

August 2010

Grantham Canal News Sheet

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1. Battle for Mann's Bridge:

This extended edition of 'BRIDGE' is dedicated to 'The Battle for Mann's Bridge' (Bridge 16) at Stragglethorpe. The Transport Minister has now issued his decisions concerning those aspects of the A46 Newark to Widmerpool Improvement scheme which were the subject of a Public Inquiry held at Cotgrave between January and April this year – and also the case made by the Grantham Canal Partnership (GCP) regarding the impact of A46 works on the canal at Mann's Bridge 16.

The Grantham Canal was not originally on the agenda for the Public Inquiry but, following an approach made by the GCP, Inspector Bill Wadrup agreed to hear our case on grounds of 'natural justice'. Honorary Secretary Peter Stone, British Waterways Regeneration Manager Tony Harvey, Cllr Neil Clarke, Leader of Rushcliffe Borough Council and Consultant Engineer Phil Walker of OPUS represented the Partnership at the Inquiry – and a number of other people spoke in the canal's support.

We think that you should all have the opportunity to read what Inspector Wadrup made of our case and then the letter received from Parliamentary Under Secretary of State Mike Penning MP – and to draw your own conclusions. Both documents are being published verbatim – which explains the length of this newsheet – but we suggest that the subject deserves your attention. [We have also omitted the usual colourful BRIDGE photographs, to contain the size of this electronic document.]

Whatever you do, please don't miss the 'What Next?' section at the end of this BRIDGE

The Grantham Canal section of the Inspector's Report

8 THE CASE FOR THE GRANTHAM CANAL PARTNERSHIP THE HIGHWAYS AGENCY'S RESPONSE AND CONCLUSIONS TO BE DRAWN ON THE CASE

The material points were:

Mr Peter Stone, Mr Tony Harvey (British Waterways), Councillor Neil Clarke (Regional Assembly Board Member), Mr Philip Walker of OPUS, all on behalf of the Grantham Canal Partnership.

- 8.1 The Partnership is an alliance of the Grantham Canal Society, the three County Councils of Leicestershire, Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire, the Melton Borough Council, the Rushcliffe Borough Council, the Kesteven District Council, British Waterways and Natural England. The Partnership has widespread support and community interests stretching over 33 miles from Grantham to Nottingham. The full case for the Partnership is set out at OBJ/010/2, OBJ/010/7 and OBJ/10/1.
- 8.2 At the Inquiry the Partnership was solely concerned with its recent realisation of how serious an impact the Made Orders for the A 46 scheme would have on the reinstatement of the disused canal. In particular it is anxious about the threat to its proposals for the reinstatement of navigation at the at Stragglethorpe Road. The

impact of the scheme at this location is a major threat to the universally appreciated endeavours to reopen the canal over its whole length. This is felt by the Partnership to be all the more annoying because these endeavours have been recognised by the Highways Agency and Secretaries of State in their promotion and approval of the Made Orders for the scheme elsewhere, where a large navigational clearance bridge is to be constructed as part of the A46 scheme.

