, had lifted man holes and uncontrolled water had entered the canal and people's houses. A meeting had organised by DCC's Flood risk management team, with officers from South West Water, DCC Bridges team, Highways, the canal team, MDDC and neighbours to determine what could be achieved as a group working together. One of the complicating factors related to the ownership of the pipe work including underneath people's gardens, once known a survey would be required. Possible solutions included sorting out the settlement pond, cleaning out pipe work, straightening up a right angled turn and building a controlled overflow into the canal in tandem with the installation of a tilting weir. The flood team at Devon County Council would lead but there was an issue as to where the funding would come from.

Re-designed Visitor Guide

There were a few different options for the front cover but the number of suitable photographs was limited. The final version would be available for the Easter holidays and would be distributed to all local outlets. Devon County Council's design team would be finalising it. It was not possible to include a section on all the various wildlife, there just wasn't room. It was confirmed that there was a page on fishing within the main guide.

Canal basin car park

Wooden posts had been rotting and snapping off at the base, replacement posts had been installed which were fewer in number but were larger and had a chain link between them.

New website

DCC's website system has been updated and as well as being more attractive visually was also much easier to update by the canal team.

Volunteers

Volunteers had contributed 183 days of work since the last meeting. The Chairman wished for the committee's thanks to be passed on to the people concerned.

Staff

Craig Saunderson had recently completed 20 years service for Devon County Council at the Grand Western Canal. It was **AGREED** that the Chairman write to him on behalf of the Joint Advisory Committee congratulating him and thanking him for his continued hard work and dedication.

Future programme of works

Discussion took place regarding:

- The reed bed project which had not been listed in the programme of future works as it was dependent on how much funding was available. It was not a priority at the moment.
- The sluice at Fossend Bridge – following recent severe rain fall, there had been a significant rise in water levels. Rangers had tried to open the sluice but had been unable to as the hatch had become seized. The installation of tilting weirs would mean that opening the hatch was unlikely to ever be necessary.
- Mr Melvyn Lucas thanked the canal team, firstly for improvements at Battens Bridge which had been praised by people in Sampford Peverell and secondly for undertaking to repair the steps and hand rail at Buckland Bridge.

23 CYCLISTS ON THE TOWPATH

The question was asked as to how the towpath was defined in law. The response was that it was a public footpath and Devon County Council, as the landowners, had given permission for cyclists to use it. The rise in cycling as a hobby had been phenomenal. In the past it had mainly been used for leisure cycling but there was now evidence of more cycling as a sport with the canal towpath being used as a practice route. However, it was extremely difficult to police and impossible to insist that cyclists dismount when going under bridges. The only way to stop it would be to introduce a chicane but there were laws governing pathways needing to be wheelchair accessible.

There was an additional problem in that some mopeds had been spotted driving along the canal, especially in the Swans Neck area. This was particularly difficult to enforce as these bikes did not have registration plates. If the individuals riding the bikes were known attempts could be made to reason with them as to the safety issues along the canal.

Signs were currently displayed instructing cyclists to dismount, however, perhaps consideration needed to be given to additional signs stating that pedestrians had the right of way.

24 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The following issues were brought up under this item:

- The trader selling refreshments at the Tiverton Road Car Park had ceased trading at the canal.
- A site visit would be organised for an evening in early July so that the committee could see the sections where water soldier had been removed and the new sluices in situ. It was suggested that this could also be used as an opportunity to meet with Aggregate Industries if there had been no progress with the Fenacre water transfer system.
- The Angling Club would be celebrating its 40th anniversary in November and Mr Malcom Trump had represented them on the Joint Advisory Committee for the duration of that time.
- Adam Pilgrim, speaking on behalf of Holcombe Rogus Parish Council, firstly congratulated the canal ranger service on the excellent way they maintain the canal and secondly to express the Parish Council's concern at the way the Red Lingham application had been managed and the length of time it was taking to reach a decision.

- The Canal Manager referred to a report that day in the Tiverton Gazette regarding a project to place decorated models of the Tivvy Bumper around Tiverton and the surrounding area. He informed the committee that models would be located outside the visitor centre and also The Globe in Sampford Peverell with the latter being sponsored by the pub itself. There would also be one located at the start of the disused railway line.

