

Dear Boat-dwellers

Stocker's Lake Local Nature Reserve

In late January 2011, we will continue the work begun in 2008 of fencing and hedging the canal-side of the reserve. As a preliminary we will fell or pollard the trees (except established oaks) on both banks of the ancient ditch which runs parallel to the canal. Thereafter we will deepen, widen and redefine the ditch itself.

The reserve is privately owned by Veolia Water and managed for them by Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust. British Waterways own the land between the towpath and the ditch but have been happy to allow this area to be part of the nature reserve. FoSL is a group of nearly 800 local people who love the lake and carry out (and pay for) much work on the reserve. Over the years I have found that a lot of you boat-dwellers also care for the reserve. And we need your help.

The aim of the work in January is two-fold:

1. To stop entry to the reserve from the canal-side and to stop the general public from throwing rubbish into the ditch. You can help by asking people you see doing these things not to do it. In other words join with FoSL in acting as guardians of the reserve (there are four official entrances to the reserve but none of them from the towpath).
2. To allow sunlight on the ditch and hedge to see what comes up that has been shaded out for so long (a limited experiment immediately produced Moschatel, a delightful little flower sometimes called 'town hall clock'). An improved ditch will also be good for frogs, newts and small fish (thus good for herons, too!). When the hedge is established it will be valuable for birds, insects and small mammals (90% of Britain's hedgerows have been destroyed since 1945).

Finally, we know that this work will cut across areas of the reserve that some of you have been using (contrary to regulations) for gardens, recreation and storage. Sorry about this, but in a nature reserve, nature comes first and the canal-side ditch area is good habitat if only we can free it from human disturbance.

I hope you will sympathise with our position and play your part in protecting this marvellous nature reserve.

Thank you

Yours sincerely
Friends of Stocker's Lake

Ian Watson, Chairman