- 8.3 The Partnership appreciates that some evidence in respect of the impact that the A46 scheme would have on the canal was presented to the Inspector at the 2007 Inquiry. It is regrettable that the Partnership did not make thorough representations at that time, although the written evidence of British Waterways made it clear that it would sustain an objection to any works that would threaten canal reinstatement. This is recorded at paragraph 6.97 of the 2007 Inquiry Inspector's report but not carried forward into his conclusions, because he appears to have formed the view at his paragraph 9.86 that "aspects of the design affecting the canal had been satisfactorily resolved". But the Partnership is now convinced that, at the 2007 Inquiry, the Highways Agency could not have spelt out the full impact of the works at Stragglethorpe Road because had it done so, the Inspector's recommendation to the Secretaries of State would have been different from that contained in his report. The Partnership now realises that road works at Stragglethorpe Road would make future bridging of the canal impracticable and/or prohibitively expensive. The Partnership has been lulled into a false sense of security by the Highways Agency and its earlier assurances.
- 8.4 Because of the clear recognition at the earlier Inquiry of the need to preserve practicable restoration of the canal in the wider public interest, the Secretaries of State took decisions to make the Orders in the belief that restoration would not be impeded. It is now clear that the decision making process has been flawed. With the A46 scheme having been accelerated as a result of the Fiscal Stimulus Package the issue has been exacerbated, and because the speed and efficiency with which the contractor is working there is little time left to sort out the Stragglethorpe Road area, to enable canal restoration to be able to proceed in due course. Therefore the Partnership, through this Inquiry, seeks to alert and inform Ministers of the true position, so that remedial actions can be directed in the public interest.
- 8.5 The Partnership accepts that the Supplementary draft Orders before this second Inquiry would not affect the canal. They have no wish to frustrate them. However, the practical and economic difficulties arising from the earlier Orders at Stragglethorpe Road could be summarised as:
- Stragglethorpe Road is currently a straight road crossing the canal at right angles and at low level (the original bridge over the canal having been demolished). With the Made Orders, Stragglethorpe Road would be curved to the east to link into a new low-level roundabout, which, crucially, is being located relatively close to the canal boundary. Any canal bridging would therefore be made more difficult because highway forward visibility standards across the curved alignment could not be achieved within the available highway land.
 - To comply with horizontal highway standards any new bridge across the canal would therefore need to be wider than the original, or one needed simply to bridge the canal. It would need to be located to enable adequate forward horizontal visibility to the roundabout to be provided. That would be expensive and that additional expense would be a direct result of the A46 scheme.
 - In addition, the encroachment of the new A46 junction roundabout relatively close to the canal (it halves the available space) makes the achievement of satisfactory vertical highway alignment standard (over the top of a new canal overbridge) virtually impossible, or at least hugely expensive, because of structural retaining wall costs and service diversions.
 - The A46 scheme, when complete, will increase traffic flows along Stragglethorpe Road by 2.4 times the current flow. That would make traffic management associated with a canal bridge reinstatement very difficult and much more expensive and potentially unacceptable to the Local Highway Authority. Land and space for local diversion of the road, including temporary crossing of the canal would be difficult to acquire and be very expensive.
 - In accordance with the Orders made following the 2007 Inquiry the Highways Agency has proceeded to construct field access roads immediately adjacent to the canal towpath on both sides of Stragglethorpe Road. That is contrary to the earlier Inspector's report (at his paragraph 6.102) and also contrary to an Agency commitment to British Waterways of 24 July 2007, to reshape the details of the original proposals to facilitate a future canal bridge. These access roads seriously restrict the practicality of a future canal bridge construction and would add cost to otherwise viable solutions.
 - The balancing pond, which has been constructed south of Stragglethorpe Road, could further impede canal restoration.
 - The proposed Toucan crossing could be removed from the scheme to pass beneath the canal bridge, should one be constructed. That would improve pedestrian crossing facilities and remove cost, should the canal bridge be built.
 - Should the canal bridge not be constructed now, any future, widespread and difficult construction would render much of the current A46 construction abortive. That would be against the wider popular public interest.
- 8.6 The Partnership, following professional engineering advice, is convinced that, should the A46 scheme at Stragglethorpe Road be amended now, a practicable and cost effective solution could be engineered, which would preserve restoration of the canal. Such a solution would incorporate a precast concrete culvert suitable for walking, cycling and navigation into the current A46 scheme. That would cost in the region of £300,000-£500,000, whereas in future (for the reasons set out above) such a solution would cost between £3 million and £5 million and render the restoration scheme unaffordable, thereby ruining the whole canal restoration

project and the £7m of public money already invested into it. That would be a direct result of the effect of the A46 scheme and Ministers should be made aware of it.

8.7 If action was undertaken soon, there would be a practicable scheme which would involve lowering the canal level beneath the raised Stragglethorpe Road by the introduction of a lock just upstream of the Stragglethorpe Road bridge and that would necessitate raising Stragglethorpe Road over the bridge by about only 1.75m. The advantage of that would be that the canal bridge scheme could be curtailed within the boundary of the highway, British Waterway land or made CPO, with just one exception. The canal lowering works would cost about £300,000.

