



The Consuta Trust

The advancement of education in the history of steam launches, by preservation, maintenance and exhibition of the steam launch **Consuta**

Registered Charity No. 1076505

Website: www.consuta.org.uk

News Letter No. 55 — Winter 2013

Dear Supporter,

Seasonal greetings, the Trustees hope you will have a lovely Christmas and Happy New Year.

The Consuta Winter Social

With this Letter and Card you will find the booking form for our Winter Social. This year (well 2014) the social will be at the Swan Inn at Streatley. The Swan is under new management and has been tastefully refurbished.

Our three course meal will be in the Icknield Suite a private room which we have the use of for the whole afternoon. If you come early then you can have a drink in the new bar lounge (Saunders Room with many historic photos) which overlooks the Thames. Please don't delay your booking.

Repaint and re-varnishing

Consuta has been given a major paint and varnish makeover at Henwood & Deans boatyard with help of the boatyard staff and some of our volunteers. Consuta is currently housed undercover at Beale Park waiting for all the various bits and pieces to be refitted after the repaint. When all the winter work is completed we will have Consuta looking absolutely stunning. The boiler is at Kintbury at present and will also be having some work carried out on it as well.

Heritage Boat Museum

The proposed Museum at Beale Park is now in the planning appeal process – it all seems to be taking a very long time. We continue to be completely mystified why one or two planning people at West Berkshire Council are so hostile to this part of our River Thames heritage, so hope you continue with support and send in your responses or even come along to the appeal hearing. As a result the planning costs have increased, fortunately we have had some financial help here. If you able to help publicise this planning appeal please let us know.

Someone made a comment during the recent Consuta transport and craning operations to lift her out at Hobbs move her to H&D crane her off here, the crane onm after work transport to Beale Park then crane off once more, said it was ludicrous to have to look after our heritage in such a risky fashion. I totally agree, the crane in and out, then moving her by road is always traumatic.

Updating the Trust website

David E has updated the trust website with a new corporate look – well worth a visit; work is still ongoing, so if you have any suggestions do let us know.

All the best for Christmas from the Consuta team

Now what about these Museum planning issues? *Continued over.....*

Why do we want a boat museum at Beale Park and what is current progress.

Consuta needs a permanent home which is suitable to help keep our historic launch working as a public exhibit. We've looked at various possibilities during the last 13 years but without much success.

Beale Park offered the option of having a wet dock boathouse for Consuta so we discussed several possibilities. Key requirements needed for Consuta are:- a covered wet dock; a suitable workshop for boat and machinery; a means of lifting Consuta out of the water during the winter; and a room for archive document and paperwork storage.

The Thames Boat Trust had just acquired Cygnet a 30ft 1870 Thames steam launch, so we decided to look at the 58ft ex Thames Conservancy inspection launch of 1894 held in storage for the last 20 years. Over time we had acquired many 19th century Thames boating artefacts plus historical documents held by the SBA. So our idea of a boathouse for Consuta changed to the possibility of establishing an accredited Thames Heritage Boat Museum open for Park visitors. The 19th century was an important time period for boat development, and some Thames builders were the great innovators of this time. A museum design was agreed with BP; the Consuta Trust would fund the costs.

Such a museum would clearly need substantial funding so we approached the HLF to see if this project would be open to funding support; costs at the time were estimated around the £1m level. The HLF were quite positive but did say that it would be helpful to have LPA planning acceptance for a museum at Beale Park. Our HLF grant application was put on hold while we applied for Outline planning permission to West Berkshire Council. This application has cost the Trust some £7,000 to date; a full application would probably have cost about £30,000.

The application was rejected on what seemed to be very flimsy grounds; it was disappointing that the case officer had decided to reject the application from the start, even ignoring consultation procedures. The application had over 50 supporting letters, several of these were from local clubs, the Parish Council approved, there were no public objections.

After this, we entered into discussions with consultees who had raised concerns and have provided all information requested and are confident there will be no problems. We have asked the case officer if they would allow the application to be re-submitted with all information requested being supplied, the answer was no. Unfortunately the only option was to go for a planning appeal, this was submitted in mid October with the agreement of Beale Park.

We requested a hearing appeal because of the significant public and media interest, as is recommended in the appeal criteria, but even here the Council Case Officer persuaded the Appeal Inspectorate to have the appeal by written representations. Unfortunately this procedure does not allow any questioning by the inspector or allow full public involvement. So we have now asked our appeal case officer to review this. No decision as yet, but the appeal is currently being conducted by the written submissions procedure.

The Council planning officers don't want the public openness and transparency that a hearing appeal would provide, what do you think of this? certainly does not seem democratic. During the application itself the council officers would not allow the application to go to the council planning committee. It seems at WBC, the planning committee can only ask for an application be taken to the committee if this is acceptable to the officers?

So where now

Until the 13th January anyone can submit written representations on this appeal. This can be done online by email, or by post to the appeal case officer; you can also question him (phone) to ask any questions about procedures:-

Nicholas Patch, Planning Inspectorate Appeals Administration, 3/06 Temple Quay House, 2 The Square,
Temple Quay, Bristol, BS1 6PN

Quote reference **APP/W00340/A/13/2208764**

Tel. 030 344 45479 or Email: teamp7@pins.gsi.gov.uk

Unfortunately the council do not have to publish all our appeal information on line, so the Consuta Trust have setup a webpage giving details of our appeal statement plus all support documents. Go to the Consuta website. We were informed that the only way the public can normally access full details is to call in at the local Council Offices in person and request the paperwork. We are now waiting for the Council's first response due before 16th Dec.

If you are interested, concerned and wish to make any representations about the application or the appeal procedure do this before the 13th January. If you have any queries about any of this just give me a call 01488 658795.

This is a wonderful opportunity to establish an important boat museum on the Thames and support Beale Park, don't let us lose out because council officers are abusing their position of trust; you have the right to make representations.