



RANGERS RAG

SUMMER 2011

New mobility buggy available for hire



People with limited mobility can now enjoy a ride beside the beautiful Grand Western Canal as a 'Tramper' mobility buggy can now be hired from Abbotshood Cycle Hire in Halberton for use on the towpath.

A lottery-funded scheme called Countryside Mobility South West, run by Living Options Devon, is aiming to provide these buggies at 30 countryside sites around the South West over the next year.

Membership of the scheme is required and costs £8.50 per year or £2.50 for 4 weeks. The charge for hiring the buggy at the Canal is £2.50 per hour for the first 3 hours or £9.50 for the whole day.

At the Canal, users of the hire buggy must be accompanied by a friend or relative in order to ensure safe passage under the Canal's bridges. Independent hire is allowed at other sites.

For more information, please visit the project's website at www.countrysidemobility.org or ring Abbotshood Cycle Hire on 01884 820728 and look out for the buggy at the Grand Western Canal stand at the Mid Devon Show.

Low water levels

Whilst many have enjoyed the dry, sunny weather this spring, it does pose some problems for management of the Canal. Low water levels mean that some boats are already dragging the bottom and it is possible that in order to keep the horsedrawn barge running, stopboards will need to be put in at Tiverton Road Bridge or Boehill Bridge and water pumped over to the southern side to keep levels high enough to float the barge.

It is likely that the bankside vegetation between the Canal Basin and Tiverton Road Bridge will need to be cut earlier this year, as the rope from the horse to the barge is snagging already because low water levels mean the boat is sitting lower relative to the towpath.

The warm sunny weather has fuelled a huge amount of blanket weed growth in the northern half of the Canal. The weedboat was out of action for 6 weeks with a series of mechanical problems, but is working again now.

News snippets

- There has been a great deal of re-organisation with Devon County Council's Highway Management department. The Canal Ranger Service is still in this department, but is now part of the Public Rights of Way team.
- The Canal has been fortunate to avoid any major funding cuts in 2011/12, but there is concern about the 2012/13 budget – particularly with regard to Mid Devon District Council's contribution (currently just over 25%)
- We are delighted to welcome back Canal Ranger Jo Roberts who returns to work in late June after 9 months on maternity leave.
- The entrance to the Canal Basin car park has been re-tarmaced following winter damage.