25 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was confirmed that the next meeting would be held on Tuesday 4 October at 7.00pm.

(The meeting ended at 9.04 pm)

CHAIRMAN

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Agenda Item 8

Grand Western Canal Joint Advisory Committee

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
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	26

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.....

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

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Email.....

Named
Deputy.....

Date.....

Signature.....

Contact
Details.....

Address.....

Tel.....

Fax.....

Email.....

Agenda Item 9

Grand Western Canal Joint Advisory Committee 4th October 2016

Progress Report (Mar 2016 – Sept 2016 inclusive)

1. Weed management

Weed clearance commenced in earnest in March this year – about a month earlier than usual – in an attempt to get a headstart on removing the invasive Water Soldier. The new weedboat has been in operation 4-5 days a week until September and will continue to be used 2-3 days per week until mid – late October.

Although Craig Saunderson is the main operator of the boat, both Jo Roberts and Mark Baker have spent many days driving it and have become proficient in its use. The boat is proving to be much faster and more reliable than the old weed harvester. As a result, despite the apparent continued increase in quantity and extent of Water Soldier in the Canal, the Canal Rangers have managed to prevent it from dominating the whole channel in any section (as often happened in recent years).

90% of the new boat's work is done using the large rake on the front arm, but the T-cutter and the trailing knives have both been used effectively to cut back reeds and horsetail (which are both rooted into the bed of the canal) in order to keep the central channel clear.

However, despite these improvements in the effectiveness of removal techniques, it is apparent that a large quantity of Water Soldier always escapes removal (slips between the tines or is inaccessible along the edges of the canal) and that any thought of completely eradicating the plant from the canal is probably unrealistic.

2. Depot embankment tree project

Following advice provided by an arboricultural consultant, a major programme of coppicing was undertaken along the offside embankment between the Post Hill depot and the golf course, on the Swan's Neck. All of the trees along the water's edge were felled and a large number of less stable trees along the slope of the embankment were also felled. It is anticipated that the majority of these will grow back to create a thick understorey, softening the effect on the landscape and providing excellent nesting cover for birds.



The work generated about 65 tonnes of firewood. 45 tonnes were sold wholesale to a firewood merchant in Sampford Peverell and the remaining 20 tonnes has been sold directly to domestic customers by the Canal Ranger Service.

The large Weeping Willow near Sampford Peverell was due to be felled as it has been slowly tipping into the canal for a number of years and would have been extremely difficult and expensive to remove were it to have tipped over completely. An adjacent conifer was felled for the same reason. However, some extensive pruning work has removed the risk of it tipping into the canal, whilst keeping a large stem and retaining the tree as a prominent feature in the canal landscape at this location. The photos below show the scene before and after the work.



3. Fallen trees



High winds in March and April brought down several trees along the canal, including three very large oaks – one near East Manley Bridge, one near the golf course on the Swan's Neck and one near Warnicombe Bridge

On each occasion the Canal Ranger Service managed the situation and with the help of a team of tree surgeons and a local telehandler operator, and were able to clear the trees promptly so that towpath users and the horsedrawn barge were affected as little as possible.

4. Other tree works

The crown of a very large Ash tree near Waytown Tunnel has died back considerably in recent years and has required some extensive work to be undertaken by rangers and tree surgeons to eliminate the risk of it falling into the canal. It had two main stems and the one which leaned over the canal has been coppiced to ground level, whilst the stem which leans back has been retained as a high pollard. If it continues to decline and then die then the remaining stem will eventually fall back away from the canal.

The Canal Ranger Service have commenced the annual task of crown-lifting and cutting back trees and branches which overhang the canal from the offside and this will continue during the autumn and winter.

5. Fenacre water transfer system

As members who attended the summer site visit will have heard, Aggregate Industries have submitted a licence application to the Environment Agency for consent for a new and improved water transfer system. The Canal Manager has recently been copied into email correspondence showing that AI's consultants AMEC Foster Wheeler have been chasing the EA for a decision. Apparently the EA is currently assessing any potential impact on two hydropower schemes near Exeter before making a decision.