8.8 The Partnership would fund the canal lock-lowering project in due course but the Highways Agency should fund the works needed to bridge over the canal now because its scheme causes the substantial extra costs that would be involved. It is publicly unacceptable for the Agency to refuse funding simply because the particular internal scheme budget has not allowed adequately for the consequences of the scheme which should have been spelt out at the 2007 Inquiry. Best value for the total public purse should override individual scheme budgets. If necessary, funding the works, which are desperately needed now, could be met by reducing the span of the adjacent Fosse Way (Bridge 18) canal over bridge, which, obviously, has been over designed and its construction would be a waste of public money. The A46 scheme should be urgently value engineered at that location. Further cost savings would accrue from the removal of the Toucan crossing from the scheme as it would be redundant should the canal be bridged. The Nottinghamshire County Council would favour that on grounds of safety, maintainability and sustainability.

8.9 In effect, should the Highways Agency not agree to carry out the necessary Stragglethorpe Road works now it has to be concluded that the A46 dualling scheme has stopped the restoration of the Grantham Canal and therefore would run contrary to a series of Government policies set down by Ministers. These are:

- PPG 13.
- Defra: Waterways for Everyone.
- DMRB: Waterways for Tomorrow, and also be contrary to the
- Rushcliffe Borough Council's Draft Local Plan.

8.10 In its evidence in response to the 2007 Inquiry, the Highways Agency only referred to the Stragglethorpe Road bridge sparingly and in the following ways:

- "A non-motorised user crossing of Stragglethorpe Road would be provided". This is a reference to the Pelican crossing.
- Farm accesses, stating that these are: "lesser issues should a new bridge be eventually planned. However HA would look to reshape the accesses at the detailed design stage where possible within the scope of the CPO as discussed with British Waterways on 21 February 2007." The Highways Agency has not done so.
- "The Highways Agency does not intend to locate a site compound in the canal area." It has done just that.
- "The Highways Agency would confirm that the scheme would allow for future reinstatement of the canal to navigable status.... Stragglethorpe Road would be unaffected by the scheme at the point where it crosses the canal." As explained, this is evidently not true because the knock on effect of the scheme immediately adjacent to the canal is significant.

8.11 The way forward is for the Partnership to work with the Highways Agency and its contractor. The Partnership already has the backing of the Rushcliffe Borough Council, which recognises, and is a champion of, best value for money and the huge environmental benefit of linking up the whole of the 33 miles (53 km).

Supporters of the Canal Partnership and project

Councillors Neil Clarke, Tina Combellack and John Greenwood, Mr John Bryden, Chairman of the Canal Society, and Mr Geoff Earl

8.12 The representatives of the Rushcliffe Borough Council and the Hickling and Cropwell Bishop Parish Councils respectively fully support the Partnership. Despite the matter receiving some attention at the 2007 Inquiry it is now proven that a full 3.5m headroom clearance bridge carrying Stragglethorpe Road over the canal cannot be achieved, consistent with the engineering levels and locations specified by the Made Orders. The earlier inquiry evidence was wrong to have indicated otherwise and misleading to the Inspector. However, lower headroom providing 1.75m clearance would be practicable providing construction is undertaken as part of the current construction contract in order to avoid hideous abortive costs and exaggerated and unaffordable future costs of having to deal with Stragglethorpe Road traffic, structures and diversions subsequently. It is simply common sense, in economic, social and engineering terms to locally halt the current contract and instruct a redesign at Stragglethorpe Road. As the Rushcliffe Borough Council will soon be approving more homes in the area the recreational demand for the canal will grow. It is important for the local economy. It should be possible to lower the canal using locks for £200,000-£300,000 and raise the money privately. This together with the Highways Agency bridging Stragglethorpe Road would enable the blockade to the whole project being removed for the benefit of all (OBJ/010/3, OBJ/O10/4, OBJ/010/5, OBJ/010/6).

Mr Andrew Doherty and Mr Graham Moreland

8.13 There are a number of materials and techniques that the contractor could deploy in order to save costs in bridging over the canal as part of the current works. These would be expedient in terms of cost and time of construction. The cost of bridging the canal at Fosse Way is about £2.119 million but at Stragglethorpe Road that cost could be reduced to little more than £80,000. The Fosse Way canal bridge has been over designed for no good reason. It is crucial that the restoration of the canal is not destroyed by the A46 project and action should ensue now to prevent this injustice.

