

BUCKINGHAM CANAL SOCIETY

June 2009 – Briefing Document for Buckingham Local Area Forum
Meeting June

There was a meeting of councillors and interested parties on 20th January 2009 at which the possibility of using the Buckingham Canal as a means to alleviating floods in the Buckingham area was considered. Following discussion with those in attendance including the environment agency, the restoration of the canal was agreed to not be the full solution. It was however concluded that the Buckingham Canal Society (BCS) should seek help in terms of grant funding for a feasibility study for the canal restoration to contribute as it would act as a downstream flood reservoir.

At the February meeting of the BCS committee it was agreed that the time was now appropriate for the Society to move forward to requesting quotations for a detailed feasibility study for restoration of the canal. Work is now being undertaken by committee members to prepare a full specification for that study, which will include the contribution to flood alleviation measures. However, investigation into possible sources of funding for a full feasibility study has been unproductive as the criteria for funding bids seem to exclude such studies.

There are therefore limited possibilities for grant applications and it appears unlikely that, even were these all to be successful, that sufficient funds would be raised to augment the Society's currently earmarked funds up to the level which would meet the costs of a full feasibility study which are currently estimated at around £60,000.

As a result, the BCS committee has been looking into other possibilities of approaching this problem. It has been suggested that a "scoping study" could be carried out by a consultant with experience in waterway based engineering, as a first step towards a full feasibility study. It would look at the key restoration issues, inform the viability of the proposed restoration and set a framework for future detailed studies. It could include an economic baseline review and identify the key next steps to take the restoration forward. The cost of this study might be within the resources of the Society's current funds and, in the event of a positive outcome, would put the Society in a better position to make applications for grant-funding to move the project forward. Discussions are at an early stage.

Meanwhile the Society continues to raise awareness of the canal whilst maintaining and improving extant sections of the de-watered canal with regular work parties of volunteers at Bourton Meadow, Hyde Lane Nature Reserve, Little Hill Farm, and from Cosgrove to the A5. Work also continues towards the goal of re-watering the Bourton Meadow section in the next few years.