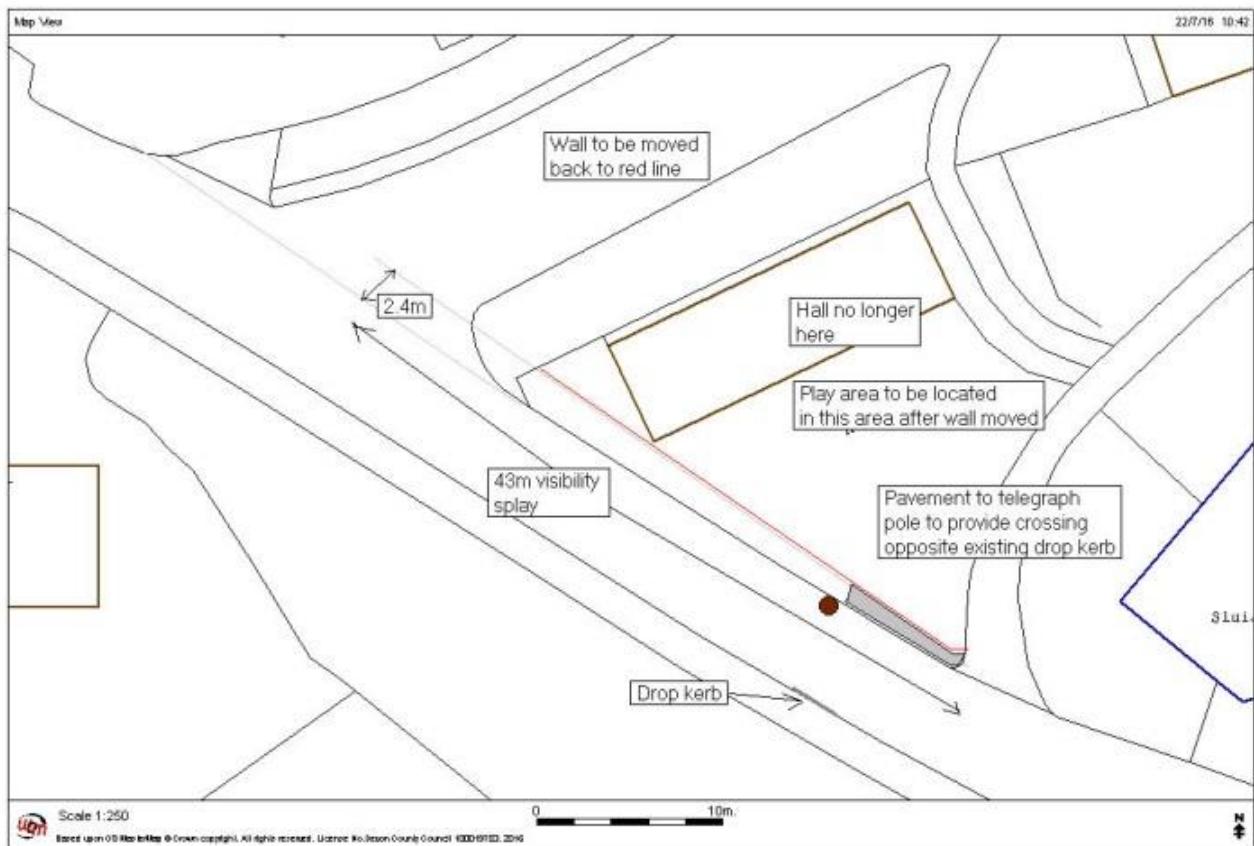
6. Canal Basin play area / wall

Tendering for the new play area was completed in the early spring with a view to installing and opening it before the school summer holidays. Proludic won the contract and together with assistance from Philip Brind, their designs for the play barge - which forms the centrepiece of the scheme - were tweaked to provide a more authentic looking canal-going vessel. Colour images of the latest designs are appended at the back of this report.

However, before installation was organised, the Canal Manager became aware of potential funding for a project to move back the wall between the play area site and Canal Hill by approximately 1.5m. This would dramatically improve visibility for vehicles leaving the canal Hill car park, without affecting the range of play equipment which could be incorporated to a slightly smaller site.

