

## WBCT Swindon Branch Meeting March 2025 – Work Party Activities

Since the last report in early Feb there has continued to be an excellent turnout for the work parties on both Wednesdays and Sundays with another 2 new starters joining the team.

The brighter weather has also helped with improved working conditions despite a few very cold starts in the morning! With heavy rain on one Wednesday, the work party was moved to Friday and turned out to be a productive day.

February started with leak repairs at Rushey Platt. After heavy rain and an increase in the water level, a leak could clearly be seen flowing through the bank. Many clay-filled sandbags were used to rebuild the bank and backfill with more clay. The sandbags were also reinforced with wooden



posts as the new bank began to slip back into the canal. All the work was done over the course of a couple of weeks and when the next heavy rain resulted in another rise in water levels, there was no leak through the bank.

Work has also continued on clearing the towpath edges and hedges to keep it clear from debris and as wide as possible for all passing traffic.



The improved weather meant that we could finally get the pontoon on the water to clear



overhanging bushes and trees on the far bank. We also had a number of dead trees to clear along the towpath side of the canal.

Our chainsaw operator (Mark) joined us on a couple of occasions which meant that we were able to clear a large quantity of overhanging trees, brambles and other vegetation on both sides of the canal before the nesting season began on 1<sup>st</sup> March.

I mentioned in the last report that funding had been secured for resurfacing a section of the towpath near Beavan's bridge. Planning is now underway to acquire all the materials and equipment needed for this work.

Preparation has also started with clearing the bank of vegetation to ensure that the bank is stable. This clearing work involves using the work boat on the water as well as clearing from the bank. There is evidence of leaks in this section which need to be addressed in the coming weeks.



The bank repairs at Rushey Platt were due to take place at Easter this year with a WRG (Waterway Recovery Group) team joining us to lead this activity. This has now been rescheduled for September/October, but preparation continues with number of tasks in progress. One of these tasks is to build a bund (dam) across the canal so that we can lower the water level in the area needed. We met with the contactors who have created similar bunds at East Wichel and we now have a revised design and location for the bund.

After a break over winter, we now have more corporate days planned starting with two arranged for mid-March. Due to the number of new starters over the last six months, our supply of PPE has diminished so we have needed to order more hard hats and hi-viz to cover the numbers expected at the corporate events. We also have an increasing number

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of items including PPE, equipment and materials needed for our ongoing work.

These will be funded from a mixture of central funds and branch funds. We will shortly be ordering a number of items including a work trolley and wheelbarrow now that branch funding has been agreed for these.

See the list at the end of this report for items/expenditure required.

We have just had the great news that the agreement to restart our work at Mouldon Hill is in the final stages and we should be able to begin during March. We can now plan our work party approach to work in this area. More details in the next report.

Henry Sullivan – Work Party Organiser

Items required for Work Party		
Item	Notes	Budget
Wheelbarrow	Agreed through branch	Branch
Trolley	Agreed through branch	Branch
Broom	Extra broom	Branch
Hedge cutter servicing	Existing hedge cutter	Central servicing
Winch cable	Replacement for existing cable	Branch (may be shared with West Vale)
Spare wheels	Wheels for wheelbarrows and	Branch or central servicing
Life Preservers	3 more needed	Central PPE
Metal Sign Posts	For signs at Mouldon Hill	Branch
Waders	2 more needed	Central PPE
Broom/tool handles	Pack of 5	Branch
Yellow marker paint spray		Branch
Soap & Cleaning materials	For welfare unit	Branch
Anti-bacterial spray	For re-used hats and clothing (corporate and general)	Branch