



14 February 2005

CONSERVATION WORK CONTINUES AT FOXTON LOCKS

Action to conserve an important piece of Leicestershire's industrial heritage continued this weekend at Foxton Locks.

Trained volunteers from the Waterway Recovery Group's (WRG's) Forestry Team returned to the site to continue the tree removal work they started in the autumn on the site's historic Inclined Plane – one of only three designated Scheduled Ancient Monuments in the county.

English Heritage, the body responsible for ensuring England's historic environment is properly maintained and cared for, had requested that a number of trees be removed to prevent their roots from further damaging the historic remains.

The Foxton Inclined Plane boat lift operated from 1900 to 1910, and was originally built to replace the existing flight of locks and speed up the transit of boats. But when an anticipated increase in waterway traffic didn't materialise at the start of the century, the locks were reinstated. Significant elements of the Inclined Plane were demolished and sold for scrap in 1928.

Lending his support to the WRG's Forestry Team at the weekend was Mike Beech, Keeper of Foxton Canal Museum and Company Secretary of the Foxton Inclined Plane Trust. He said:

"I've been involved in efforts to restore the Inclined Plane since the 1980s. It's good to see such a massive step forward. The Inclined Plane is an important part of our heritage, and the Foxton Locks Partnership is keen to see it is conserved as part of work to improve Foxton Locks."

British Waterways is currently developing the site with other members of the Foxton Locks Partnership, and is working with English Heritage to ensure that the remains of the Inclined Plane are preserved.

Jon Humble, Ancient Monument Inspector for English Heritage, said: "Good conservation is about balancing significance. The historic assets at Foxton are non-renewable and of national

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archaeological importance. The tree removal is in keeping with the Conservation Plan for the site, which was widely consulted upon.”

Foxton has a wide range of wildlife habitats and is home to a variety of creatures, so British Waterways is careful to minimize impact on the surrounding environment during work of this nature. British Waterways carries out extensive consultation with experts from English Nature and the Department of Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra), as well as its own ecology experts.

Local groups and residents were involved in planting 2,500 trees including oak, beech and hawthorn at Foxton Locks during National Tree Week in November. Further plans include the installation of bird and bat boxes on the site to conserve and enhance Foxton’s wildlife habitats.

Ends

Press and media enquiries: Contact Louise McCarthy, Media & Communications Executive, South East Waterways, British Waterways. Tel: 01908 302500. Email: Louise.McCarthy@britishwaterways.co.uk.

Notes to editors

Images attached: Three low-resolution digital images are attached, suggested captions: (1) “Trained volunteers from the Waterway Recovery Group’s (WRG’s) Forestry Team clear vegetation from the Inclined Plane”, (2) British Waterways Engineer, Peter Ruffle (left), and Mike Beech of Foxton Locks Canal Museum (right) help the WRG Forestry Team”, (3) “How the Foxton Inclined Plane boat lift looked in its hey-day in the early 1900s”. Please note these images are for single use only, please credit “British Waterways Photolibrary”. If you require a higher resolution image, email louise.mccarthy@britishwaterways.co.uk.

The Foxton Locks Partnership was established in 1996. The Partnership is chaired by British Waterways and includes: The Waterways Trust; the Foxton Inclined Plane Trust; The Inland Waterways Association; Harborough District Council; Foxton Parish Council; Leicestershire County Council; English Heritage; East Midlands Development Agency and the Old Union Canals Society. The Partnership meets regularly to plan development at Foxton Locks and raise funds.

The **Waterways Recovery Group** is the national co-ordinating body for voluntary labour on the inland waterways of Britain.

British Waterways is the public corporation responsible for the care and enhancement of the nation’s 2,000-mile two centuries old network of canals and rivers, working in partnership with public, private and voluntary organisations to develop and improve the waterways in a sustainable manner. British Waterways’ navigations are visited over 400 million times each year accounting for £1.5 billion annual visitor spend. For more information, visit www.britishwaterways.co.uk

Plant hire company, **ArborPlant**, kindly supplied the wood chipper used for the tree felling works.

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