However, there is a significant impact in terms of timing as the wall project will take many months to design, tender and execute, before the play area can then be installed.

The funding for this project would come from a Section 106 agreement between DCC and developers building houses as part of the Tiverton Eastern Urban Extension. There is a facility for DCC to spend against the agreed income from such an agreement even though the actual payment will not be made for several years. A developer has recently pulled out of the EUE and so it is likely that this may lead to some further delays in the wall project. However, it has been agreed that the design work may be able to proceed in the meantime, subject to a reasonable quote for design costs being submitted by DCC's designer, Jacobs. At the time of writing we are awaiting that quote.



Due to these uncertainties, it is difficult to say at present exactly when the wall project will go ahead and then when the play area will subsequently be installed.

In order to maximise visibility for drivers leaving the car park and pedestrians crossing the road at the end of the towpath in the meantime, the Canal Rangers and volunteers spent a day removing all of the ivy and brambles which had grown on the walls. Stop / go traffic control was used to provide a safe work space and the stumps of the ivy were treated with glyphosate to prevent re-growth.

7. Stopboard trial

Following the breach in 2012, DCC reviewed its systems for damming off sections of canal. It was concluded that the wooden stopboard system - which was developed in the 1980s - is unsuitable for emergency situations and for working behind (in a drained section of channel) during routine maintenance.

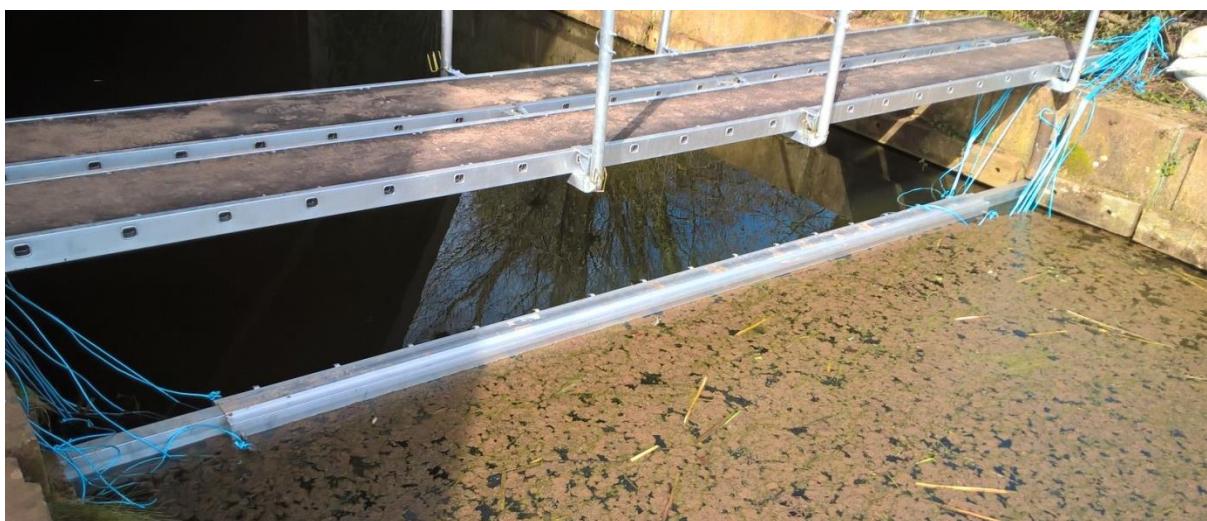
Last year the Canal Rangers took delivery of 22 new aluminium stopboards which are based on a design developed in recent years by the Canal and River Trust. These boards are hollow and accommodate arms at either side, the length of which can be set to fit any of the damming off points under the Canal's bridges.



The key advantages of this system are:

- They can be deployed using Youngman boards (lightweight bridges) so there is no requirement for any staff to enter the water.
- As they are hollow, they fill with water and sink, and so can still be deployed if there is a flow of water (e.g. if a breach has already occurred)
- Unlike the timber boards, the structural properties of the boards are uniform, unchanging and easy to calculate, and so are safe and reliable for staff or contractors to work behind if a section of canal has been drained.

