

Wey & Arun Canal News

November 2010

A review of recent events on the Wey & Arun Canal

PLANNING PERMISSION GRANTED FOR FUTURE WORK

On 18 August 2010 Chichester District Council's Area Development Control Committee (North) approved two planning applications submitted by the Wey & Arun Canal Trust.

The first application was for the rebuilding of Southland Lock. This is the next lock towards the River Wey from the restored section at Loxwood, ½ mile or so from Devil's Hole Lock, which was reopened in April 2010. It is the first of the brick-built locks (those further south were built of stone) and local builders 'recycled' the bricks early in the 20th century.



Southland Lock - the corner posts (quoins) are the only visible signs of the original lock

The successful application was the outcome of much patient work by Canal Trust representatives to mitigate the impact of constructing the lock on a very cramped site. There is no public road access and the canal towpath at this point is a narrow bridleway that is very popular with local residents. Bringing lorries along this path or blocking it for a long period was clearly out of the question. The Canal Trust is most grateful to a local landowner who solved this difficult problem by allowing access for delivery of construction materials across their property.

Chichester District Council also granted permission for new parapets on the Loxwood High Street canal bridge. The current steel parapets have attracted criticism for their rather functional appearance. The new parapets will be lower and faced with brick, to blend with the new Loxwood Lock and footbridge.

Before construction of the new parapets can begin, West Sussex County Council, owners of the bridge, have to approve the detailed technical design prepared by the Trust's consulting

engineers. A revised legal agreement is also needed. Joint fundraising by the Canal Trust and the Loxwood community is making good progress towards the target. A "buy a brick" scheme has been extremely successful and two special canal cruises organised by the Loxwood Society contributed very useful profits.

The Canal Trust is very hopeful that 2011 will see completion of the new parapets and substantial progress towards the rebuilding of Southland Lock.

SURREY RESTORATION PLANS MOVE UP A GEAR

The Canal Trust has announced plans to restore a section of the canal near Dunsfold, Surrey, to fully navigable condition.

Between Compasses Bridge and the A281 at Fast Bridge, the canal is already navigable (although shallow in places) and has hosted an annual Small Boats Rally for the past few years. To the south of Compasses Bridge, as far as Tickner's Heath Road, the canal route is clear of major blockages, after the Canal Trust removed two causeways during the 1990s, but this section is heavily silted. A generous grant from the Inland Waterways Association (IWA) will allow the Canal Trust to make a start on dredging.

Future plans include public boat trips on this scenic section of canal, which is next to Dunsfold Park, where the BBC's Top Gear programme is filmed.



Wey & Arun Canal Trust volunteers seen near Compasses Bridge at Dunsfold

NEW LOXWOOD VISITOR CENTRE PLANNED

Early results from the 2010 boating season show that about 11,000 visitors enjoyed canal boat trips from Loxwood this year. The number of visitors who use the peaceful canal towpath for walking or cycling must be much larger. The showpiece section of the Wey & Arun Canal at Loxwood is quickly becoming a significant tourist attraction.

The current facilities for welcoming visitors and informing them about the canal, as well as selling boat trip tickets, are clearly too small and outdated. The Canal Trust is therefore planning a new visitor centre next to the canal and the Onslow Arms. The building is being designed by Fordingbridge plc, who specialise in sustainable and environmentally responsible construction.

A generous donor has come forward to cover the cost of the new building. The Canal Trust hopes to submit a planning application very shortly.



An artist's impression of the new building

LINK TO RIVER WEY MAKES PROGRESS

The National Trust, owner of the River Wey Navigations, and the Wey & Arun Canal Trust have announced an agreement whereby the Canal Trust will lease a section of land near the junction of the canal route and the River Wey, in Shalford, near Guildford, Surrey. This is an important step towards achieving the Canal Trust's aim of reconnecting the northern end of the canal to the River Wey, and hence the rest of the national waterway system.



Chris Harrison, Wey & Arun Canal Trust project manager, seen near the northern end of the canal route in Shalford

The Wey & Arun Canal Trust has also received a £2,000 grant from the Inland Waterways Association (IWA) towards the cost of ecological and flood risk studies in the Shalford area. This supplements a legacy from the Ed and Doris Hunt Memorial Trust to establish a green corridor at Shalford, where the Canal Trust hopes to provide a public park, based where possible on the original canal route.

Ed and Doris Hunt lived in Loxwood near the Wey & Arun Canal and wanted their legacy to be used for the conservation of the countryside and, in particular, wildlife, which is very much part of the Canal Trust's plans.

PRESTIGIOUS AWARD FOR LOXWOOD LOCK

The new Loxwood Lock, with its adjoining horse bridge, has been awarded the runner-up award in the Community Benefit category in the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors' 2010 RICS Awards South East. The lock and bridge were constructed by Canal Trust volunteers between 2005 and 2007 as part of the scheme to reinstate the canal route under the B2133 at Loxwood High Street, completed in 2009. The Trust is proud to receive this prestigious award, especially since the other entrants were professionals.

Philip Bobby FRICS, the South East Regional Judge, said of the project: "The new length of canal adds to the rural landscape, is an amenity for boating, fishermen and for walkers and benefits the whole community."

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If you would like to know more about the Wey & Arun Canal or keep up with our progress, our website is updated at least once a week so you will frequently find something new there.

www.weyandarun.co.uk

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