



23 March 2005

HERITAGE LOTTERY FUND AWARDS £1.78 MILLION BOOST TO FOXTON

The Foxton Locks Partnership, which is working to restore and develop Foxton Locks and Inclined Plane, one of Leicestershire's most popular visitor destinations, have received a massive boost with the news that it has been awarded £1.78 million from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).

Funding from the successful bid will enable a planned £2.8 million, 3-year programme to improve access to and restore major elements of the Foxton Locks site to proceed, increasing visitors' enjoyment and understanding of this unique historic site on the Leicester section of the Grand Union Canal.

The funding will be used to put into action major plans for the 8-hectare site, which is home to a Grade II* listed staircase of locks and a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

James Clifton of British Waterways, Chair of the Foxton Locks Partnership, said: "We are absolutely delighted with this news, which will enable us to carry on our work to develop Foxton Locks as a much improved destination for visitors and for the local community.

"Following detailed design and tendering this year, we will be able to carry out some ambitious and exciting engineering works in 2006 that will greatly add to the experience of the Foxton Locks site's outstanding built and natural heritage."

The work will include re-watering the upper arm approach canal, and dredging and repairing the bottom basin, which will be utilised in any future restoration of the Foxton Inclined Plane boatlift, an important part of Leicestershire's industrial heritage and a Scheduled Ancient Monument that last operated in the early 1900s.

Further work to restore the Foxton site will include replacing a missing bridge over the Harborough Arm of the canal, and footpath improvements to make the attraction more accessible for all.

Media Enquiries

South East Waterways Ground Floor Witan Gate House 500-600 Witan Gate Central Milton Keynes MK9 1BW
T 01908 302500 F 01908 302510 E louise.mccarthy@britishwaterways.co.uk
www.britishwaterways.co.uk

So visitors can more easily find out about the different elements of the Foxton Locks site and their historic importance, visitor interpretation including signs and information boards will also be installed. Most of the work is planned for 2007, following consultation next year.

Other members of the Foxton Locks Partnership, especially Foxton Parish Council, were equally delighted at the funding news. The partners meet regularly to plan developments at Foxton Locks and raise funds.

Councillor Graham Hart of Harborough District Council, Vice Chair of the Foxton Locks Partnership, said: "A lot of hard work has already been put into the planning for the restoration and development of the Foxton Locks site. Achieving this Heritage Lottery funding will enable us to undertake works that are the first steps on the road to bringing the Inclined Plane boatlift back into full use.

"The planned development of Foxton Locks will lead to an increase in visitor numbers and support increased tourism for the district, whilst ensuring the needs of the local people are taken into account."

Mike Beech, Keeper of Foxton Canal Museum and Company Secretary of the Foxton Inclined Plane Trust, said: "I've been involved in efforts to restore the Inclined Plane since the early 1980s. This award is fantastic news. Our volunteers have been working so hard to raise funds and carry out works on site, this is just the boost we need.

"It is a major step forward towards the restoration. The Inclined Plane is an important part of our heritage, and the Foxton Locks Partnership is keen to see it conserved and restored as part of works to improve the whole Foxton Locks location."

The Partnership's application for Heritage Lottery funding was awarded Stage 1 approval in December 2003. The Stage 2 bid was submitted in December last year.

Work already undertaken to improve the Foxton Locks site has included the restoration of the site's Top Lock Cottage, which is to be opened as a refreshment centre for visitors, the building of a new car park and access road, the refurbishment of the Foxton Locks pub, which is due to open at the end of May, and the planting of 2,500 trees on the site at the end of last year.

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.

Media Enquiries

British Waterways Willow Grange Church Road Watford WD17 4QA
T 01923 201329 F 01923 201300 E pressoffice@britishwaterways.co.uk
www.britishwaterways.co.uk

Notes to editors

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.

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.

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