In April a purpose-made chain-hemmed tarpaulin was delivered, which is used to seal the gaps between the arms. The Canal Rangers, engineers from DCC's Bridges and Structures Team, and contractors with experience of deploying the tarpaulin system, conducted a trial.





The trial was conducted at Boehill Bridge where there are stop plank grooves on either side of the bridge. Aluminium stopboards were deployed on the northern side and the timber ones were deployed on the southern side. Once the tarpaulin was laid out, a large pump was used to draw down the water level underneath the bridge and ensure that the tarpaulin achieved a good seal against the aluminium boards.

Advice was also given by the contractors on how to deploy the tarpaulin in a breach situation when there would already be a considerable flow of water through the gaps between the arms.

It was agreed that the trial had been very useful. Not only did it provide valuable experience for the Canal Ranger Service and DCC engineers on how to use the system, but also identified and resolved some issues with the equipment and how it is deployed. Hopefully they will never have to be used in an emergency situation, but if necessary, the Canal Rangers now know exactly what to do.

8. Public toilets

The public toilets in the Canal Basin car park are an important facility for Canal visitors and in April some important maintenance work to the exterior of the building was undertaken:

- Three external doors which were rotting at the base



- have been replaced and improved magnetic timer locks have been fitted to the Gents and Ladies doors (the disabled toilet had a new maglock fitted last year).
- Several rotten sections of fascia board and soffit have been replaced
 - All exterior timber has been painted.

At the time of writing quotes are being sought for repainting the interior suspended ceilings, replacing some missing tiles and re-fitting some slipped roof slates.

9. Leaks

In early April the Canal Rangers and contractors spent a couple of days looking for leaks near Tidcombe Bridge. The owner of the house beside the towpath has been complaining of water coming up in his garden for some time and so after divining some possible leaks on either side of the bridge, trenches were dug to try and intercept them.

On the northern side of Tidcombe Bridge, a JCB was able to access the site and bring in a few tonnes of puddling clay to back fill behind any leaks. After digging two deep trenches, only one minor leak was discovered.

On the following day, a small excavator (which was able to fit under the William Authers Footbridge) was brought in to search for a potential leak on the southern side of Tidcombe Bridge. Once again, only a small leak was found which suggests that the water in the neighbours garden is coming from somewhere other than the canal.

Another persistent leak near Warnicombe Bridge has been sealed several times this year. A more permanent solution is being planned, but may require the felling of a large oak on an embankment, underneath which the water flows.



10. 'All Aboard!' sculptures

This year, Tiverton Museum has organised the production, decoration and installation of a number of 'Tivvy Bumper' models in and around Tiverton. The initiative – titled 'All Aboard!' has included two sculptures placed beside the canal. There is one beside the visitor centre in the Canal Basin which was designed by the Olympic runner, Jo Pavey, and another is located beside the towpath next to The Globe Inn in Sampford Peverell. Colour photos of both are appended at the back of this report.

11. Ranger Service training

Jo, Craig and Mark have completed a Working safely in Water training day held at the canal in March. As well as general principles relating to water safety, the course focussed on the safe use of drysuits and the effective use of throwlines in various situations. Although they have been using drysuits for many years, it is reassuring to now have the appropriate training to back up their practical experience.



12. Green Flag Award

The Country Park has once again been successful in retaining its Green Flag Award. Two judges spent a day at the Canal in June and were clearly very impressed with the site and its management.

In addition to visiting a number of points along the canal and spending time reading the management plan, they also had lunch at the Duck's Ditty with the Friends Group Chairman, Robert Hodgson, and Tiverton Canal Co. MD, Philip Brind. Thanks to Robert and Philip for giving up their time to discuss the management and maintenance of the canal with the judges.



The Canal Ranger Service celebrated the announcement of the Award with members of the Friends of the Grand Western Canal at the Mid Devon Show, where they shared a stall.

13. Tilting weirs

A verbal update will be provided at the meeting.

14. Fenacre Farm / flooding

A verbal update will be provided at the meeting.

