

## **Appendix 4**

### **The Basingstoke Canal: Value for Money**

#### **Report to the Basingstoke Canal Joint Management Committee Summary**

- The Canal has approximately **1/3 million regular, local users**
- It provides **unique leisure and educational benefits to the region**
- There is a **legal obligation to maintain the SSSI** and wildlife value of the Canal
- The Canal is a man made structure and there are **significant safety and flood alleviation responsibilities**
- The Canal is **seriously under funded** and the Canal Authority are struggling to meet the maintenance backlog.

Further under funding will result in:

- **Gradual deterioration of the infrastructure leading to flooding and safety risks**
- **Loss of “Added Value” provided by staff i.e. education, guided walks, patrolling, litter picking, upkeep of secondary facilities like benches, towpath surface**
- **Further deterioration of the SSSI**
- **Reduced access to the towpath as bankside erosion continues**
- **Closure of Locks and diminished navigation**
- **Further encroachment of trees and their associated safety issues**
- **Lose crucial volunteer support**

This report aims to demonstrate the importance of the Canal for not only conservation and recreation, but for local quality of life and the local economy. Furthermore the significance of the canal as part of the drainage network and the necessity to maintain it in a safe condition are highlighted.

## 1. Background

- 1.1. The Basingstoke Canal was purchased, restored and officially re-opened amid much publicity and with great support. The benefits that the restored canal would bring were much lauded. The Local Authorities provided large sums of capital and the voluntary sector rose to the challenge to give us the canal we have today.
- 1.2. Since being officially re-opened in 1991 the Basingstoke Canal has become a much used and well loved local feature, being designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest in 1995 for its outstanding wildlife value.
- 1.3. It has been a success, and become an integrated part of the local scene. However, the canal is in danger of becoming a victim of this success. To coin a phrase, familiarity breeds contempt! The daily running of the canal and maintenance of the 200 year old structure is “un – glamorous”; yet it is essential. It is important to remember that the canal is basically unnatural – it is an attempt to keep water where it doesn’t necessarily want to be. Water is constantly seeking “short cuts” along the line of least resistance and this process of constant hydraulic pressure and activity takes a great toll on the engineering features. Both the state of the SSSI and the structure itself is coming under threat as the Canal budget is continually cut and preventative maintenance takes second place to emergencies and essentials.

## 2. Recreational Opportunity

- 2.1. The Basingstoke Canal provides a unique local resource giving free access to 32 miles of beautiful waterway, the majority of it a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest for its wildlife value. Whether on, or next to, the water it provides opportunity for relaxation and enjoyment as well as more challenging physical and mental pursuits. Some of its key recreational attributes include:
- 2.2. It is estimated that there are around **one third of million (see Sub Appendix1) regular local towpath users** plus visitors from further afield.
- 2.3. It is calculated that over **17,000 people had a boat trip on the Canal in 2003, (see Sub Appendix1)** in addition to private boat owners.
- 2.4. It provides a regionally scarce facility for navigation and general boating. Three charities along the canal operate boats specially adapted for people in wheelchairs.
- 2.5. It is one of a few watersports venues in the area, providing both safe and challenging (in terms of distance) facilities for canoeists of all abilities. Three very active canoe clubs are based on the Canal. It is estimated that **nearly 4000 canoeists** (see Sub Appendix 1) use the canal as part of a

structured activity every year. Specialist organisations exist to help people of all abilities to enjoy canoeing.

- 2.6. It provides **32 miles of very accessible, flat walking suitable for people of a range of abilities**, from the serious Rambler to families with push chairs and people of limited ability. Much of the towpath is suitable for wheelchair users, providing a link from urban areas out in to quite remote countryside.
- 2.7. The towpath provides **clearly defined accessible countryside** for those **individuals, groups and cultures less at ease in the outdoors**. There is no fear of getting lost or straying on to private land, thus encouraging more people to enjoy walking and the health and relaxation benefits that brings.
- 2.8. It provides a **safe venue for off-road family cycling**, away from the dangers of the road.
- 2.9. It is one of the **best canal fisheries in the country**, with day tickets available for all comers and a venue for National Angling Championships. In 2003 5,200 Anglers were affiliated to the Angling Association via club membership whilst individual permits were sold to 1,500 local anglers – meaning there are some **7000 regular anglers**. In addition, visiting anglers take part in matches on the canal. In 2004 30 matches are booked with an average of 87 participants in each, creating another 2,500 visits.

### 3. Wildlife Conservation Value

- 3.1. The Basingstoke Canal is a designated SSSI. It was designated for its **rich variety of aquatic plants – more than any other water body in Britain** – and their associated wildlife, particularly dragonflies. The Greywell Tunnel, at the western end of the Canal is a designated SSSI in its own right, being Britain's largest bat hibernation site and the second largest roost site in Europe for certain species..

