

North Walsham and Dilham Canal Trust LCN project – equipped for the future

The Light Craft Navigation project - an amazing success for the Trust

A step toward the restoration of the canal

The vision of the Trust is to see the canal restored and this will present many challenges.

It would be nice to be given several million pounds to fully restore the canal in one go, with everyone onboard. Realistically this is not going to happen in the short term. It has to be recognised that each section of the canal is, in its own way, unique and any work has to reflect the wishes of the individual proprietors.

It has long been thought that craft suitable for portage might use the sections of the canal in water prior to the repair of the major structures. However, to undertake any project work the Trust needs to secure the funding necessary.

So, it is great news that, as announced at this year's AGM in October, the Trust has been awarded a grant from the Rural England Prosperity Fund.

The award means that the Trust can be suitably equipped to help maintain the sections of the canal that can be used by unpowered craft (eg canoes, paddle boards etc). The award however is only part of the story.



North Walsham and Dilham Canal Trust
Registered Charitable Incorporated Organisation No. 1180474

North Walsham and Dilham Canal



Kayaks on Pound 1

Proposal to make the canal navigable by light craft*.



Canoe on pound 4

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light craft nonmotorised navigation F.pptx

The challenge

The Trust's funding team learnt of an opportunity to apply for a grant for funding from the Rural England Prosperity Fund earlier in the summer.

From the start of the process it took three months of hard work to develop a scheme and submit a grant application to North Norfolk District Council (NNDC) who were supported by the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership (NALEP) in this process.

At the outset the Trust showed what it had achieved working in support of the proprietors of the canal. It also outlined what it could do in the near future, if suitably equipped, to facilitate navigation by light, unpowered craft.

There were two key aspects to the proposal –

Pontoons

The purchase of sectional pontoons that the Trust could move between sections of the canal. These would be used to help the Trust to address the ongoing maintenance that is required, primarily the vegetation that can make the canal unnavigable if left unchecked.

Platforms

The provision of platforms that would allow users of light craft to easily come on and off the canal. Nb The level of the water in the canal can vary and it is desirable to minimise any restriction of flow in the canal.

Funding

The Trust met with representatives of NNDC and the NALEP on the canal visiting both Ebridge and Briggate before discussions were held on the wherry (The Newun) at Tonnage Bridge.

The Trust learnt what had to be carefully considered when applying for the grant.

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First the rules for the funding required that before payment of the grant all expenditure had to be completed and there had to be evidence of the project work being undertaken.

Second the project had to be complete before Christmas. Third the Trust had to provide 25% of the value of any project from its own resources, a not insignificant amount. So this was a project that would have to be delivered to a tight time scale and to a strict budget.

The proposal

A sub-committee was set up to manage the process of applying for the grant.

Given the timescale and budget the focus of the project became Pound 1 (Wayford Junction to Honing Lock and Pound 4 (Ebridge to Bacton Wood Mill). Hopefully, in the future, work can be undertaken on the other pounds. (Nb A pound is a section of the canal between two locks and takes the name of the lock at the bottom end of that section)

The process for the application was relatively straight forward but as always the devil was in the detail - and there was a lot of detail.

The grant award

The grant award was confirmed in the middle of October and immediately a detailed plan was drawn up, including a programme for delivery. This was to be updated on a weekly basis with completion targeted before Christmas.

Month	October			November				December				
w/c	16	23	30	06	13	20	27	04	11	18	25	01
Item ↓												
1 Funding												
Progress												
2 Procurement												
Progress												
3 Commission pontoons												
Progress												
4 Install platforms												
Progress												
5 Channel maintenance												
Progress												

Procurement

During the first two weeks of the project the focus was on procuring all the equipment. This had to be achieved at the prices quoted with strict timetable for the deliveries.

The four main packages to be procured were:-

The sectional pontoons and platforms – this was the major purchase.

The trailer to allow the pontoons/platforms to be moved between the different sections of the canal.

The outboards for the work pontoons, complete with batteries and chargers.

The hand tools for use on the pontoons, including the batteries and chargers.

Equipment delivery

Thursday, 2nd November brought the severe storm 'Ciaran'.

It was also the day that the majority of the materials to construct the pontoons and platforms arrived in the yard at Spa Common!



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Suitably clad the volunteers withstood the storm and the equipment was off loaded.

By the end of the day and, after some training, the first floating platform was assembled and launched into the canal.

It was moored on the west bank of the canal just below Bacton Wood Mill Lock. A huge achievement given the conditions.

Project delivery

The platforms

The following work parties rapidly assembled further platforms for mooring at specific locations in Pound 1 and Pound 4. A second platform was moored to form a double platform at Spa Common. Two further platforms were taken to Ebridge Lock by canal and moored on the east bank above the lock.

Two platforms were taken by road to Tonnage Bridge on Pound 1. One platform was moored at the canoe field and the second taken by canal to the bottom of Honing Lock.

The final platform has been assembled and it is planned to use this at Honing Staithe to work from to help remove a large tree that is in the water at the entrance to the staithe.



As these platforms float they move with the changing water levels and do not restrict any flow within the canal.



The pontoons

Three work pontoons have been assembled with two being deployed on Pound 4 (Ebridge) and one on Pound 1 (Wayford Junction/Lower Canal).

Those for Pound 4 were launched directly into the canal at Spa Common and moored adjacent to the double platform below Bacton Wood Mill Lock.

The outboard motors complete with their batteries were then tested on the pontoons on Pound 4 before being used to take the platforms to Ebridge.

Thereafter the pontoons have been used to trim alders growing in the canal on Pound 4 using the tools purchased as part of the grant. One pontoon was used to work from and the second to transport the useful timber back to the yard.

(The battery driven pole pruners have also been used to cut back vegetation restricting the flow in the backsough above Spa Common)

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On Pound 1 the pontoon was used to take a platform from Tonnage Bridge to the bottom of Honing Lock, there being only pedestrian access to this location.

In the future it is planned to use this equipment to remove sunken and floating logs from the pound.

Taking a fully made-up pontoon to Pound 1 by road has shown that the Trust could use the trailer to take a pontoon to remote sections of the canal and move the pontoon manually to the desired position. This is a great step forward.

The deployment of the platform below Honing Lock completes the operational delivery of the project. The equipment will, of course, be used for many years to come. This will be both on maintaining the channel within Pounds 1 and 4 and elsewhere on the canal as the pounds come back into water.



Submission for grant payment

However, it's not quite the end of the project for the sub-committee. Records have to be submitted that show the Trust has purchased what it said it would and that the equipment has been deployed. Only when this is done will the grant monies be paid.

To date it's been a fabulous project undertaken to very strict time scales and within a tight budget. The volunteers have put a lot of effort into the many work parties which is great. This leads to a real sense of achievement, especially bearing in mind that the weather this autumn has not been kind.

As the last platform was assembled the volunteers felt they were really getting quite good at the task. Given that the sectional elements of both the pontoons and platforms can be reconfigured there will be opportunities to test those skills in the future.

CHH

This project is part funded by the UK government through the Rural England Prosperity Fund (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rural-england-prosperity-fund-prospectus>)

The Rural Fund supports the aims of the government's Levelling Up White Paper and Future Farming Programme. It funds capital projects for small businesses and community infrastructure. This will help improve productivity and strengthen the rural economy and rural communities



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