15. Fringed lily control

The invasive Fringed lily (which has yellow flowers) has continued to spread and so a specialist contractor has spent a day treating all of the outlying patches between Tiverton and Sampford Peverell with glyphosate (under licence from the EA). The main area of infestation around the Swan's Neck was treated last year and just a thin band beside the bankside vegetation remains.

16. Tiverton Road Bridge car park works / issues

- Earlier in the year, a number of potholes that had been forming in the car park were patched.
- A new mobile catering stall has been operating under agreement with DCC at the car park this year. Feedback has been good and the proprietor seems keen to continue next year.
- At the time of writing the Tiverton-Halberton waymarker located beside the towpath and the Dudley Weatherley Jubilee Bridge has been snapped off at ground level by vandals. The Canal Ranger Service will organise the repair or replacement of this waymarker as soon as possible.
- A number of the planks decking the Dudley Weatherley Jubilee Bridge are cracking or becoming uneven and so the Canal Ranger Service plan to fit new decking this autumn.
- The timber seats and tablet of the picnic bench at the far end of the car park will also be renewed this autumn.

17. Towpath mowing and strimming

The Canal Rangers and volunteers have once again done a great job of keeping the towpath clear this year. In terms of time, it is the second most time-consuming for the Rangers (after weed-cutting) and when the volunteers time is taken into consideration it is easily the biggest task in terms of man-hours. As well at mowing the towpath edges and picnic sites and strimming around benches, fishing swims are cut at regular intervals to provide swims for anglers, landing points for boats and views of the water for walkers.

The bank and hedge-side vegetation is sided up once it starts to fall across the towpath using the Canal Ranger Service's Kubota tractor and side arm flail.

18. Erosion and drainage works

Contractors have completed a number of works to the north of Burlescombe. A very muddy area of towpath (due to water draining from land above) south of Fenacre Bridge has been dried out through the installation of a French drain. An area of eroded bank near Waytown Tunnel (caused by water drainage and dogs climbing out of the canal) has been reinforced by installing a stone-filled gabion basket.

19. Spot dredging at Manley Bridge

A road drainage channel empties into the canal at Manley Bridge and most years a large volume of soil and gravel is washed in at this point, forming a spit of 'land' which extends into the canal. An excavator contractor was engaged to dredge this out in late March, prior to the first horedrawn barge trip of the year.

20. Sampford Peverell picnic site

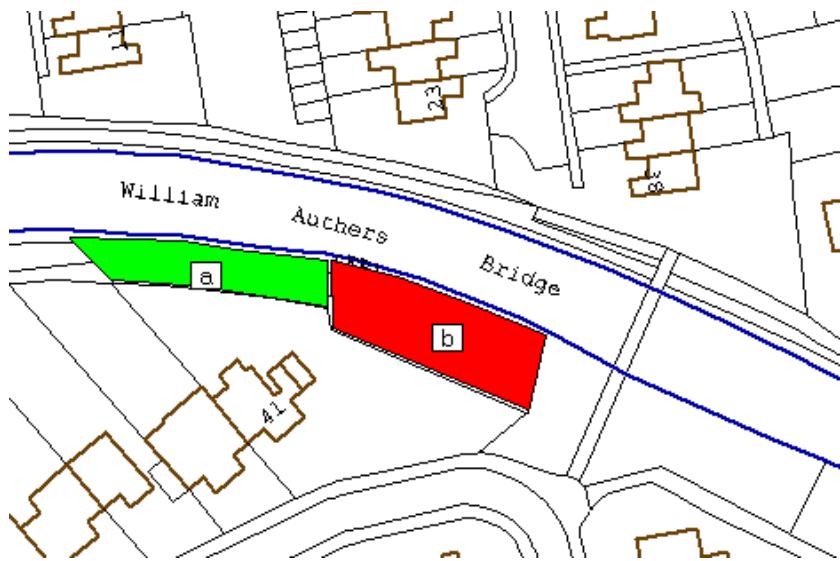
A group of three Silver Birches have been planted within the picnic site in the area where a horse chestnut was felled last winter (due to being ring barked by something / someone).

A similar problem of bark being peeled off the orchard trees in the corner of the picnic site has been spotted by the Sampford Peverell tree wardens. In order to protect the trees, the Canal Ranger Service has provided them with fencing material and tools so that they can build guards around them. At the time of writing, five guards have been built and six are due to be built shortly.

