



Consultation paper for changes to Liverpool Link 2015 season

After discussions with boaters we are considering changing the way that we manage the Leeds & Liverpool Canal from Hancock's Swing Bridge to Stanley Locks. This consultation paper is to ask your views about the proposed changes.

The summary of the changes are below. At the end of the paper there are questions that we would like your comments on.

So in summary:

- The area between Hancock's and Stanley Top Lock will have freedom of movement for all boats wishing to visit
- Staff and volunteers will continue to operate Hancock's bridge and Netherton Bridge. Hancock's bridge will continue be opened between 9-10am and 2-3pm as the agreement with the local authority
- Passages will start from Stanley Top Lock (rather than Hancock's bridge)
- Boats booking a passage into the dock will be able to enter and leave on **any** operational day subject to a pontoon being available
- Pontoon bookings will be available for 7 nights will be without charge, additional nights will be charged at £20
- Booking on line should be available from April 2015 and will be for the next 3 seasons so boaters can book in advance
- A limit will be put on block bookings (6 boats), parties with more than 6 boats will need to contact the office for authorisation
- No shows or cancellations within 5 days of travel will be charged at £20
- We seek feedback on the non-operational day(s) this could remain as Tuesday, **or** move to Saturday **or** be Saturday and Sunday

What happens' now

Boaters wanting to go to Liverpool South Dock book a passage by contacting the office, this passage starts at Hancock's Swing Bridge in Aintree.

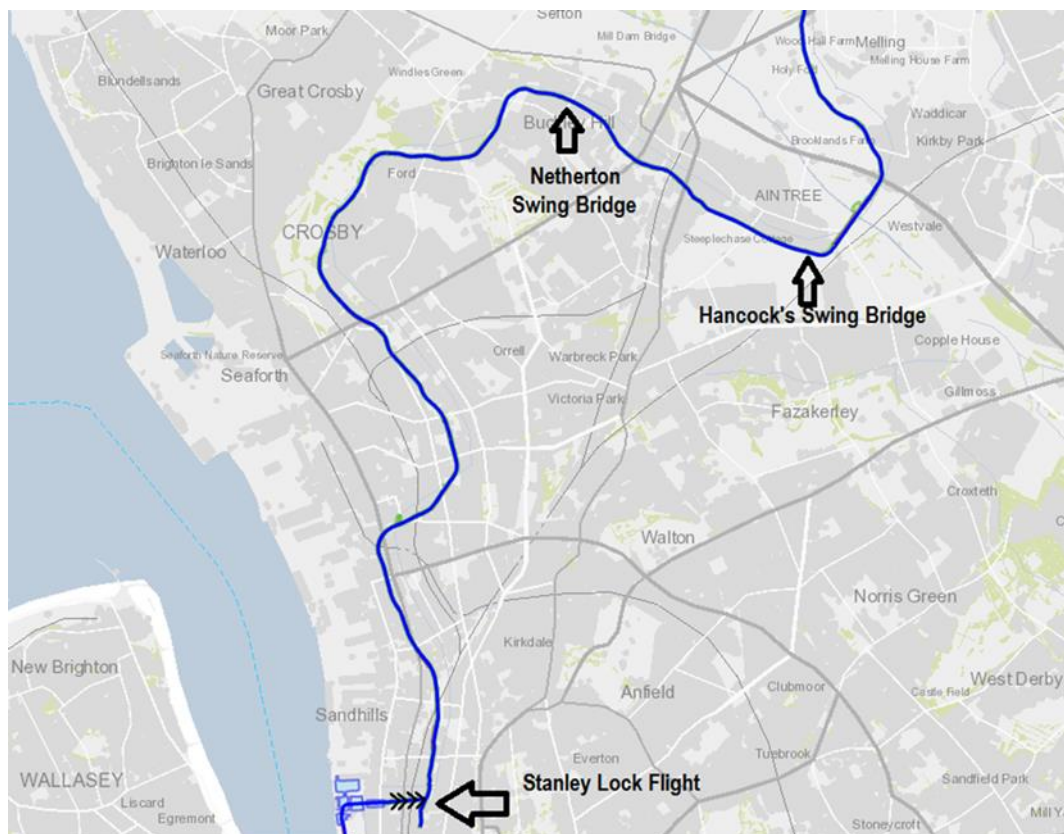
No other boats can pass this point. Passages can be booked into the Dock on Wednesday, Friday and Sunday. We can accommodate a maximum of 10 boats per day.

Staff open Hancock's bridge at 9am and let boaters through, then go to open Netherton Swing Bridge for them. Boats arrive at Stanley Lock at approx. 1pm and staff operate the locks for boaters to pass through and on to Princes lock, and then into Liverpool Dock. The passage from Hancock's to the Dock can take up to 6 hours in total.



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Boaters can book passages to leave the Dock on Monday, Thursday, and Saturday. Boats leave the dock at 9am with staff operating locks at Princes and Stanley and then opening Netherton Swing Bridge and Hancock's between 2-3pm.

Licensed boats can visit the dock for 14 days without charge. Additional nights are charged at £20. A £20 charge is made for cancelling a booking within 72 hours of the passage or for a 'no show'.

Booking is opened in early January for that year and an updated skippers' guide is sent out to those booking.

Some events at the Dock limit the ability of boats to move within the dock on a limited number of weekends so boats may be held back on occasion or passages cancelled or not made available.

There is considerable demand during the peak season with many boaters being disappointed.



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The constraints on the operation

Hancock's bridge is on a very busy main road, used by the emergency services and close to schools. There is an agreement with the Local Authority that the bridge will only be swung between 9-10am and 2-3pm, a sign on the road close to the bridge confirms this.

