

CALLAF meeting Stainton Aqueduct Lancaster Canal 16 July 2016 - Informal Report

After a formal meeting in Natland Village Hall, members viewed the restoration work on the Stainton Aqueduct on the Lancaster Canal over the Stainton Beck, being carried out by Kier Construction. The aqueduct was damaged in Storm Desmond in December 2015, which washed away the foundations, scoured the wall and distorted the arch and parapet of the aqueduct. After the storm the canal had to be dammed to isolate the aqueduct, and the Stainton Beck was diverted.



Martin Dean, Site Agent for Kier Construction, explained the ongoing repair work, joint with the Canal and River Trust, to rebuild the aqueduct. The original stones have been numbered and will be reused.

The public footpaths along the towpath, and down to the road, are temporarily stopped while work is in progress. It is hoped that the upper and lower footpaths can be linked by a ramp, as opposed to the old steps, when the restoration project is completed, hopefully by November 2019.



Members then walked past the road bridge which marks the current end of the watered section of the Lancaster to Kendal Canal (the 'black and white canal': coal moved north and limestone was transported south). Robin Yates of the Lancaster Canal Trust explained progress towards the vision for rewetting the canal. The first 'furlong' of the canal continuation has been excavated, triple lined and covered with concrete blocks. The canal is a 'receiving site' for water; this is currently delaying a stretch near the bridge as water seeping in has caused the excavated bank to collapse.





When refilled with water and checked for leakages by the Canal and River Trust the new stretch will be used by the Lancaster Canal Trust's trip boat *Waterwitch*. It is also hoped that the canal will be used by other 'trip boats', specially designed for use on severed canal branches. The canal towpath is a public footpath. Cyclists are tolerated but not horse riders, despite the irony that the canal boats were originally pulled by horses.



David Gibson of Cumbria County Council explained the 'Towpath Project' which is funded by Sport England through the Canal and River Trust. The towpath is to be levelled, as it originally sloped towards the canal, before re-surfacing works are carried out. It is also hoped to provide a ramp from the road bridge down to the towpath, and to create a circular walk eventually. The new stretch will enhance the local environment, creating new habitats and promote other pastimes such as fishing.

Members admired the ambition to extend the canal to Kendal.



Members were given a copy of *Waterways in Progress*, a publication by the Inland Waterways Association. This details the varied benefits for leisure and the environment that can accrue even before projects are completed.