



A Review of 2014

Launched the Unlock Runcorn Campaign

This was in essence to raise the public profile of the campaign.

The launch was held on Friday 25th April 2014 and was attended by members of the Society. Derek Twigg MP, Rob Polhill, Leader of Halton Council, and various other key people.

The day was an important step forward as it resulted in both Derek and Rob publicly endorsing and supporting the campaign which was covered in both local papers.

We also set up the Unlock Runcorn website

www.unlockruncorn.org

and started a petition which to date has collected over 1300 signatures online, all of whom we have emails for which can allow us to communicate with supporters.

Big Dig Fun Day

Was held on 31st August in the car park of the Wat Phra Singh temple. It was overall a great success. Attended by over 100 people, there were stalls, food and great entertainment.

Graham Wallace led three guided walks down the flight of locks which proved to be very popular and really brought to life the reality of the project for the hundred or so people who did a walk.



The event was also attended by Theresa Griffin MEP and Derek Twigg MP. Theresa committed to supporting any bids we made for European funding, which she feels we would have a strong chance of securing if the council agreed to formally include the locks restoration in the official City wide plans.

* Graham has also taken some local schools on the walk which has been greeted with much enthusiasm by both children and the staff

Stakeholders Meeting

Whilst not perhaps the most exciting development of the year at first glance, this event is probably the most important of 2014. It was held on 30th September and was attended by

all the major stakeholders that will need to be on board and involved at various levels if we are to succeed in our goal to open up the locks. This included representatives from the Society, Rob Polhill, Leader of the Council, Cllr Norman Plumpton-Walsh who



has responsibility for the Town Team as well as the Mersey Ward, relevant council officers, representatives of the Bridgewater Canal and of Neptune Holdings and the Office of Derek Twigg MP.

Cllr Plumpton-Walsh gave a presentation around the Town Team which demonstrated the critical part of the restoration of the locks has to play in the overall regeneration plan put together by the Town Team. This was followed by Graham Wallace and Graham Bridge giving a detailed presentation about our plans and the reasons behind them.

There followed a discussion between all parties. The significant developments that came from this meeting were that:

- 1) All Parties were in principle supportive of the aims of the society
- 2) That the council would formally include the restoration of the locks in their official City wide plans – thus enabling our applications for European funding to be fully supported by Theresa Griffin MEP
- 3) That the council would assign an officer to help with the project managing of the scheme.



The key thing is that...Real work has actually started!

Real Work being carried out

Exploratory work discovered Japanese Knotweed that needed to be, and was removed around the area where we hope to begin work on the showcase lock.

Work then began on the towpath on the side of the two chambers that we intend to dig out first.

The sand stone blocks have been moved from Ditton Island to a safe location on Wigg Island.

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Going Forward

Over the last year the campaign has moved forward, due in large part to the Mersey Gateway project getting underway which has given impetus to our cause as the possibility of

restoring the locks has become more of a reality.

This has brought many steps forward as detailed in the review of 2014. It has also however highlighted the gaps in our organisational ability to fully cope with the demands

the campaign is presenting.

Put simply, we need many more people to give up a little of their time so we can take advantage of the opportunities currently out there to further the campaign, like the promise of support in searching for funds, the practical support of the Council and the political support of all the key politicians who can help us.