

Statement on Land Management and Environmental Issues.

General Statement.

The Trusts objective is to reinstate the Derby Canal to its original profile and route, as far as is possible, creating an aquatic corridor from the Erewash Canal in Sandiacre to the Trent and Mersey Canal at Swarkestone via Pride Park in Derby.

Following the abandonment of the canal in the 1960, the canal was largely filled in and maintained as a foot / cycle path. Along the line of the canal, approximately 7 miles of the original route has been acquired to the Derby and Sandiacre Canal Trust, out of the total 12.5 miles of the route. We need to maintain this canal route to ensure that it can be used and enjoyed by all, walkers, joggers, cyclist and horse riders. This entails the cutting of the grass, hedges, trees and the removal of any invasive or injurious weeds.

The actual restoration of the canal will involve civil engineering works to remove the material used to infill the canal. This will disturb the existing wildlife and the removal of the shrubs and trees that have been planted or self set in the route of the canal. However, before this can take place we are responsible for ensuring that the route is maintained, hedges trimmed and paths kept clear.

With the changing awareness of looking after the environment and wildlife, the Trust needs to reconsider their approach to how we manage the canal route.

What 'manage' means.

Hedgerows.

The Trust has planted thousands of sapling over the years to replace hedges that had previously been removed, or to infill the spaces where the hedgerow had been damaged or plants had died back. The saplings include hawthorn, dog rose, crab apple, hazel and dogwood. Planted and maintained in line with the recommendations of the Woodland Trust and The Conservation Volunteers / I Dig Trees.

These hedgerows, after a number of years have been or will be laid, and after they have grown and filled out, trimmed. This laid and trimmed hedge provides habitat for birds both during the nesting season and protection during the winter. Various trees will be left within the hedge to grow into 'standards' within the hedgerow line.

Where a hedge borders a path, the hedge will be regularly inspected to ensure that it does not cause harm to people and animals using the path. Fast growing brambles will be cut back if they encroach onto the paths.

Cutting of any hedge or tree will be carried out during the winter season from September to March, to ensure that nesting birds are not disturbed. If any work is required on a hedge or tree during the summer, for emergency action, then the hedge / tree will be checked to

ensure that no nests will be disturbed.

Saplings will be planted to repair or improve any hedgerows as required.

Trees.

All trees, whether purposely set along the boundary or self set on the canal route that are on land owned by the Trust will be inspected on a regular basis. This will establish if the tree is healthy or showing signs of stress. Trees that are deemed to be at risk will be removed or pruned to prevent possible injury to the public or damage to neighbouring properties. Branches will be removed that could harm the general public, cyclists and horse riders using the paths. Ensuring that roots do not pose a trip hazard to the public, cyclists or horse riders.

Non-native trees will be removed and all trees that are growing in the canal bed area will be removed to ensure that the root system does not damage the canal bed.

Trees that have been overgrown with ivy will be inspected to see if the ivy is causing rot in the trunk that may cause the tree to fall. A band will be cut in the ivy at ground level to help restore the trees health. The dieback period will enable any wildlife to find alternative habitat.

Saplings will be planted away from the canal bed to replace removed or dead trees as required.

Grass Areas and Weed Control.

Cutting of the grass areas will be different from site-to-site dependant on how the current area is used.

Following the abandonment of the canal, the in-filled areas have been allowed to grow wild in some areas, this has led to some invasive species and injurious weeds being allowed to grow. In others areas, they have been regularly mowed over the years to keep the areas clear to each side of the paths.

With the changing awareness to the environment and wildlife, we need to be aware of the habitat that has been created and how we should replace it after the canal has been restored.

To ensure that the edges of the paths are safe and weeds or brambles cannot cause harm the public, mowing will be initially limited to 1m each side of a path, or up to a hedge. Where it is possible for horse to use a section between the path and the ditch or restore canal, the grass will be mowed to ensure that they can see the ground.

On ground away from the path, a minimum 1m wide section will be left uncut against a hedge or fence. This section will only be cut in the Autumn with half to a third left untouched till the spring.

Where possible, some areas will be left uncut during the summer months and cut either in the Autumn or in the Spring. This again will vary from site to site.

Injurious weeds, as identified in the 1959 The Weed Act and updated by DEFRA April 2011, will be removed with care and the plants destroyed. It is noted that various insects, butterflies and bees use these plants, therefore they will be removed after flowering season and before they can set their seeds.

See - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/identification-of-injurious-weeds>

In some instances, weeds cannot be controlled by cutting, particularly when they could cause damage to structures. These will be treated with a herbicide by our trained and qualified volunteer.

Japanese Knotweed, is an invasive species and can only be destroyed by herbicidal treatment.

Himalayan Balsam is an invasive species which overpowers native plants. They will be physically pulled out of the ground before they can seed.

Banks of newly restored canals.

After all earthworks have been completed the disturbed soil will be seeded with suitable grass and plants to encourage the return of wildlife.

Areas already in water.

The trust will ensure that the banks are kept cleared of invasive weeds, in line with the above statement and that the edges of the banks are clearly visible.

Reeds and water borne weeds will be removed, as required, to prevent the water courses being blocked and flooding. Consideration will be given to areas that have wildlife present and during nesting season to ensure that the disruption is kept to minimum.

Conclusion.

The Trust will work with all organisations to ensure that the work performed by the volunteers is in line with current thinking on wildlife and land management to ensure that minimum damage is caused to nature while carrying out restoration work on the canal.

All work on the canal route will be carried out to ensure that the wildlife will have an-improved habitat with Biodiversity Net Gain at the forefront of our plans.