The operator must stand on the bridge as it swings because of the location of the control panel, there are no barriers on the bridge and cars do sometimes jump the traffic lights on red as the bridge is slow to move and this causes frustration. It is considered too dangerous for boaters to operate. The time taken for the bridge to swing and close to is approximately 10 minutes.

Netherton Swing Bridge is a very narrow bridge on a quieter road. Staff have operated the bridge recently because of local vandalism experienced a number of years ago resulting in increased protection for the (now locked) control panel.

There is currently no 'freedom of movement' on the canal from Hancock's to Stanley Locks and there is very little secure mooring other than at Litherland and the Eldonian Village where service stations are available. This is a lost opportunity for the local area to increase visits from boaters.

There are no landing stages at Stanley or Princes locks. Staff (and volunteers) operate these locks for boaters.

The link is narrow and can only accommodate boat traffic in one direction at a time.

When boats reach Mann Island this is operated by staff from Liverpool Dock as we need to maintain water levels carefully in this area.

The pontoons (of various lengths) available in the dock accommodate 46 narrow boats. Currently to book a passage into the area past Hancock's bridge there must be a pontoon available within the dock.

A new pedestrian swing bridge is currently being installed at Litherland next to Tesco. This will be boater operated.

The link does not operate on a Tuesday to allow maintenance and cleaning to take place. This is a contractual requirement but the day and delivery of the maintenance and cleaning works is flexible.

The Link operates between Easter and end of October, with winter moorings available from November to April.



The proposals

After listening to boater and trade boater comments, and consulting with partnership members, we have drawn together a proposal for providing more 'freedom of movement' on the canal, and to improve access into and out of the dock. We hope that this will provide alternatives for boaters, and increase tourism to the local area and help the local economy.

It is proposed that passages will be provided into and out of the dock on each operational day. Six boats will be accommodated in each direction daily (widebeams taking two allocated spaces).

We propose to start the passage into the Dock from Stanley Top Lock rather than Hancock's bridge. Any boat will be able to use the canal from Hancock's bridge to Stanley Lock creating more opportunities to visit the area.

Passages will be booked via an on-line system which we hope will be available in April 2015. Until the on-line system is available bookings will be processed in January for April, in February for May, and March for June. This will help us to manage the number of bookings in the office in an appropriate way. We welcome your views on this.

When the on line booking system is in place boaters will be able to book passages for the next 3 seasons (2015/16, 2016/17 and 2017/18). Frequent cancellations by the same party will be monitored to ensure that future bookings are not made and cancelled at short notice. If boaters don't want to use the on-line system, postal bookings can be made with an administration charge of £5 per boat.

To provide the opportunity for more boats to visit we propose that visits of up to 7 nights will be free (rather than 14), any additional nights will be charged at £20.

We are considering limiting on-line block bookings to 6 boats in any party, for larger groups the organiser would need to contact the office for authorisation. We welcome feedback on this.

We propose to change cancellations charges so that a charge of £20 will be made if a passage is cancelled within 5 days (rather than current 72 hours) so that this provides more time for other boaters to take advantage of the cancellation. No shows will be charged £20. Frequent cancellations by the same party will be monitored to ensure that future bookings are not made and cancelled at short notice.

Hancock's Bridge will be operated by staff and volunteers between 9-10am and then 2-3pm, Netherton will be operated at suitable times to allow boat passage (timings subject to change upon trial and review). Boats will not need to book to go through



the bridges but will need to be at the bridges at the agreed opening times – there will be freedom of movement between the bridges and Stanley Lock. Signs will be put into place to confirm that boats cannot enter the Stanley Lock flight without having booked a passage. We intend to provide more secure moorings in the area and will be fundraising to cover these costs, local businesses may want to contribute. General comments on this are welcomed.

Boaters who have booked a passage into the Dock will meet at Stanley Lock at 1pm when staff and volunteers will take them through the locks and into the Dock with a total estimated time of 2.5 hours. A volunteer ‘meeter and greeter’ will welcome boats into Salthouse Dock and make sure they moor on right pontoon.

Boaters would leave the dock at 9am on the day of their booked passage.

We are considering operating Monday – Friday, or Sunday to Friday, because events take place at weekend and this is usually when there is less boat movement. We welcome your comments on this.

We look forward to your comments:

- Would you welcome freedom of movement between Hancock’s swing bridge and Stanley top locks? Yes / no / comments
- Would you support passages into and out of the dock each operational day? Yes / no / comments
- Would you use an on-line booking system when introduced? Yes / no / comments
- Do you think that moving to 3 years for bookings is better than just 1 season? Yes / no / comments
- Would you support us charging £5 for telephone bookings for those not wanting to use the on-line system? Yes / no / comments
- We are proposing to take a structured approach to bookings from January to March until the on line system is available with bookings being processed in January for April, in February for May, and March for June. Do you have any comments on this? comments
- We propose reducing the free moorings for 14 days to 7 days to maximise the number of boats visiting. Do you support this? Yes / no / comments
- We are considering limiting on-line block bookings to 6 boats in any party. Would you support this? Yes / no / comments
- Do you feel that more moorings are required on the canal – and where would you locate them? Yes / no / comments
- Options for operating are:
 - Monday – Friday,



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- or Sunday to Friday,
- or Wednesday to Monday.

Which would you prefer?.....

Please include any general comments in the box below:

Please return to enquiries.northwest@canalrivertrust.org.uk by Friday 9 January 2015.