

SEDGWICK PARISH COUNCIL CANAL REPORT

Canal Inspection November 2022

Autumn came late and seems to be over already!

Vegetation: Most leaves have fallen so the trees are mainly bare and the canal bed vegetation is dying back and beginning to expose the goat willow and sycamore regrowth that will be removed over winter. The Queen's canopy saplings look healthy. We will dedicate the Queen's Canopy around the coronation in May.

Paths: The paths are sound but leaf litter is making them a bit muddy but nothing you wouldn't expect this time of year.

Benches: The two older benches and the Stoker Seat are fine. The large seat at Hill bridge is very damp and crumbly – the legs are fine and sturdy and will take some removing – would it be preferable to simply replace the horizontal bar with another hefty piece of wood rather than remove completely – it is used.



Boundaries, Walls and Fences: all look sound.

Usage: High levels of use – evidence of cycle tracks

Signage: All seem OK

Boards: The notice boards still need a varnish.

Canal Trust; Planning notice still posted until March 2023. The aqueduct has not had any maintenance and the path is wet and sticky.

Action

I have spoken with James Park and he will contact me when he is in the area to walk the canal – when the vegetation dies down a bit more would be best. He will quote for removing the goat willow stumps and tidying any dead wood and removing seat. There are 2 skeleton trees including the dead tree at the apex of the easy path and footpath that could do with coming down if we can do it when the path is closed but nothing urgent.

**COUNCIL NEWS FOR NOVEMBER 2022 FROM Cllr. R.K BINGHAM,
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The more things change the more they repeat themselves. Nearly 40 years ago when I first became a member of South Lakeland District Council, we debated the condition of what we called Grange Baths which now in official Council Speak are designated as The Lido.

Back in 1984 it had developed a great crack and was leaking into the Bay. Emergency repairs kept it open for another decade before it was closed and dwindled into dereliction. Subsequently a new pool was built, controversially because a Compulsory Purchase Order had to be used for the site at Berners Close. But the new pool only lasted five years before it too was declared unsafe and quickly closed and pulled down.

It was then decided to restore the old pool complex, now listed as an important Art Deco building. With advice and practical help from dedicated volunteers it has now been tidied up. At the November Council we were informed that funds for a further £5,006,200 were required even after “a change in methodology had been adopted” –meaning cuts - and that a new Structural Engineer has been appointed. Once renovated the building will be opened to the public but the actual pool will not be filled for bathing –although there have been plans to transform it into a garden. A children’s playground and the promenade will also be repaired.

The other historic issue dealt with was the restoration of the Canal. Here, I have a direct interest as I represent either as a District or a County Councillor all except one parish (Beetham) along its along its length from Kendal to the County Boundary. My other affected parishes are: -Sedgwick, Hincaster, Stainton, Preston Richard, Preston Patrick, Holme and Burton. Currently, a £600,000 government grant is available to restore the tow paths for walking and cycling. This I thought should be popular with local residents although I recalled that the original plans to re-reopen all the waterway had been opposed by many local people who feared an intrusion of noisy visitors. Despite excellent work by volunteers in clearing large stretches and repairing bridges it is unlikely that M6 breaches will ever be removed or evaded.

Child poverty was a worrying problem raised at both the SLDC Cabinet and at the County Council. Cumbria has already created a £4m Cost of Living Crisis Fund. The cost of school dinners, now £2.41, is likely to reach to £3 although food inflation recently has dropped from a peak in July. Inevitably, the need for free school’s meals has increased. Many schools now have breakfast clubs and food vouchers, or meals are provided for the School Holidays.

Meanwhile as we await the dissolution of SLDC and Cumbria County Councils some officers seem too busy or, perhaps may be distracted by Local Government Reorganisation, to attend to enquiries promptly.

I have received complaints about delays by the District Planning Department and failures by County Highways to provide early notification about planned road closures. Meanwhile with so many members retiring and other members busy planning for LGR attendance at council meetings has dropped. I counted 51 members present at the November County Council. The full membership is 81. Personally, I'm still pressing on at councils and the Crime and Police authority and have kept up my attendance at Parish Councils where I am permitted to take part. Meantime, I'm checking on flood relief measures as it is now just a year since Storm Arwen flooded us out.

All the best and don't forget the COVID and FLU Jabs. -Roger.