**Maintaining the wildlife value of the Canal is a statutory obligation under the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000.** The Canals owners could be fined for failing to meet their obligations.

- 3.2. The tree lined waterway, with its reed margins and banks of wildflowers provides a **rich variety of habitat for rare and not so rare species** of wildlife.
- 3.3. The **wildlife value of the Canal undoubtedly adds to its recreational attractiveness**. For many, the thrill of seeing a kingfisher, a shoal of fish or a swarm of blue dragonflies makes the Canal a really special place to spend some time.

**3.4.** The Canal contributes considerably to the biodiversity of the areas through which it flows, and ensuring it remains in good condition will help **Local Authorities meet their Biodiversity Action Plan targets**

**3.5.** However, it has been noted in recent years that the SSSI is in quite serious decline. Ironically, the shading from canalside trees, high silt load and recreational pressures are just some of the causes of this decline and the Conservation Working Party are looking at ways to turn this around whilst maintaining the canal as a viable recreational asset.

## **4. Wider Benefits of the Canal**

**4.1.** In addition to the more easily recognised attributes of the Canal listed above, it has many other benefits, contributing significantly to local quality of life. These include:

### **4.2. Local Economy**

The presence of the Canal contributes significantly to the local economy in a number of ways. This is a difficult figure to quantify as no two people will spend the same on a day trip nor is it easy to identify what elements of, for example, a pub's profits are due to canal visitors. Nationally, some attempts at establishing a formula for calculating economic benefit have been made (see Sub - Appendix 1), although these have to be taken as a guide rather than as hard facts. Nevertheless, **figures would indicate that visitors and canal users make a contribution to the local economy running to £millions a year.**

### **4.3. Employment**

The Canal Authority employs 17 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff. There are 4 or 5 other FTE positions employed directly on the canal through commercial operators etc.

It is difficult to estimate the number of indirect jobs created by the Canal. The Canal Authority spends some £300,000 per year on supplies and services, generally using local suppliers, contractors etc.

**The visitor spend will create numerous employment openings in local shops, pubs and restaurants. Direct jobs are provided for over 20 people.**

### **4.4. House Prices**

Either backing directly on to, or in close proximity to the Canal certainly adds value to property. Estimates vary from between 10 – 25% (various sources).

**Whilst not having a direct effect on the local economy, higher property prices will have indirect effects through attracting higher earners with a higher spend to an area.**

#### **4.5. Local Drainage Function**

The area surrounding the Canal developed rapidly through the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Over this period the Canal has become integrated as part of the local drainage network. It takes run – off from roads and built up areas as well as taking drainage directly from new developments via pipes and outfalls. Following heavy rainfall, the West/ East flow of water has to be carefully controlled and managed as urban run-off builds up in the canal. Drainage is a vital role, especially in these times of higher rainfall and associated flooding. Management of the local drainage network is a statutory function carried out by Local Authorities in conjunction with the Environment Agency.

**This function of the Canal warrants statutory funding and investment by Local Authorities and the Environment Agency as part of their responsibility to minimise flooding risk.**

#### **4.6. Health**

The Canal provides a venue for both physical and mental relaxation. It has many opportunities for exercise at all levels, from a gentle, flat stroll to long distance canoeing, jogging or the “Green Gym” benefits of voluntary physical work.

**As an accessible, free, safe, resource on the doorstep of thousands which provides for a variety of formal and informal opportunities to benefit health, the Canal is unsurpassed locally.**

#### **4.7. Social Integration and Development**

Being accessible and on the doorstep of thousands of people, the Canal has rapidly become a popular resource for social interaction. Many opportunities exist.

- 4.7.1.** There are many clubs associated with the Canal, providing a chance for social contact, development of skills and providing a platform for people to take an active role in life at all ages.
- 4.7.2.** Associated with Canal based clubs and organisations is the opportunity to get involved as a volunteer, providing self esteem and challenge as well as a sense of contributing to the community. Whether carrying out maintenance with the Surrey and Hants Canal Society, teaching youngsters to fish, or organising a fundraiser for the Boat Club, volunteer opportunities abound. Without these volunteers, the Canal would not be the facility it is today.
- 4.7.3.** Each year, the Canal provides an ideal venue for many sponsored events and activities – canoe races, duck races, bike rides, BBQs, walks and even scuba dives have all taken place recently. The money this ploughs back in to local good causes is difficult to quantify, but is likely to be in the 10s of £1000s.

