

BERKHAMSTED TOWN COUNCIL

CANAL AND RIVERSIDE PARTNERSHIP

Minutes of Meeting 13th April 2010

9.00am Civic Centre Berkhamsted

Present:

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|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| CLlr Lindy Foster Weinreb | Berkhamsted Town Council (Chair) |
| N Cutting | Berkhamsted Citizens Association |
| T Statham | Berkhamsted Community Partnership |
| G Cox | Berkhamsted Community Partnership |

Apologies:

| | |
|-------------|------------------------------|
| C Covington | Dacorum Borough Council |
| D Hilling | Inland Waterways Association |
| J Clifton | British Waterways |
| N Graham | Dacorum Borough Council |

1. Minutes of Previous Meeting

Members noted the following comments and amendment to the minutes made by NG, as follows:

Reading through the minutes of the last CARP meeting, I noticed a mistake under **item 5 'Future Projects'**. You have recorded a comment from N. Cutting with regards to the edge of the Canal adjacent to the Car park (I assume he was referring to the structure of the Canal edge which is allowing water to seep through onto the grass – I understand this would be British Waterways responsibility to repair?). You then record a comment from me in response to him, however I was not responding to him, but to Lindy who raised the issue of planting a hedge/Screen on the verge between the car park and the Canal. What I actually said with regards to the hedge/screen was, 'the site user survey did not identify it as a priority, so it is not an action in the management plan'. On this matter, I do think that the opinion of the Canal by the Tennis Cottage residents needs to be taken into account; they may not appreciate having their view obstructed by a screen! As I have said before, I don't believe this is a good location for a hedge/screen because of the presence of the large mature trees. These trees will have extensive root systems that would be disturbed by any planting work, and this could be detrimental to the health of the trees. Also the trees would shade out the hedge during the summer months thereby inhibiting growth.

The minutes were agreed and signed by LFW.

2. Replacement Signage

LFW reported that the bridge signs have now been fitted by British Waterways. NC commented on the area of the canal known as the Port of Berkhamsted and suggested that it should be extended.

3. Canal Fields Liaison Group

NG was not present and GC had not attended the last meeting on 18th March. LFW is meeting with JL regarding the group.

4. Interpretation Boards

GC presented the completed boards and will discuss planning consent and installation arrangements with NG.

5. Future Projects

LFW and DH had walked the canal towpath and presented the following report:

BERKHAMSTED TOWN COUNCIL

Canal and Riverside Partnership

Proposal for Re-surfacing of Grand Union Tow Path

The tow path from Raven's Lane to Billet Lane was surfaced in the first half of 2000. The 25 mm top of the existing tow path was scraped off and 20 x 125 mm boards provided a new edge to the path. The new surface was of compacted Cotswold Stone with a gradient toward the canal to ensure surface drainage.

Condition in March 2010

The length of canal tow path between Raven's Lane and Castle Street Bridge has recently been resurfaced and the present proposal is for a resurfacing of the length from Castle Street to Billet Lane. The

purpose of the 2000 surfacing was to encourage and facilitate tow path use by walkers and this is undoubtedly to be considered as an outstanding success. The tow path is now heavily used by walkers, many with push chairs and young children, and cyclists and the surface has deteriorated very markedly.

The following comments are based on a visual inspection undertaken on Sunday, March 7th 2010 following several nights of heavy frost with some thawing during the morning. The tow path surface is now very uneven with numerous places where water collects and there were residual patches of ice, some puddles and areas of moist mud. Clearly the original attempt to provide for surface drainage in the direction of the canal no longer functions. Indeed, there are places where a buildup of earth and vegetation has buried the edge boards and this allows drainage on top the path – this is particularly marked in a length of canal on the Moor side of King's Road Bridge where the Bulbourne runs alongside the canal for a short distance.

Above Broadwater Lock a number of larger, in some cases quite pointed, stones are proud of the surface and hence a danger especially to children should they fall, and the edge boards are mainly in place on the canal side of the path but missing over considerable distances on the inner side. On the heavily used section of path close to the Waitrose Bridge the surfacing has largely disappeared, the path is badly depressed and the surface very muddy. Jagged stones in path above bridge and another muddy section near the Park Street Bridge.

In the area of Gas Locks, one access path from the Stag Lane development on to the tow path is complete and another is nearing completion. These will almost certainly increase tow path use in an area where the path is very uneven and surface very poor over some stretches with accumulation of mud after wet weather. Above Billet Lane the path is very uneven.

In many places the original edge boards are either well proud of a lowered path surface or have disappeared below the surface, in both cases detrimental to the proper drainage of the path.

It would appear that the path is very much in need of resurfacing and this should be considered with some urgency and with fullest attention to the design specifications adopted.

Dr David Hilling FCILT

On the inspection walk several other points were noted:-

The two plinths nearest the Crystal Palace could certainly do with a cleaning.

The Egerton sign on the Castle Street Bridge looks excellent.

The canal –side wall adjacent to the CARP Phase 1 site is badly cracked in consequence of which the path behind the wall is collapsing and the paving blocks very uneven and in need of re-setting

The whole area around the seat needs tidying up.

In the vicinity of Stag Lane there is one point at which a tree has collapsed or grown over the path so restricting its width to about 25 – 30 cm and forcing anyone with a push chair to leave the tow path and come close to the canal edge. This needs urgent attention.

David Hilling

TS said that the state of the towpath has been discussed at Citizens Association meetings and agreed it is a mess.

LFW suggested that funds could be sought from Commercial sponsors in the town. The towpath could be measured and sections sold off at around £250 each.

TS asked who is responsible for the towpath.

LFW replied that BW has a responsibility for certain health and safety aspects. A risk assessment would need to be carried out to identify these areas to obtain funding for remedial work required under these circumstances.

NC said that BTC could raise some funding through the Precept for 2011/2012, but this would be a political decision.

A wide discussion followed on the type of surface and area covered.

NC said he has a measuring wheel and will measure the area to form the baseline for costings.

The towpath will be measured in three separate tranches:

- Castle Street to Lower Kings Road
- Lower Kings Road to Waitrose
- Waitrose to Park Street Bridge

TS said that the towpath is an asset to the town and it should be emphasised as such. Organisations in the town, such as CARAB, Citizens Association and Chamber of Commerce should work with BTC to move the project forward.

LFW mentioned the BW national campaign to provide seating as part of a public art project.

TS felt that standard seating may be better, as a number of different art schemes could look a mess.

A discussion on the location and type of bench followed. The Moor was mentioned as an area that would benefit from more seating. It was agreed that the erection of benches was a good idea, but not as a public art project.

GC said that funding was in place to plant wild flowers. LFW will contact the supplier already identified, to cost out a plant list and confirm planting times and arrangements. Volunteers could help with the planting.

GC raised the issue of information boxes, again funding is available. It was decided to stick with the original idea to locate three along the canal, for use by visitors, containing information about the town and surrounding area.

A discussion on the type of box fit for this purpose ensued. NC suggested a product and said he would cost it.

6. River Bulbourne

The restoration project was discussed.

7. Canal Leaflet

LFW reported that progress on the final draft is progressing well.
GC confirmed that BCP funding is in place to finance the project.

8. AOB

None.

9. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting is on Tuesday, 8th June at 2.00pm in the Council Chamber, Berkhamsted Civic Centre.