Written Support for the Canal Partnership

Reverend Stephen Parish

8.14 Ambiguities arose at the first Inquiry, which led to misunderstanding about the effect of the scheme on the canal. This is evident from the submission of the Rushcliffe Borough Council, which clearly pointed out the potential impact on the canal in its criticism of the vertical alignment of the dual carriageway, yet the Highways Agency side-stepped the issue in its response to the 2007 Inquiry (OBJ/010/9).

The Nottinghamshire Access Forum

8.15 The Access Forum, a statutory independent body, recognises the urgent need to incorporate a canal bridge in the scheme at Stragglethorpe Road to safely deal with pedestrians crossing the road from the canal towpath (OBJ/010/4).

Interested Party

Mr Richard Scriven on behalf of Mr Clifford and Mr Steven and Mrs Pauline Ablewhite

8.16 Mr and Mrs Ablewhite own land adjacent to Stragglethorpe Road, of which about 15 ac (6 ha) is served by the recently provided field access of the road. They stress that whatever the future of the canal, restoration of which is not opposed, such access would need to continue and be safe for all including slow moving agricultural vehicles (OBJ/010/8).

[The Highways Agency's Response to the Grantham Canal Partnership](#)

8.17 This is set out in detail at Document S1/R/10/1. The Grantham canal is not directly physically affected by the Supplementary Orders before the Inquiry. It is accepted that the project to restore the canal has gathered pace since the 2007 Inquiry closed and that the Fiscal Stimulus Package has accelerated the A46 project. That has reduced the window of opportunity for discussions with the Partnership. However, the restoration of the canal at Stragglethorpe Road, and the bridging of the canal at that location, is not directly threatened by the scheme, which will not prevent future restoration and therefore the need to address the situation is not critical.

8.18 The Agency does not accept that the case was not fully explored at the 2007 Inquiry, or that the matter was left unresolved. British Waterways clearly had every opportunity to object to the scheme at the 2007 Inquiry. It only submitted written evidence.

8.19 It is accepted that the restoration project may be made more difficult to achieve because of the adjacent new road but it would not be an absolute impossibility. It is also accepted that future restoration of the canal would result in some of the A46 works currently under construction being removed between the Stragglethorpe Road roundabout and the point of tie in.

8.20 As some form of future bridging of the Stragglethorpe Road would not be impossible it follows that the scheme accords with but offends no Government Policies in that regard.

8.21 The Stragglethorpe Road roundabout is currently being constructed above the existing road, thereby helping to achieve an acceptable vertical profile across a future canal bridge. It is accepted that traffic flows on Stragglethorpe Road would double as a consequence of the scheme to about 10,800 vehicles per day in 2016. Temporary traffic diversions would therefore be necessary in order to build a bridge over the canal, with or without the A46 scheme, and the County Council would be amenable to that. It is not accepted that further diversionary works for services would be prohibitively expensive. It is accepted that access tracks to the adjacent land have already been constructed without amendments to the design (contrary to undertakings at the earlier Inquiry), because only recently have bridge details been received from British Waterways. It is also accepted that the opportunity to reduce the impact on a future bridge has therefore been lost because some adjustment of the access would have been possible. The balancing pond adjacent to Stragglethorpe Road would not affect bridge proposals.

8.22 In general it is accepted that there would be additional work associated with a new canal bridge because of the A46 scheme and some abortive work in respect of earth works, landscaping, surfacing and the Toucan crossing.

8.23 Funding for the bridging of the canal would not be met by the Highways Agency. The cost of bridging the canal with headroom of only 1.75m as part of the current A46 scheme would be about £900,000 and the costs of building such a structure after completion about £1.2 million. Therefore there would, overall, be a saving of about £300,000 if the bridge were built as part of the overall A46 scheme. It is accepted that other necessary costs associated with the lowering of the canal and locks would be in addition to this, and a direct result of the A46 scheme.

8.24 Should agreement be reached to improve Stragglethorpe Road and bridge the canal, it would still be necessary to publish further Supplementary Orders for such an activity. These would cost about £85,000. The current construction programme envisages completion of works local to Stragglethorpe Road, by June 2010 and well before the likely authority to proceed with any bridge works could be achieved.