**4.7.4.** The easy access, proximity to urban areas, safety and beauty of the Canal and the roles it provides makes it of particular benefit to many “target groups” including local older people, younger people and people with special needs. It helps to break down barriers between different social and cultural groups and between people and their environment.

**4.8. The vital volunteer input and contribution to society needs to be shown the respect it deserves through being matched by adequate funding for maintenance and infrastructure.**

**4.9. Educational Value:**

**4.9.1. Formal:** The Canal is used as a formal part of the education curriculum for all Key Stage levels, as well as degree and postgraduate coursework. Most of this work is co-ordinated by the Canal Authority through the Visitor Centre at Mytchett, although an unknown amount of additional educational visits and field work does take place. The Canal’s unique social history, geographical issues, engineering aspects, and abundant wildlife and conservation interest make it an ideal resource for formal education from nursery through to graduate and post-graduate coursework.

**4.9.2. Informal:** As a venue for lifelong learning, the Canal is ideal. It is used regularly for art, history, wildlife interest, health, wellbeing and personal growth courses. Through volunteering, there are boundless opportunities to learn new skills and develop interests.

**4.9.3.** A simple walk along the canal for a young child can provide a huge range of stimulus and interest, inspiring an interest in the natural world and encouraging the pursuit of outdoor interests and their associated health benefits.

**4.9.4. As an outdoor education resource, the Canal is unmatched locally for the variety and range of experience, stimulus, interest, relevance and accessibility it has. Further investment could make it a significant regional education resource.**

**4.10. Heritage interest**

The Canal provides an important slice of local history, being instrumental in the development of the local area and its economy. Evidence of its changing role and use is evident in the associated wharves, bridges, locks and structures as well as the remains of second world war defences and more recent changes and improvements.

**The Canal provides much historic interest as well as providing the important root to local identity sought by many in an area of constant change and growth.**

#### 4.11. Sustainability issues:

The Canal can contribute towards sustainability in many ways. It provides a number of social, economic, health and environmental benefits as can be seen elsewhere in this document.

**The towpath itself contributes significantly towards the reduction in traffic congestion by providing a suitable route to school, work, shopping etc. for walking and cycling.**

Transport by boat is being encouraged nationally to contribute towards reducing road congestion.

**Whilst commercial freight transport is not really viable on the Basingstoke Canal, the historic principle of waterborne transport on the Canal can encourage people to open their mind to alternatives.**

**4.12. Landscape character** The Canal adds considerably to the landscape and aesthetic value along its route. Through the more urban centres of Woking, St Johns, Ash and Fleet it provides a tree – lined environment and a green corridor which continues through the more outlying suburban areas. The old locks and bridges provide visual and historic interest along the length of the Canal contributing considerably to the local setting.

## 5. What it Costs

**5.1.** The Basingstoke Canal Authority requested a sum of £502,400 from Local Authority partners in 2004/05 to manage the Canal, in line with the agreed funding formula. A number of Authorities were unable to meet their request. The budget is made up as follows:

<b>AUTHORITY</b>	<b>ORIGINAL</b>	<b>ACTUAL</b>
Surrey CC	140,500	140,500
Guildford	33,000	33,000
Runnymede	15,900	<b>8,000</b>
Surrey Heath	19,800	<b>11,000</b>
Woking	48,400	48,400
Hampshire CC	140,500	140,500
Hart	60,700	<b>20,000</b>
Rushmoor	<u>43,600</u>	<u>43,600</u>
<b>Total Cost to rate payers</b>	<b>502,400</b>	<b>445,000</b> (minus <b>£57.4k</b> )
Income Generation from BCA (See Appendix1)		<u>150,200</u>
<b>TOTAL BUDGET</b>		<b>595,200</b>

**5.2.** This cost to local Council Tax payers of £502,400 works out at **approx. 90pence per head per year for residents of the riparian Districts and Boroughs. (See Sub Appendix1)**

**5.3.** The shortfall represents 11.4% of the budget. Both Surrey Heath and Hart have failed to meet their funding request for several years now. Runnymede are cutting for the first time and have indicated this to be “permanent”.

**5.4.** The budget for the Basingstoke Canal works out at approx. £20,000 per mile. British Waterways spend approx. £70,000 per mile. In this context it can be seen that the Basingstoke Canal would be poorly funded, even if all partners met their obligations.

**5.5.** This under- funding, exacerbated by cuts in recent years, is now seriously taking its toll on the ability of the Canals managers to meet the maintenance backlog and maximise potential for visitors. This will have effects on the safety of the Canal and the quality of nature conservation and navigation. Whilst the Basingstoke Canal Authority can fundraise and acquire grants for some works, the basic maintenance and upkeep is “un attractive” for fund providers. This essential work therefore must continue to be provided for by the Local Authority partners whose populations benefit from the Canal.

