

# **The Somersetshire Coal Canal Society**

## **Trustees Annual Report**

Period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025



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Charity Registration No 1207513

Website [www.coalcanal.com](http://www.coalcanal.com)

# Chairman's Report

The Society has had a successful year and progress is being made with making the charity sustainable in the long term in order to continue to achieve our charitable objectives, as we have done in the last year.

I will highlight some of the significant achievements, all of which have been carried out by volunteers, whom I thank on behalf of everyone for their hard work.

Membership continues to grow and the Society has attracted significant donations to assist with the increasing costs of conservation and restoration, (tools, equipment and materials), running the Society and its events, together with further historical research.

The Society maintains a high profile in the public domain with our website at [www.coalcanal.com](http://www.coalcanal.com)

This website performs an educational function, publicises events to the public and members, also enabling easy contact with the Trustees.

We also have a strong presence with publicity in conventional and Social Media (e.g. Facebook and Instagram) so that members of the public and Society members are made aware of our activities.

Our outreach programme provides talks and guided walks for other groups such as Probus, WI and other history and canal societies. The Society also had stands at various local events to publicise our activities and make us available to the public. Trustees have increased their knowledge of the UK canal restoration and have links with the Canal & River Trust by attending training sessions and conferences. This is equivalent to Continuous Professional Development.

The administration system (including email and video conferencing) has been upgraded using Microsoft 365 free of charge by volunteers who are suitably qualified and experienced IT experts. We hope that this will avoid the glitches being experienced by other voluntary and commercial organisations.

The subject of the Local Plan is covered elsewhere. However I must state that many people were not aware of the B&NES policy HE2, adopted in 2017, which preserves the line of the Somersetshire Coal Canal and the Wansdyke. We are working hard on with the B&NES Planning Department in order to meet the second objective (i.e. conservation, protection and restoration) of our charitable aims.

Our Work Parties have had no Health & Safety Issues. In my view, they are excellent example of the equal opportunities available with the Society !

The Society's finances are in good shape as can be seen in the Financial Report. We live within our means. However, we will need substantial working capital (probably millions of pounds) in order to achieve restoration.

In addition to raising substantial funds, our future programme over the next decades will need to be linked to factors such as Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), climate change, potential for flood mitigation and water resource management.

In my view, our dynamic volunteers are well-placed to make progress toward the Society's ambitions.

## **Walks and Talks**

The Society provided a programme of Walks and Talks which are open to members of the public in order to make information which the Society holds available to those who are interested in this aspect of our heritage.

The guided walks along sections of the Canal were led this year by Roger Halse, Society Archivist. Roger always brought copious amounts of maps and photographs to illustrate the Canal, its history and context in the landscape. Attendees benefited from Roger sharing his knowledge and archives. The detailed and concise interpretation revealed much information which was new to many people. .

Some of the guided walks in were on private land to which we were allowed permissive access for which we thank the landowners. The Society emphasises the need for members of the public not to trespass as we have permissions to access almost all the remains of the Canal.

The illustrated talks were held at Paulton Village Hall, Somerset which is a short distance from the sections of the Canal which are in water. We included guest speakers on topics other than the Canal itself in 2024. They were reasonably well attended by members but did not attract many members of the public. Feedback from members has suggested that topics directly related to the SCC will be of greater interest in the future.

The Walks and Talks programme was well publicised in traditional and Social Media. This made them available to the public, raised the profile of the Society and promoted the benefits of our activities. Both the Walks and Talks were well-attended and attracted new members

All of these events are free of charge. The Society suggests donations, if affordable, to assist with covering costs such as hire of the Hall.

# Charity Structure

The Somersetshire Coal Canal Society was first registered as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation on 19<sup>th</sup> March 2024 with Charity Number 1207513.

It replaces the Unincorporated Organisation of the same name, Charity Number 1047303, which was first registered in May 1995.

The Society's objectives are:

- To advance the education of the general public in the history of the Somersetshire Coal Canal by carrying out historical research and by providing information in published documents and in public meetings.
- To promote the conservation, protection and restoration to a waterway of the physical and natural environment of the Somersetshire Coal Canal and its structures for the benefit of the general public.

The Society's registered office is:

40 Greenleaze  
Knowle Park  
Bristol BS4 2TL

The affairs of the CIO are managed by its Trustees, assisted by its Officers.

## Trustees

Derrick John Hunt (Chairman)

Martin John Turner (Secretary)

David Blair Chalmers (Treasurer)

Tracy Nicola Craven

Kathryn Laura Ford

All of the current trustees were appointed on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024.

The Society's constitution requires that there should be not less than three and not more than fifteen appointed trustees. Trustees are appointed for a term of three years but can apply for re-election.

Trustees are appointed by a resolution passed at a properly convened meeting of the charity trustees.

# Conservation and Restoration Activities

The Society actively supports the conservation of the historic structures that remain along the historic routes of the Somersetshire Coal Canal. It is also engaged in works to protect and restore the northern arm of the canal to a fully working waterway.

Regular work parties take place every Tuesday in the Combe Hay / Midford area and every Sunday at the Paulton / Timsbury terminus.

Over the past year our volunteers have worked for over 1,800 hours maintaining the canal environment and carrying out essential works.

## Combe Hay / Midford



At the Combe Hay Lock Flight the team works regularly on the management of vegetation within the lock pounds and stonework. Over the century or more since the canal was abandoned brambles and saplings have taken root in the canal bed and stonework. In many cases these have grown into bushes and trees that threaten the integrity of the flight.

Work parties this year have cleared invasive vegetation from the pounds of locks 12 to 15 creating a open, natural environment.