[Conclusions in respect of the Grantham Canal Partnership's case](#)

8.25 Having regard to the technical evidence of the Grantham Canal Partnership, its supporters and the Highways Agency, and having had the advantage of reading the earlier Inquiry Inspector's report and visited Stragglethorpe Road in the company of the main parties and observed the construction activities, I have formed the following views. Reference is given in square brackets [] to the relevant paragraphs above.

8.26 The Made Orders for the A46 scheme provide full authority for the current contract under construction in the vicinity of the canal. None of the draft Supplementary Orders before the Inquiry would directly affect the canal because the construction works stop just short of the canal boundary [8.3, 8.17].

- 8.27 The proposals for the restoration 33 miles (53 km) of the Grantham canal have and continue to receive widespread support from National and Local Authorities and the public. Such a scheme is clearly underpinned by various National and Local Planning policies [8.1, 8.9, 8.13-8.15].
- 8.28 The 2007 Inquiry had some regard for the effect that the scheme would have on the canal at Stragglethorpe Road but, despite notice having been given, no appearance was made at that Inquiry on behalf of the Canal Partnership, although some written evidence was submitted to it by British Waterways, and responded to by the Highways Agency. It seems to me that, as it now emerges, earlier written evidence (on behalf of either party) may not have been sufficient to draw out the necessary detail in order to cover all aspects of the practical effect of the scheme on the canal. From the records it is difficult to be conclusive on this point. I am satisfied though that the detailed submissions made to this Inquiry, and the testing of them, fully exposes the issues between the parties [8.3, 8.4, 8.17, 8.18].
- 8.29 The A46 scheme will not physically affect the Grantham Canal, other than to a minor degree. Even so, it is quite clear that the scheme would have an indirect and substantial impact upon the potential engineering options for future bridging of the canal at Stragglethorpe Road. These effects would make future bridging, and thereby complete canal restoration, significantly more difficult to deal with than the position that would have existed had no A46 scheme come forward. In coming to this opinion I have had regard to the relative position and level of the new roundabout relative to the canal, necessary service diversions, earthworks and field accesses, the undisputed need for highway visibility standards to be achieved, the environment of the area and the general confinement of the site.
- 8.30 It is obvious that because of the juxtaposition of the canal and the new Stragglethorpe roundabout full 3.5 m headroom clearance over the canal is now impracticable, having regard to the required highway standards and the position of the new roundabout (and its level). Reduced headroom over the canal of 1.75m would be practicable, but the future functioning of the canal would thereby rely on lowering it and the provision of locks. That would be bound to be expensive for those promoting restoration, although practically achievable.
- 8.31 It follows that the A46 scheme would have a serious and costly affect on the future bridging of the canal and necessitate expensive lowering of it. In my opinion, and having regard to the competing evidence on this particular point, this additional expenditure, over and above that which would have been necessary should the A46 scheme not have been built, could amount to a total figure in the order of £0.75 million - £1 million.
- 8.32 Should bridging of the canal have been incorporated in the A46 scheme from the start that would have resulted in a substantially cheaper overall solution than one that would be, in future, practicable. In my view it is probable that a saving somewhat in excess of £300,000 would have been made. If the canal was bridged as part of the current contract there would be offsetting savings arising from the removal of the then unnecessary Toucan crossing. I am also persuaded that there is an apparent cost saving which could be made through value engineering of the adjacent canal bridge No. 18 at Fosse Way. No evidence was brought forward to show that such a saving could not be achieved [8.2, 8.5-8.7, 8.19, 8.21].
- 8.33 It is regrettable that the Agency has not followed up on its earlier promises to the first Inquiry to adjust access proposals at detailed design stage. There is little doubt that the acceleration of the A46 scheme compressed the timescale in which discussions and agreements between the Agency and British Waterways could have been held and I note that there were late submission of canal bridge details by British Waterways, but I also note that there was no effective reaction to that submission by the Agency which, no doubt, was preoccupied with the build up of momentum of this large project. That is understandable but nevertheless unfortunate [8.5, 8.17, 8.21].
- 8.34 In any event, the necessary highway works associated with the canal would have required a further Supplementary Side Roads Order, and probably a Supplementary Compulsory Purchase Order. The administrative timescales involved now would make incorporation of the canal works into the current construction contract, at the optimum time impossible. However, providing those draft Orders are published with urgency it may still be possible to incorporate the necessary Stragglethorpe Road works within the current contract before it completes, with some advantage in terms of overall expenditure because of shared overheads should such an outcome be desired. There would still be abortive works as the contractor has moved on quickly in this area already [8.24].
- 8.35 In summary, I am of the firm view that the A46 scheme will not make restoration of the canal impossible from an engineering point of view, but the design of the A46 scheme has clearly caused it to be appreciably more expensive and administratively more complex. These are direct consequences of the trunk road scheme. In these circumstances I can understand the view held by the Partnership and its supporters that the complications that would arise for the canal restoration may not have been adequately fed into the earlier Inquiry by the Partnership. Similarly, whilst the Highways Agency did respond to the written evidence of British Waterways, it appears that it did not go into the depth needed to enable an appreciation of the real impact, which the scheme would have locally, to be formed.
- 8.36 There would still be the opportunity for the A46 design to be altered and the construction contract redirected, resulting in an overall cost saving which would offset the additional costs of providing a 1.75 m clearance of the canal. A practical engineering solution to restore full height clearance would then be possible in future years should the Partnership wish to pursue such a project in the public interest [8.5-8.7, 8.12, 8.19].
- 8.37 As none of the draft Supplementary Orders before this Inquiry affect the canal it is not for me to carry forward any recommendation, which might have arisen from the above conclusions, into my Recommendations at Section 10 of this report, but I draw attention to the above conclusions, to the relative difficulties that the A46 scheme would now pose for the future canal restoration project and what might still be done about it.

