

SEDGWICK PARISH COUNCIL CANAL REPORT

Canal Safety Inspection September 2023

I accompanied Alistair Hearne, our Woodland Management Consultant as he carried out his annual safety inspection.

Trees: To summarise, very positive in the short term with no safety issues identified or urgent action required. However, in the medium to long term, we still need to be prepared for a programme of felling due to Ash Die Back and Dutch Elm Disease. The felling work carried out in 2016 has really paid off and the habitat is in good condition. The canal basin is now protected by a thriving herbaceous layer. Our Ash stock is showing encouraging resilience to ADB. Several small specimens that have succumbed are not in positions where they will present an issue with the road or path and should be left as dying and dead trees form an important part of the habitat and shouldn't be removed unless necessary. Some specimens are struggling but should be left and continued to be monitored annually. The largest Ash by the Stoker Seat has signs of ADB but like all the others, should be left as it might deteriorate and need removing in perhaps 5 years or may last longer. A silver birch has snapped off in the middle of the Back Lane embankment but is held by trees on both sides and should be left. There are two dead Elms – one at the back of the easterly embankment which should be left and the small one at the apex of the easy path and towpath should be removed soon (this is already planned in James Park's Autumn maintenance work and will not require a felling license).

The Back Lane Embankment contains a large number of Elms and while there is no sign of any problem at the moment, it is highly probable that they will succumb to Dutch Elm Disease which is terminal and will necessitate their removal due to their proximity to the road and adjacent properties. Any problems should be picked up by our annual inspection regime. The disease progresses relatively quickly and when it happens, we will need to find the funds to carry out the felling work within 12-24 months of the onset. This is something we should be planning for now along with a capacity to deal with future ADB casualties. We will review the Canal Management Plan and the Canal Contingency fund at our November meeting.

Vegetation: The berries are abundant; rosehips, haws, sloes, elderberries and blackberries. The verges are long but are beginning to die back. James Park will trim any overhanging branches as part of his maintenance visit.

Benches: The new Stoker Seat was being installed during our visit and looks fantastic.

Paths: Dry and sound. I could not see where the pipeline had been exposed so assume that BT have dealt with it.

Boundaries, Walls and Fences: There is a 2m section of the wall $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way along the path that has collapsed adjacent to the section repaired in August. That section of wall looks quite vulnerable. James Park is working on a quote for this and a section of the retaining wall along the easy path which needs repairing and the sycamore saplings causing the problem need removing.

Signage: We have been asked to improve the number, size and visibility of dog poo signage – although I could see no evidence on my visit, fouling was a big problem over the summer. I recommend we buy 2 of these signs at £6.99 for 2.



2 No Fouling Dog Signs
200mm x 300mm - Rigid
Plastic (DF.09F-RP)

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4.6 ★★★★★ 307 ratings

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2 x Rigid
Plastic Signs

£6.99

1 x Rigid
Plastic Sign

£5.95

2 x Self
Adhesive...

Currently
unavailable.

Roll over image to zoom in

The no cycling signage is in place but is being ignored. We could consider more informative signage to dispel the misunderstanding that it is a cycle path – I would recommend either the metal or plastic options – similar price.



Footpath only no horses, bikes or vehicles metal park safety sign

Condition: **New**

Size: 200mmx300mm

Multi-buy:

- Buy 1: £7.49 each
- Buy 2: £7.12 each
- Buy 3: £6.74 each

Brand	KPCM Display Ltd
Size	300 x 200 mm
Material	Plastic
Orientation	Portrait
Pre-printed	Letter

About this item

- Footpath only no horses, bikes or vehicles Safety sign
- 1.2mm Rigid plastic
- 300mm x 200mm

Usage: Extremely busy. Evidence and reports of cyclists using the path – when stopped they explain they are entitled to use the path as it is a cycleway. Improved signage may help this.

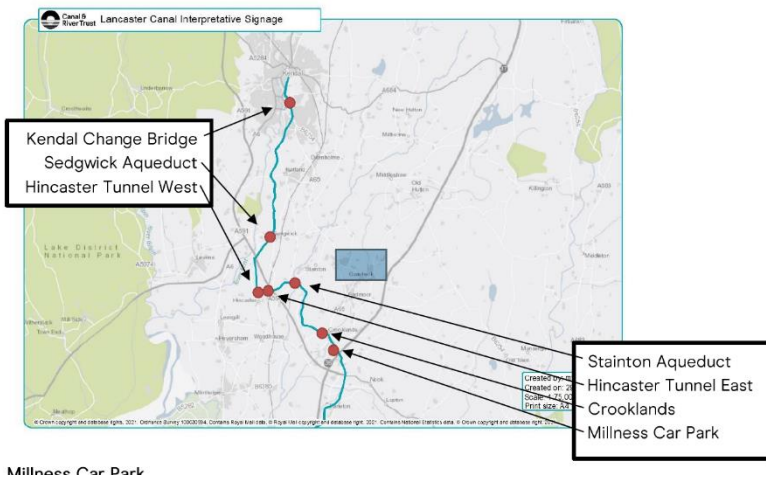
LCRP: As agreed there was a meeting to discuss the new LCRP Access Strategy and a response was formulated, which has since been shared with all members of the Council, prior to discussion and approval at the September meeting.

In late August we received an email from the CRT requesting a copy of the permission we have given for the installation of way markers and art installations on the section of the canal in our ownership. There were no details given about the location or nature of the proposed installations. They seem to be under the impression that permission had been granted by us to Richard Franks in 2021. We have responded to the request by asking to see a copy of their original communication which they assumed had been sent, along with the exact location, an artist's impression of what is planned and what plans for installation and

maintenance have been put in place. It is worth noting that planning permission has only been granted for installations on the aqueduct and there is no mention of the one originally intended on Hill Bridge on Mr Simpson's land.

As we know way markers have never been discussed.

We have yet to receive a response from CRT.



We have planned to meet at the aqueduct at 7pm to walk the canal to inform discussions at the September and November meetings.