A program of repair and reinstatement of lock coping stones and other stonework that have become displaced by root growth or environmental decay over past years has been started. This work will stabilise the remaining lock structures and prevent further deterioration.



An additional task this year has been the removal of tree branches from the Wellow Brook that have washed downstream and lodged against the abutments of the already-restored Midford Aqueduct.

A public footpath runs alongside of locks 11 to 15 of the Combe Hay Flight and so an added benefit of this work is that it opens up of the views of the flight increasing the public appreciation of this magnificent heritage asset.



## **Paulton / Timsbury Basin**

The Somersetshire Coal Canal terminates in two basins; Paulton basin and Timsbury basin. Here the company constructed a range of buildings and a Wharfinger's house, all of which have since been demolished. However, the basins themselves, although dilapidated, are still there and hold water.

Over the past year the Paulton work party have removed extensive reed blockages from the in-water section of canal between the two basins. This stretch of the canal is full of wildlife, including dragonflies, ducks, moorhens and a pair of swans and so particular care has been taken to avoid disturbing potential nesting positions while removing the reed blockages. The return of Spring has seen wildlife flourishing again in this section of the canal.



Immediately to the east of Paulton Basin Terminus Bridge allowed towing horses to cross the canal to reach Timsbury Basin. This bridge was also demolished many years ago but work party volunteers are currently rebuilding the abutment walls and an adjoining sluice so that the section of the canal in-water can be extended through this bridge opening into an already-excavated stretch of the canal.

A unique structure at Paulton Basin is the remains of a Dry Dock capable of holding three boats abreast. This was excavated in previous years but requires regular maintenance by work party volunteers to avoid further deterioration and a build up of vegetation within it.



## **Protecting the Route**

The Society is fortunate in that the historic line of the canal is designated a Heritage Asset by Bath and North East Somerset Local Authority and is protected from development by Planning policy HE2, introduced in 2017.

To minimise the potential impact of our restoration activities on local landowners the Society has recently submitted an application, as part of the current Local Plan consultation, for several small diversions to this protected area where dwellings had already been constructed on the historic line of the canal before the policy came into effect. Our proposal is currently being considered as part of the full Local Plan public consultation.

# Financial Review

We show a surplus of £440.25 after transferring £2,300 to our General reserve. So a good year financially.

Subscriptions were up slightly, in part as more people now pay the correct subscription. Donations were significantly up this year but this is always a fluctuating amount. The Newsletter costs fell because we published less issues in this financial year.

Sales remain strong, mainly the walk booklet, and no new stock was bought this year. Interest is our return on the Investments we hold, these Investments fell slightly this year. If it had been valued a week later, with all the turmoil in the financial markets, I think the fall would have been bigger.

The expenses from our various funds are shown below general expenditure. These movements are mirrored on our balance sheet. We have a strong balance sheet and so as a Society we are in a strong position.

## Income and Expenditure for year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025

<b>Unrestricted Funds</b>			
<b>Income</b>		<b>2025</b>	<b>2024</b>
	Subscriptions and Gift Aid	4,194	3,966
	Donations	1,390	522
	Talks and Walks	429	544
	Interest	88	84
	Investment value - Increase		356
		<b>6,102</b>	<b>5,472</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>			
	Weigh-House magazine	1,310	2,038
	Walks and Talks	335	259
	Marketing	320	704
	Insurance	390	390
	Restoration	520	608
	Administration	431	539
	Investment value - Decrease	56	
	Transfer to General Reserve	2,300	
		<b>5,662</b>	<b>5,038</b>
	<b>Surplus</b>	<b>440</b>	<b>434</b>
<b>Restricted Funds</b>			
	Research project - Grant		550
	Research project - Expenditure	252	
	Research project - Transfer	-252	-550
		<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
	Paulton / Timsbury / Camerton - Donation	10,000	
	Paulton / Timsbury / Camerton - Transfer	-10,000	
		<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
	Terminus Bridge Project - Expenditure	1,298	3,348
	Terminus Bridge Project - Transfer	-1,298	-3,348
		<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
	<b>Surplus for the year</b>	<b>440</b>	<b>434</b>

## Statement of Assets & Liabilities as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025

Unrestricted Funds			2025	2024
Income & Expenditure Reserve	Balance brought forward	2,028		
	Surplus for the year	440		
	Balance at 31 <sup>st</sup> March		<b>2,469</b>	<b>2,028</b>
General Reserve	Balance brought forward	10,350		
	Transfer this year	2,300		
	Balance at 31 <sup>st</sup> March		<b>12,650</b>	<b>10,350</b>
Restricted Funds				
Canal Project Fund	Balance brought forward	1,554		
	Transfer to Terminus Bridge Project	-1,554		
	Balance at 31 <sup>st</sup> March		<b>0</b>	<b>1,554</b>
Terminus Bridge Project	Balance brought forward	2,245		
	Transfer from Canal Bridge Project	1,554		
	Expenditure	-1,298		
	Balance at 31 <sup>st</sup> March		<b>2,501</b>	<b>2,245</b>
Research Project	Balance brought forward	550		
	Expenditure	-252		
	Balance at 31 <sup>st</sup> March		<b>298</b>	<b>550</b>
Paulton, Timsbury and Camerton Fund	Income	10,000		
	Balance at 31 <sup>st</sup> March		<b>10,000</b>	<b>0</b>
			<b>27,919</b>	<b>16,728</b>
Net cash available			23,879	12,632
Investment CAF Capital Growth Fund			4,040	4,096
<b>Total Funds</b>			<b>27,919</b>	<b>16,728</b>

## Declaration

This report has been approved by the Society's Trustees on 23 May 2025 and signed on their behalf by :



Derrick Hunt  
Chairman