9 CONCLUSIONS

Legal and Procedural Matters

The Grantham Canal Partnership

9.1 In my consideration of whether or not to hear evidence in respect of the Grantham Canal Partnership and the debatable effect that the scheme, as defined by the already Made Orders, would have on future canal restoration prospects, it would have been easy to conclude that, clearly as no current draft Supplementary Order would affect the canal, no evidence about the canal should be heard at this Supplementary Order Inquiry. However having read the 2007 Inquiry Inspector's report, the Government Office's decision letter, and heard the detailed and compelling submission of the Canal Partnerships case, which was not countermanded in any detail by the Highways Agency, it seemed to me that there was a need to inform Ministers of the current and persuasive views of the Partnership that the process involved in the earlier decisions may not have been furnished with all the relevant matter now available. In these circumstances, it also seemed to me to be wrong to dismiss the Canal Partnership, representing a number of Local Authorities, Government Departments and individuals as it does from being heard at the Inquiry and correspondingly enabling the Highways Agency to have the opportunity of responding fully to any points raised. That would enable all parties to be satisfied that the matter of the degree of impact of the A46 scheme on the canal restoration could be understood in detail and Ministers advised accordingly [3.1-3.5].

In explaining my ruling to allow the Canal Partnership to be heard I clarified that as none of the draft Orders before me were affected by, or had an affect on the canal my report to Ministers in respect of the canal, could, at this stage, be for information only and would have no statutory intent or carry any formal recommendation. That ruling was acceptable to both the Canal Partnership and the Highways Agency. I therefore deal exclusively with the case for the Grantham Canal Partnership in Section 8 of this report, which also contains my separate conclusions on this particular dispute.

Link to the planning inspector's report following the inquiry; the decision letter and the Inspector's report are available on the DfT's website

<http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/roads/network/strategic/programme/decisionletters/a46newarkwidmerpoлимп>

Please read on

The Minister's Reaction – in a letter from Mike Penning MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State to Peter Stone.



From Mike Penning MP, Parliamentary
Under Secretary of State

Mr Peter Stone
Honorary Secretary
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27 JUL 2010

Dear Peter

A letter will be issued shortly conveying the decision of the Secretaries' of State on the published draft Supplementary Orders for the A46 Newark to Widmerpool Improvement scheme. Officials will send you a copy of the decision letter and the Inspector's report directly.

The draft Supplementary Orders did not affect the Grantham Canal or its restoration and therefore the Grantham Canal Partnership's case presented to the local inquiry could not be considered as part of the decision making process on the Orders.

