

At last the restoration starts!

After so many years of campaigning to keep the Viaduct at the forefront of the minds of those who're in a position to do something about its condition, our patience has finally been rewarded – the Hockley Viaduct is being restored!

The walls are being cleared of all the roots of the damaging vegetation (a long hard job), the trackbed has been cleared right back to the concrete, and the positions of the new viewing panels towards the City have been marked out on the brickwork.

The scaffolding has most cleverly been erected so that it “hangs” from just above the trackbed in order to avoid it sinking into the ground on which the Viaduct stands. As many of you will know, that field is extremely boggy!



To make up for the blue engineering coping bricks which were stolen or broken in the attempt to remove them back in the 1960s/70s, replacements have been made and they and all other bricks are being carefully stacked ready for re-use. As you'll know from our Newsletters, we have the history of both varieties of brick used on the Viaduct and it is good to know that so many are still useable. The workmen are finding it a slow job removing the roots since the old mortar is very hard and they have to remove each brick in order to remove the network of roots that appear to be entirely woven into the fabric of the structure.

Our grateful thanks for the start of this great new phase of the Hockley Viaduct must go to Chris Webb and Dr. Edwin Course who tried valiantly to persuade English Heritage to list the structure for over 2 decades; Nick

Farthing of Sustrans who has worked tirelessly over the years to ensure that the Viaduct can become part of National Cycle Network Route 23 and of course George Beckett, the recently-retired Leader of the Conservative City Councillors, for his determination to provide funds.

We must also remember the Friends of Hockley Viaduct themselves whose interest and support have provided the voice necessary to keep pestering the people in power – this is a triumph for all of us.

And finally let's remember too that local architect Michael Carden wrote to the Army in the 1980s to inform them that though they'd been requested by the City Council to blow up the Viaduct, the people of Winchester didn't want that to be done – Field Marshall Lord Bramall of Bushfield replied that the Army never became involved in a local controversial matter, so the Viaduct was safe!



Several of us were interviewed recently by the BBC TV South Today team, so why not take a look at the footage – it was transmitted on Monday July 30th 2012.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-dorset-19069418>