21. Land beside William Authers Footbridge

JAC members will be aware that planning permission has been granted for a new bungalow to be built beside 41 Spurway Road. The owner has enquired about renting some of the land in front of the site under a Garden Agreement.

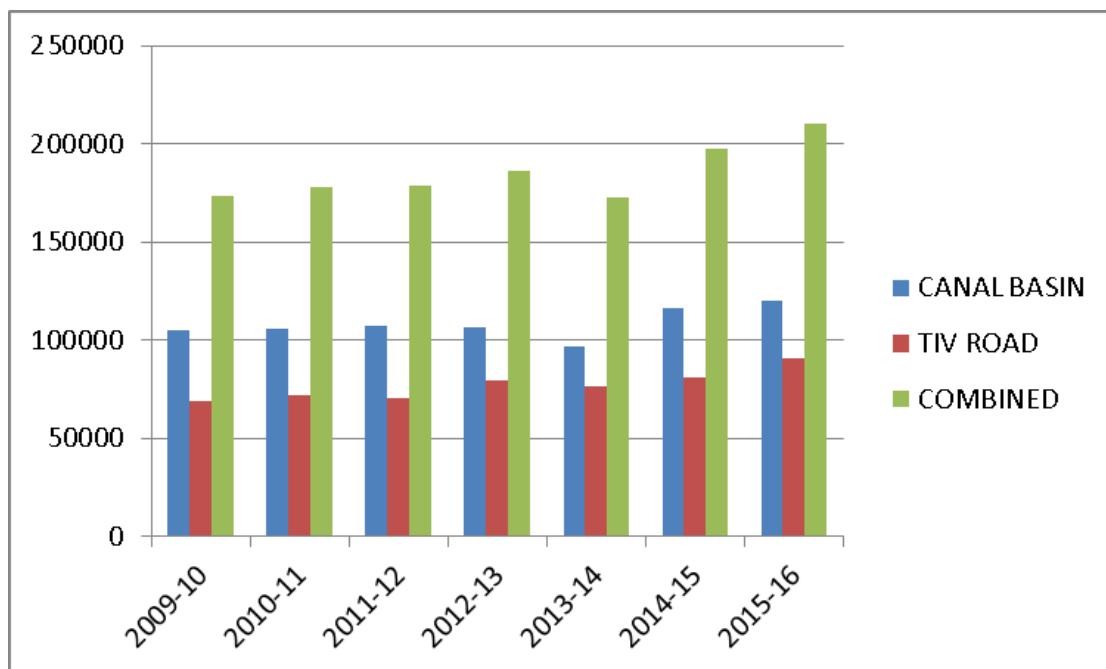
Given that the existing and proposed properties may end up with different owners the suggestion is to have two agreements from the outset, as per the plan, with a) for number 41 and b) for the new bungalow, but with both being taken up by the present owner until such point as he sells either property. The Canal Manager has explained that the terms of the agreement enable DCC to dredge onto the land after providing a period of notice and the land owner is still keen to proceed.



As the areas of land are much larger than in most other garden agreements, the rent would reflect this. An area of land beside the bridge would not be rented to preserve access for boaters to moor under the bridge and walk to the Canal Basin. The Canal Manager is minded to proceed with the agreements, but given that the JAC has discussed the land around the bridge before (on that occasion in relation to a potential sale of land) and is aware of the recent planning application, wished to share the proposals with members first.

22. Visitor numbers

The annual totals for vehicles using the Canal Basin and Tiverton Road car parks have been supplied by DCC's Highway data technician and reveal a continued increase in vehicle numbers at both car parks over the period between August 2015 and July 2016. The figures below show projected visitor numbers arriving at the two car parks based on an assumption of an average of two occupants per vehicle.



Taking this 6% increase into account, our estimate for total annual visitor numbers to the Country Park now stands at 310,000.

23. Atherton Way

In recent years a number of properties at the end of Atherton Way in Tiverton have suffered from flooding incidents and have had to live with an ongoing threat of further flooding.