**It is therefore timely to re-establish the importance of the Canal and the role it plays in the local and regional community as a way of demonstrating to funding partner Local Authorities the value it provides and the dangers that underinvestment will cause.**

**L Thornton – Canal Director Feb 2005.**

**Attached : Sub - Appendix 1**



## Sub Appendix 1 BASINGSTOKE CANAL – FACTS AND FIGURES 2003/04

### 1. Visitor Numbers

- 1.1. Local Population:** The Canal runs through 6 District and Borough Council areas (the “Riparian Boroughs”) . Figures show the population of these Boroughs to total 552,290 residents. (Source: Council Websites).
- 1.2.** In addition to the Riparian Boroughs, regular users are likely to come from the large population areas of adjoining Boroughs including: Basingstoke and Deane, Waverley (Farnham) and Bracknell Forest (Bracknell, Sandhurst, Crowthorne etc).
- 1.3.** Research at Rushmoor Borough Council has indicated that 44% of the population are Canal users. Centrally based on the Canal, with a population housed further from the Canal than in Woking, yet nearer than in, say, Hart, Rushmoor could be considered a fair indicator of local use.
- 1.4.** Extrapolating this 44% figure to the local population gives a user total of approx ¼ million people from the riparian Boroughs. Allowing for the highly populous neighbouring Boroughs, an **estimate of 1/3million** users would not be excessive. Assuming 3 or 4 visits per year (once every 2 months) we arrive at a figure of approximately **1million Annual Visits Per Year**
- 1.5. Private Boating:** The BCA typically issues 120 Annual Licences and 150 Visitor Licences a year for powered boats. In addition over 280 canoe licences are issued.

### 1.6. Passenger and Holiday Boats:

**1.6.1.** In 2003 the **BCA** ran the boat operation at the Canal Centre, Mytchett:

- 130 Self Drive Hires took place for 960 people
- 42 Chartered Cruises took place for 1050 people
- Approx. 6000 passengers took a short boat trip
- 1400 passengers enjoyed a “Santa Cruise”

**1.6.2. Galleon Marine** at Odiham took 130 holiday bookings (typically a 1 week holiday) with an average of 5 passengers a time = 650 people. In addition 40 day hires took place for approx 320 people.

**1.6.3. The Surrey and Hants Canal Society** provide approx. 130 Chartered Cruises p.a. for 30 – 40 passengers = 4,445 people. In addition 46 public trips took place for 900 people.

**1.6.4. Accessible Boating** provide hire boats for people with disabilities and their carers. 106 day hire bookings were made in 2003.

**1.6.5. Maggie G** operated by volunteers in Woking provides trips for groups with disabled members. 42 trips with 173 passengers were

made in 2003

**1.6.6. The Swingbridge Community Boat** gave trips to more than 700 people from disadvantaged backgrounds in 2003.

**1.7.** Overall almost **17,000 people enjoyed** a trip on the Canal in 2003.

## **2. Visitors and Users Spend**

**2.1.** The Inland Waterways Association ( Restoration Handbook, Harrison. 1999) give the following figures for visitor spend, based on 1996 prices:

Private Boats	£3,100 per boat/ p.a.
Hire Boats	£23,000 pb/p.a.
Trip Boats	£27,500 pb/pa
Anglers	£3.09 per visit
Informal Visitors	£3.53 per visit

**2.2.** Based on the Canal's 5 hire boats and 4 trip boats and approx 100 resident private boats we arrive at a figure of **£535,000** plus the spend of the 200 or so visiting boats per annum. The 1million informal visits will generate approximately **£3,500,000** . Meanwhile the 7000 regular anglers, assuming just 6 visits per year, plus the 2,500 match visitors will have spent approx **£130,000**.

Allowing a modest 25% for inflation since 1996, plus unaccounted spend from visiting boats, an estimate of £5,000,000 per year input to the local economy from the Canal's visitors could be made. However there are many variables and these figures should be used cautiously.

## **3. Canal Income Generation**

### **3.1. Canal Authority Income Generation**

Income for 2003/04 can be broken down as follows:

Boat Licences	20,247
Sales	1,930*
Angling	9,013
Rents and Hire	32,550
Events	11,492
Fibre Optic Cable	50,399
Donations/Grants	35,955**
Commercial Ops.	<u>69***</u>
TOTAL TO REVENUE:	161655
CAPITAL GRANTS	42,000 (Waterways Trust / SITA)

Notes: \* Larger profit offset by bulk purchase of new Canal Guides near end of Financial Year

\*\* Includes £20,000 from English Nature

\*\*\* Reflects set up costs of first year of operation of Tea Room

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