However, as the Inspector considered it was in the public interest that the Partnership's case should be heard at the inquiry, I have now looked at the matter - independently from the Orders. The key points for me are:

- A new bridge to take Stragglethorpe Road over the Grantham Canal is not part of the A46 improvements scheme as the canal is beyond the boundary of the scheme at this location
- The A46 scheme does not prevent restoration of the canal or the construction of a new bridge in the future

It would therefore be inappropriate for the Department for Transport to fund and construct a new canal bridge on the Stragglethorpe Road.

The Highways Agency has listened to the Partnership and worked with it to see if there is anything it can do to help. The Agency's contractor surveyed the canal in the area of Stragglethorpe Road and worked up outline designs for a new canal bridge which the Partnership is free to use for their own scheme.

I am also aware that as part of the improvements to the A46 from Newark to Widmerpool, we are providing a new bridge near Stragglethorpe junction to carry the A46 over the Grantham Canal which supports the Partnership's plans to make this a fully navigable waterway.

In this way I believe the Department for Transport has done what it can to assist the Partnership with its aspiration to restore the Grantham Canal.

Yours faithfully
Mike Penning

What Next?

Can you spot the link between Inspector Wadrup's findings and Mike Penning's letter? – there's a prize for the winner. Those of you who have previously lobbied a Minister about Bridge 16 may recognise the same Highways Agency-drafted 'mis-information' that they've been putting out all year – it's as if the Inquiry never happened or the Inspector's report has been completely ignored!

The HA is hiding behind a boundary that they drew ... and were criticised about by the Inquiry Inspector ... and which they've since tarmaced beyond, in any case (see photograph).

It's the HA which has failed to honour its 2007 commitments and has built an island nearer to the canal and put a curve into Stragglethorpe Road which, if not making a new canal bridge impossible, will make heights and sight-lines a major problem and bump up our costs.

If Government expenditure is a key issue, why have they ignored our (and the Inspector's) proposal to 'value engineer' the new £2 million Fosse Bridge?

- The Grantham Canal Partnership and Society are taking advice on what more can and should be done. [If you, or someone you know, has expertise in these matters, please contact us ASAP]
- Please contact Mike Penning MP and your own MP and let them know what you think of the matter. [See below for the contact details of our 3 Grantham Canal MPs]
- Don't despair! This may be disappointing news but every other edition of BRIDGE is full of exciting developments – especially on the newly re-opened A1 to Woolsthorpe section of the canal ... and the Partnership and fast-growing Society are currently working on:
 - a Heritage Lottery Fund bid to restore further Woolsthorpe Locks
 - establishing a team of volunteer Rangers, to keep an eye on the canal and liaise with our local communities
 - canal improvements alongside Cotgrave Country Park
 - securing land for the Trent Link
 - a raft of other projects
- **The future of the Grantham Canal has rarely been more exciting!**

PLEASE GET INVOLVED - YOUR PRESSURE WILL HELP

The current situation at Bridge 16 is a bad mistake - but a practical, low-cost solution is still possible, to prevent it turning into a permanent disaster for the East Midlands. Please make your views known to as many of the following as you are able:

Rt Hon Kenneth Clarke QC MP, Rushcliffe House, 17/19 Rectory Road, West Bridgford, Nottingham NG2 6BE. clarkek@parliament.uk - 0115 981 7224. (NB: Ken prefers letters)

Rutland & Melton MP Alan Duncan asks that his constituents contact him at his constituency office, via his Senior Casework Assistant: Mrs Lesley Baldam, 33 High Street, Melton Mowbray, Leics. LE13 OTR. baldaml@parliament.uk - 01664 411211 or at Westminster, via his assistant, Rob Flint: flintr@parliament.uk - 020 7219 6420.

Nick Boles MP, Grantham & Stamford Conservative Association, North Street, Bourne, PE10 9AJ. 01778421498 or 01529 241507 (Andrea Webster) nick@nickboles.com ... or at Westminster: Nick Boles MP, House of Commons, Westminster, SW1A 0AA nick.boles.mp@parliament.uk.

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State Mike Penning MP - at his Department of Transport address on page 7.

The Ministers decision flies in the face of the Inspectors report, the Government's own planning guidance PPG 13, 'Waterways for Tomorrow' and common sense. Please keep pointing this out!

If you spot anything new or unusual on the Grantham, please contact the editor with photos if possible. Any questions and I will try to find answers.

The editor can be contacted at: ian.wakefield@granthamcanal.com