A range of works have been undertaken by various agencies to address this issue. Attention has now turned to the ditch which carries water between number 14 Atherton Way and number 34 Francis Crescent. There is concern that the ditch is filled with debris and has a number of bottlenecks and partial blockages along its route and so is not draining water as effectively as it should. As a result there is a danger that:

- a) Debris may be deposited within the recently cleaned culvert that leads to the open ditch, reducing its capacity and adding to future cleaning costs;
- b) During high rainfall, water may back up and cause flooding;
- c) During high rainfall, water may overtop into the canal, contributing to rapidly rising water levels and causing siltation of the canal.

In order to address these concerns, Devon County Council – which owns the land between the gardens and the canal is planning some works to clean out the ditch and standardise the capacity of the ditch along its length.

Later this autumn/winter we plan to undertake these works. A topographical survey has been completed and DCC engineers are currently finalising designs prior to tendering the works. Adjacent residents have been informed of the proposed works and will be contacted individually to explain what work will be undertaken beside their properties. It is likely the works will require the felling of some medium-sized willows and conifers growing beside the ditch.



24. Wildlife Advisory Group

In recent years it has become increasingly difficult to find dates that all members of this group could make, and the meetings had become rather repetitive. Members have agreed that rather meeting at set periods regardless of whether there are any specific issues to discuss, it is preferable to just meet when we need in order to discuss a particular topic.

To that end a site visit was recently held to discuss the management of fringing reeds in the Ebear Bridge area. A significant amount of reed clearance was undertaken by excavator contractors last year in the section between the sluice and Ebear Bridge. The next section (Ebear to Westcott) is the most sensitive along the canal for dragonflies, and so it has been agreed that this will be broken down into two sections with two or three years gap between work in each section, so that all of the towpath-side habitat is not disturbed at once.



25. Events

The Canal Ranger Service have run or attended the following public events this summer:

- Uffculme Green Day – 14th May
- Canal Bat Walk – 8th July
- Mid Devon Show – 23rd July
- Fun on the Water – 31st August
- Petroc Fresher's Fayre – 22nd September

26. Talks

The Canal Manager has given talks about the Canal to the following groups:

- Bovey Tracey Primary School -16th March
- Halberton Village Meeting – 3rd May
- Clayhanger WI – 10th May
- Haldon National Trust Association – 2nd August

27. Volunteers

288 volunteer days were completed between March and September (inclusive).

28. Ranger-led Walk and Talk (Healthy walks)

- Halberton – 16th March – 18 participants
- Holcombe Rogus – 18th May – 27 participants
- Sampford Peverell – 20th July – 25 participants
- Tiverton – 21st September – 13 participants

29. Ranger-led school / community group visits

- Castle Primary – 83 pupils
- Home educators – 26 children
- Heathcoat Primary – 56 pupils
- Blundells Prep. – 24 pupils
- Sampford Peverell Primary – 22 pupils
- Clyst Hydon Primary – 20 pupils
- 3rd Tiverton Brownies (pond-dipping) – 21 children
- 2nd Tiverton Beavers (pond-dipping) – 15 children
- Willand Scouts (bat walk) – 15 children

Future programme of practical works by Canal Rangers over next six months

- Cutting back overhanging branches throughout the canal
- Laying several sections of hedgerow
- Weed harvesting – collecting as much Water Soldier as possible before it sinks
- Coppicing trees on embankments
- Hedge and bank cutting
- Mowing and strimming towpath and picnic sites
- Crown-lifting low branches above towpath and in front of bridges
- Scrub-clearing to enable more thorough inspections of embankments

Major projects for next six months

- Installation of tilting weirs
- Re-profiling Atherton Way / Francis Crescent ditch
- Reed removal in Ebear Bridge area
- Relining of section beside Westcott Bridge
- Sharing and testing of Emergency Response Plan
- Finish drafting new Canal Management Plan
- Movement of Canal Basin wall / installation of new play area in Canal Basin
- Interpretation panel improvements in Canal Basin and Lowdells
- Visitor Information Guide update and reprint

Appendices

Appendix 1

Canal Play Area – Updated designs for ‘Play Barge’



Appendix 2

All Aboard! – Tivvy Bumper models located at the Canal

