LISTED BUILDING CONSENT APPLICATION

Lock 14
Ashton Canal
Manchester

Replacement of steel balance beams with oak beams and manual gearing on the lock tail gates



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Canal & River Trust

Submission by Judy Jones BA(Hons) MA IHBC, Heritage Advisor

OVERVIEW

This statement has been prepared to support a Listed Building application by the Canal & River Trust for the alteration of steel balance beams to timber, on the lock tail gates at Lock 14. The existing hydraulic gearing is to be changed to manual.

This statement aims to provide supporting information about the historic character of the lock, the methodology of the proposal and to address the relevant impact of the development on this designated asset.

Lock 14 is a Grade ll Listed structure.

LOCATION OF THE DEVELOPMENT

The lock is located on the Ashton Canal at Openshaw, between Crabtree Lane to the west and Edge Lane to the East.

Easting 388931
Northing 398036

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The Listed Building application concerns the following –

- **Replacement of bottom or tail steel lock balance beam with oak balance beam.**
- **Replace hydraulic gearing with manual gearing.**

APPLICANT

Canal & River Trust

STATEMENT PREPARED BY

Prepared by:

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Background history of the Ashton Canal

The Grade 2 listed lock is situated on the Ashton Canal, adjacent to Great Ancoats Street, Manchester.

The Ashton Canal was promoted to carry coal from the mines of Ashton and Oldham to Manchester. In 1792 an Act of Parliament was lodged to create a company to be called the Manchester, Ashton-under-Lyne and Oldham Canal, with the original scheme completed in 1796, running from a large basin behind what is now Piccadilly Station in Manchester, and climbing gradually eastwards via 18 locks to Fairfield, Droylesden.

In the first half of the 19th century the Ashton Canal prospered, traffic being so great that the company started to convert the locks into double (twin) locks, although they only completed the two Fairfield locks, 17 and 18. However, the coming of the Railway Age saw a loss of trade for the canals. In 1848, the railway, now the Manchester, Sheffield and Lincolnshire Railway, bought the Ashton, Peak Forest and Macclesfield Canals in order to feed goods into their railway system.

The canal continued to be utilised for the transport of substantial amounts of coal and other products until the early 20th century, but during his period many of the mines served closed whilst the other main trade of textiles was also in steep decline, this being illustrated by the drop in goods carried on the Ashton Canal, which fell from 50,000 tons in 1933 to just 7 tons in 1955.

The various branches of the Ashton Canal closed in sections between 1932 and 1962, and due to the drop in trade it appeared that the Ashton Mainline would follow rapidly after these closures. However, in 1964, the Peak Forest Canal Society was formed and, with the Inland Waterways Association, fought to keep the Peak Forest and Ashton Canals open and to restore them.

Following discussions between the relevant local authorities and the Canal Societies in 1971 the canal was given a reprieve and restoration was approved, over the next two years with volunteer help and mechanical plant, the whole canal was cleared and restored, finally being re-opened for navigation during 1974.

Since then, the use of the canal network for leisure has developed and the Ashton Canal is an important link in the Cheshire Ring.

Significance of the Heritage Asset

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2012 provides the Government's national planning policy of the conservation of the historic environment, in respect of information requirements it sets out that:

'In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance'

It is therefore accepted that in order for the LPA to consider this application it is necessary for the applicant to provide a detailed description and justification of the works.

Assessment of significance

The April 2008 'Conservation Principles Policies and Guidance', published by English Heritage (now Historic England), states that 'understanding the significance of places is vital' and that 'articulating the values and significance ... is necessary to inform decisions about the future '

The English Heritage/Historic England guidance describes a range of inter-related 'heritage values' that may be attached to historic places, arranged in four groups:

- Evidential value: the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity;
- Historical value: the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present – it tends to be illustrative or associative;
- Aesthetic value: the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place; and
- Communal value: the meanings of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience of memory.

The lock has **Historical value**, as it forms part of the historic national canal network.

It is one of the locks forming part of what is known as the Cheshire Ring. It is a busy cruising waterway and therefore must feature in the memory of those who live, work and not least cruise in the locality. Therefore the lock is of both **Evidential and Communal value**.

Statutory List Description

The lock is a Grade 2 listed asset.

The list description reads –

SJ89NE ASHTON CANAL, Beswick And Clayton 698-1/5/522 Lock No.14, between Crabtree Lane and Edge Lane

GV II

Canal lock. c.1792-1799, for Manchester and Ashton-under-Lyne Canal Company; renovated. Large blocks of millstone grit, wooden gates. Narrow type (chamber 7 feet wide), with overflow channel on north side, stone staircases flanking lower entry, double gates at lower end and single gate at upper end. Twelfth in a series of 13 similar locks, all in working order.

Listing NGR: SJ8892198074

Reasoning for the proposed works

Steel balance beams were added to many gates on the Ashton Canal, reputedly because of the high level of vandalism and anti-social behaviour at the time but due to recent building of canal side residential housing and apartments, such incidents have dropped.

At Lock 14, the head gates are of traditional timber construction. The tail gates are timber, but currently the balance beams are steel.

The timber gates are replaced like for like on a 25 year or so cycle and are constructed traditionally of oak. However, at Lock 14 the steel beams are a late 20thc alteration and not historic. It is intended that as new like for like oak gates are installed, the steel balance beam element will be replaced with a tradition oak beam.

After earlier discussions with John Whyard, Conservation Officer, it was agreed that one set of steel beams will be retained on the flight to illustrate the transition and history of the locks on this canal. There are currently other steel beams still insitu, for example at Lock 1 and Lock 7.

Over the years we have worked towards removing the hydraulic gears as these regularly fail, are expensive to refurbish and are not historic. The replacement of hydraulic gearing will improve the service we provide our customers and reduce failures. The effect will be a more appropriate manual solution which is sympathetic to the historic significance of the lock.

Proposed design

The gates will be manufactured by Canal & River Trust's own workshop.

The conservation philosophy has been considered before the submission of this application. The use of steel as opposed to timber for balance beams is a technological development and therefore holds evidential significance which will be retained on one lock on this Canal.

Timber would have been used until very recently for any replacement but during a less enlightened period in the mid-late C20th, the beams were replaced with an inappropriate material.

The installation of oak gates with oak beams will enhance the listed asset and be aesthetically more pleasing.

We believe that the reintroduction of historically correct oak beams and manual gearing will have a positive effect on the listed lock.

PHILOSOPHY AND APPROACH TO CREATING AN ACCESSIBLE DEVELOPMENT

The principle behind the scheme is to repair the lock to enable it to function correctly and therefore improve public safety by reducing the scope for injury whilst operating and passing through the lock.

KEY ACCESS ISSUES

The body of works will improve access for canal users as it should increase the reliability and safety of this section of the canal.

COMMITMENT TO MAINTAINING A RELEVANT DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

It is confirmed that the issue of access will be considered throughout the development and constructional phases of this project.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion it is considered that the proposed replacement of the steel balance beams for oak and the installation of manual gearing is sympathetic to the special character of the Listed asset, and will have a positive effect on the aesthetic character. It is therefore respectfully requested that this application is approved.