



PRESS RELEASE

11 October 2005

ENGINEERING WORK BEGINS AT FOXTON LOCKS

An exciting £2.8 million project to conserve and restore important historical features of the popular Foxton Locks site in Leicestershire will begin this week.

Owned and managed by British Waterways, Foxton Locks received a Heritage Lottery Fund grant of £1.78 million towards the three-year project earlier this year. Developments on site are being overseen by the Foxton Locks Partnership, a group of interested local partners, many of whom are also contributing financially to the project.

The initial programme of works will concentrate on improving the site's Bottom Basin, which once fed boats into the bottom of Foxton's famous Inclined Plane Boat Lift. The boat lift operated at the start of the 1900s, and was an amazing feat of Victorian engineering. It was originally built to replace the existing flight of locks and speed up the transit of boats to just 12 minutes – compared to the 45 minutes it takes boats to navigate the locks.

The Bottom Basin is now occupied by a number of permanent moorers, who have agreed to temporarily vacate the basin while the necessary works take place. The works, which will involve dewatering and dredging the basin and carrying out a full engineering inspection, will be completed in November.

James Clifton, Foxton Locks Project Manager for British Waterways, said: "This is the start of some very exciting work at Foxton, which has long been anticipated by members of the Foxton Locks Partnership. Thanks to the generous contributions of the Heritage Lottery Fund and our other project partners, these important works can now commence.

"Our thanks go to Foxton's boaters, residents and visitors for their patience while this work is carried out, and we hope they will be pleased with the improvements when the work is completed."

More follows...

South East Waterways

British Waterways Ground Floor Witan Gate House 500-600 Witan Gate
Central Milton Keynes MK9 1BW

T 01908 302500 F 01908 302510 E enquiries.southeast@britishwaterways.co.uk

www.britishwaterways.co.uk



Unlike rivers, which normally experience a constant flow of water, canal water can remain relatively still for long periods, particularly in areas such as canal basins. This can lead to the build up of dredgings on the canal floor which, over a number of years, can significantly reduce the depth of the canal.

In order to solve this problem, engineers need to drain the water from a short stretch of the canal. Once dewatered, plant machinery can enter the canal and scoop up the dredgings from the canal bed. This process can sometimes reveal hidden secrets of the canal's past, such as interesting artefacts from a bygone age, as layers of dredgings are removed. The work will be carried out by specialist dredging contractors, Land & Water Services Ltd.

Further improvements to the Bottom Basin will take place in the coming months, including the construction of a new building incorporating WCs, 'Elsan' and refuse disposal points for the use of visitors, permanent and visiting boaters. Future work will include a major engineering project to repair and rewater the currently disused top arm of the canal, which once fed boats into the top of the Inclined Plane Boat Lift.

Members of the Foxton Locks Partnership are keen to see that the remains of the Inclined Plane are preserved, in anticipation that one day the boat lift can be fully restored. For further information on the planned works, contact South East Waterways on 01908 302500 or email enquiries.southeast@britishwaterways.co.uk. For information on great days out at Foxton Locks, 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.

Notes to editors

- Digital images to accompany this news release are attached in the accompanying Word document. To be sent these images individually, please 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.
- 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.