

FRIENDS OF HOCKLEY VIADUCT

NEWSLETTER No. 10

Well, I had to pinch myself when, following the Jubilee long weekend, the company Avon Construction actually began what we've all been waiting for – the restoration of the Hockley Viaduct!

Yes, it seems unbelievable, doesn't it, that after nearly 5 decades the necessary work to bring new life to our viaduct has finally begun. Not an easy task either – the bricks all need to be individually removed since the old mortar is still very effective although criss-crossed with roots from all the vegetation which was the main cause of the deterioration.

Replacement blue coping bricks have been made to fill in the gaps and all the bricks are being carefully stacked till they're needed. All the vegetation has been removed and the trackbed is now clear. It was amazing to stand at one end of the viaduct and see how long and wide it is – with all the vegetation removed it just looks so much longer and wider!

On the day that the builders moved on to the site your committee, accompanied by several of you Friends, joined with Nick Farthing of Sustrans, Cllr Mel Kendall of the County Council, and a couple of officers from the City Council for a photo-shoot.

We managed the necessary half hour without any rain, much to everyone's pleasure and surprise, and the photo is on the Home page of our website. Even more exciting than that was our invitation to take part in the BBC TV South programme at the end of July. This gave us a chance to express our delight at how the three producers of the necessary funding have worked so hard together to finalise this first step of the restoration. The link to the programme is [here](#) if you didn't catch it on television at the time.

The summer's been mixed weather-wise, needless to remind you, what with virtually the whole of June and July providing enough rain to keep any number of ducks happy, but at least August and September perked up for the Olympics and all our outside activities, though not being able to walk across the viaduct was sad. However the work must be finished by the end of March next year since the funding is time-restricted, so it's well worth the wait. By next summer we should all be able to indulge our love of this local structure and walk across it with ease.

There will be 2 or 3 “viewing” areas in the wall of the side closest to the City so that one can look across the water meadows and enjoy the views that previously could only be enjoyed from the train itself! Many memories will be revived for some of you, I fancy.

Since both August and September were relatively dry months the contractors were able to get on well with the work and their next part of the project has been to start the creation of the ramp needed to join the viaduct to the cycle route system at the end of St Cross Road.

Your committee is about to enter talks with the City Council project team about what signage and information boards will be needed next year for the official opening of the viaduct – one of the things that our small pot of funds will help to provide. We’re still in negotiations over the lattice post which needs to be shortened and then welded back on to the bottom of the original post on the viaduct. We bought the signal and its post but it’s too long and is awaiting the skills of welders to enable it to be brought back to life here in Hampshire. Originally this post was based in the ground whilst ours was erected on the edge of the viaduct’s walls.

If any of you have strong views about the signage and boards do get in touch with Julia a.s.a.p. – all your input is most welcome and will be put to the Council’s team as soon as possible.

We’re well into winter now and so opportunities for us all to get out and about are more limited, but keep your eyes on the Hampshire Chronicle – their reporters are particularly good at putting any news about the viaduct in the paper.

Your committee wishes you a splendid Christmas and New Year (I know it seems a long way away!) and thank you as always for your continued support and commitment to the Hockley Viaduct.

Contact the Secretary and Treasurer Julia Sandison on 01962 867490 with any queries or for further information, or email her on julia@ntcom.co.uk

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