



12 July 2005

SIGN OF THE TIMES: Striking new welcome sign 'unveiled' at Foxton Locks

Seasonal lock keepers at Foxton Locks, more used to helping boats navigate through the lock gates of Foxton's famous staircase, have today 'unveiled' a striking new lock gate shaped welcome sign for the site.

The sign, which stands at over 15ft tall and is made of Forestry Stewardship Council sustainable timber, has been installed at the main entrance to the Foxton Locks site, which is visited by over 200,000 visitors a year and is one of Leicestershire's most popular tourist destinations.

The sign directs visitors around the site to Foxton's many attractions and facilities, including Foxton Locks Canal Museum, Foxton Boat Services and Vagabond Cruises, the recently opened Foxton Locks Inn, and the soon-to-open Coffee Stop, an information and refreshment centre that will be situated in the site's Top Lock Cottage.

British Waterways lock keepers Derek Turner and Dave Selby, who have been helping boaters through Foxton's famous double staircase of locks since the start of the summer boating season in March, 'unveiled' the new sign. Representatives from businesses at Foxton Locks, members of the Foxton Locks Partnership, and British Waterways staff also attended.

James Clifton, Chair of the Foxton Locks Partnership and Project Manager for British Waterways, said: "This striking new welcome sign is a great addition to the site. It will help the many visitors who come to Foxton Locks to orientate themselves on arrival and navigate their way around the many attractions and facilities that are available to them. "

In March, the Foxton Locks Partnership was awarded a Heritage Lottery Fund grant of £1.78 million, which with match funding will fund a planned £2.8 million, 3-year programme to improve access to and restore major elements of the Foxton Locks site.

British Waterways' innovative partnership with Scottish & Newcastle Pub Enterprises Ltd means that, when visitors buy drinks or enjoy a meal at the Foxton Locks Inn, a share of what they spend contributes to ongoing improvements to the waterways.

More follows...

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For more information on Foxton Locks and the Foxton Locks Partnership, visit www.foxtonlocks.com.

Ends

Press and media enquiries: Contact Louise McCarthy, Media & Communications Executive, South East Waterways, on 01908 302560 or 07917 373116, email louise.mccarthy@britishwaterways.co.uk.

THE LOCKS AT FOXTON LOCKS

Did you know...?

- Foxton's famous staircase lock flight was built in 1810.
- A masterpiece of 19th century engineering, the locks raise boats a massive 75ft up the hill from Market Harborough, and link the north and south of England by canal.
- The locks are arranged in two 'staircases' of five locks each - within each staircase, the top gates of one lock are the bottom gates of the next.
- It can take boaters a grand total of 45 minutes to complete the passage through the locks!
- This was one reason why, in 1900, the Foxton Inclined Plane Boat Lift was opened – ascending the lift took boats only 12 minutes from start to finish.
- However, financial pressures led to the closure of this engineering feat and, in 1911, canal traffic returned to the historic lock flight. The Foxton Inclined Plane Trust (www.fipt.org.uk) has campaigned for the restoration of the inclined plane, and works planned as a result of the £1.78 million Heritage Lottery Bid awarded to the Foxton Locks Partnership this year will help lay the groundwork for its restoration.
- When first built, the locks were lauded for their ingenuity, and the clever use of side ponds still saves considerable amounts of water today.
- Dave Selby and Derek Turner are part of a team of British Waterways lock-keepers that man the Foxton flight in the summer months, between 8am and 7pm, seven days a week.
- You will see boats passing through Foxton Locks on almost any day of the year, and at summer weekends it gets very busy!

Notes to editors

Digital images to accompany this news release are attached:

Image A: (l to r) Lock keepers Dave Selby & Derek Turner, Foxton Locks Inn landladies Stephanie Hamblin, Sandy Hamblin & Bob Hamblin, and Mike Beech of Foxton Locks Canal Museum.

Image B: (l to r) Murray Geddes (British Waterways), Dave Selby, Derek Turner, Bob Hamblin, Stephanie Hamblin, Mel Baylis (British Waterways), Sandy Hamblin, James Clifton & Mike Beech.

Image C: (l to r) James Clifton, Mel Baylis, Murray Geddes, Bob Hamblin, Derek Turner, Sandy Hamblin, Mike Beech, Stephanie Hamblin & Dave Selby.

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

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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.

The newly formed **Waterside Pub Partnership** is a first in the leisure retail sector. It brings together British Waterways' public remit for the care and upkeep of 2,000 miles of canals and rivers across the UK with Scottish & Newcastle Pub Enterprise's pub sector experience and expertise. Profits from the groundbreaking partnership, which is increasing visitors and enhancing recreation by the waterside, will directly contribute to the care and upkeep of the nation's 200-year old canals and rivers.

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