

# *Wendron Leats and Helston Kennels*

## **The Way Forward**

A planned outcome of our Leats and Kennels meetings with CC/CORMAC is that a local support group will be created to oversee the overall management of the Wendron and Helston watercourse. The purview of such a group will be from the Leat take-up at the sluice gate at Trenear to the return to the Cober at the St John's area of Helston. The intention is that before such a support group becomes active the structure of the watercourse will be fully secured by CORMAC. On a personal note, I do not think that such a support group can be started without the active support and involvement of Wendron and Helston Councils. Inevitably, this will require a little precept backing initially as they become the new stakeholders, but this should not be excessive and should mainly rest on HTC. Moving forward the support group should work with all stakeholders in a structured way and through designated individuals. Therefore, at some point it will be necessary to consider the makeup of such a support group.

Below are some membership suggestions.

- The CC Division members for Helston North, Helston South and Wendron
- The Town Clerk and Parish Clerk - representing the new stakeholders
- Two members from Helston TC and two members from Wendron PC
- \*The Helston Kennel Warden and the Wendron Leat Negotiator
- Two members from the local community
- Present stakeholders invited to attend as consultees as and when needed

The total membership would be about 12/14. The group might be called 'The Friends of the Leats and Kennels' - but that is just a working title.

Clearly, CC Councillors will have an important role lobbying for financial support at CC; similarly parish and town councillors will need to report to their respective council meetings. As there is a lot of community interest in the kennels and leats, I suspect that it will be easy to get people within the community to put their names forward. Although some may just be happy to be part of a workforce team or to disseminate information in the town or perhaps just to donate money.

### **\*The Warden and the Negotiator**

I am of the opinion that it is essential that in each parish there should be a single point of contact for the watercourse for both the public and the support group. Riparian owners could contact the person for advice and the support group could be kept up-to-date with incidents occurring to the leat, or kennel, in the respective parish. This person will have the authority to contact/organise external support as required or to work with an assigned HTC employee, for example alerting CORMAC or SWW during an emergency such as heavy rain that might be causing flooding. In Helston, that person should have an intimate knowledge of the kennel system and understand the functionality of the drainage network in the town. In recent Years various people have specialised in such local knowledge - I am confident that such a person can be found today. Regarding the leats of Wendron I think a different approach is required - here we would need somebody with the personality and skills to negotiate with the riparian owners, and to maintain good relationships with these people whom, without their support - often financial, the whole project would have collapsed. The negotiator can inform these landowners about the availability of a working party to walk their section of the leat in order to inspect and maintain it. Also, as part of that role the negotiator would establish good working relations with the owners of the Hydroelectric Power Leat and possibly with SWW regarding their extraction requirements for drinking water during droughts.

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Both of these roles would be voluntary but a small gratuity might be offered.

## The work required of volunteers and the new stakeholders

- General clearance of the leats and kennels will be done separately in each parish by HTC and WPC using paid staff and volunteers and will include the repair of small leaks. The use of volunteers will be the primary aim but there may be occasions when the use of professionals will be preferable. (This area will need careful consideration as the capacity of HTC for such work is much higher than WPC).
- CC Highways will, through CORMAC still monitor and maintain areas where the Kennels act as a dispersal mechanism for road and pavement surface water.
- Helston Town Council might consider taking over full responsibility for the weeding of the Kennels and minor upkeep of the Kennel floor and accessible culverted sections. This may require an asset-transfer and such a move may not be agreed by the local members due to potential future liabilities.

Major structural problems will still receive **free** professional advice from CC but funding for repairs will depend on the nature of the problem and the capacity of the authority to access appropriate grants.

The support group will through the help of the new stakeholders, establish a fund that will be used exclusively for Leats and Kennels support. Such monies might assist riparian owners who are unable or unwilling to fund a repair that, if not carried out, would affect the integrity of the watercourse. HTC as the larger authority might act as the banker for such a fund.

## Idea - Leats and Kennels Newsletter

This could start as an annual or half-yearly newsletter but if interest surges a quarterly issue might be possible.

It will be a publication of 'The Friends of the Leats and Kennels' - the group explored above.

### Aims of the Newsletter -

- To promote the value of an historical legacy that may go back 900 years
  - To recognise the contribution of the Kennels to the identity of Helston today
  - To acknowledge the connectivity of the Kennels of Helston to the Leats of Wendron
  - To explore the biodiversity of the watercourse system
  - To showcase the stakeholder contributions namely CC/CORMAC / SWW and the EA
  - To educate the wider community about the construction of the leats and kennels over time
  - To explain the local drainage, flow and functionality of the watercourse
  - To offer help and advice to the riparian owners as they manage the watercourse through their land
  - To actively advertise the need for residents and visitors to respect the watercourse by not disposing cigarette stubs and other rubbish into it
- \* To raise money.

### The Newsletter will be -

- Digital with a few hard copies for circulation to those with no digital access and the reading tables of Helston's waiting rooms
- Funded, printed and distributed through primary stakeholders
- Copy created and edited by Leats and Kennels members
- Circulated to all riparian owners and interested people

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## **Content**

- Images of areas in need of attention
- Images of areas being worked on
- Images of areas of interest - for example features on a stretch of Leat or Kennel
- Historical information as submitted
- Stories from Helston or Wendron history about a Leat or a Kennel
- Flow information
- Biodiversity through the seasons
- Professional input - conservationists/scientific/engineering/etc.
- Warden and Negotiator's report
- Bank account details for paying in donations in support of the ring-fenced fund for assistance to those with riparian responsibilities

And much, much more.

## **Conclusion**

I am very grateful to Kevin Bryant and his colleagues at CC and CORMAC for contributing and leading the research into the flow of water that leads to Helston Kennels. Through the contributions of The EA and SWW we have learnt many positive things about the state of this amazing piece of aqua-engineering.

I have attempted to look at the possible way forward to a new way of preserving a future for Helston's prize possession - a working watercourse system - the sight and noise of which is a treasured feature of the town's history. We need to seize the opportunity that this initiative represents to work with our neighbouring parish to safeguard this asset for future generations. Failure to do so could mean that in time the whole leat supply system will fall into disrepair. At that point, the only water running through the Kennels would be surface water from the Redruth Road. With the Kennels dry at all other times, it would be quite possible that for health and safety reasons they would have to be covered over in the main street, thus ending a tradition of an open watercourse begun many hundreds of years ago.

If Wendron Parish Council are willing to support this - and they have nothing to gain from working with us - then such community spirit should not go unrecognised. As it is our Town owes a debt of gratitude to the riparian owners in Wendron parish who have, for decades, enabled the water to successfully cascade down our streets so attractively for so many years.

Thank you for reading this.

**Mike Thomas CC**

**Helston 2020**