

Basingstoke Canal Options Appraisal

Success Criteria

The following criteria are shown below in summary, and on the following page in detail to explain what is meant by each criteria. The purpose of developing success criteria is in order that potential options can be evaluated against each to indicate which may be the most feasible options to explore in more detail regarding the potential way forward.

Criteria
Financial sustainability/cost effectiveness
Structural integrity
Environmental value
Accessibility – use of towpath and recreational asset
User representation and support
Navigation

Evaluation mechanism

This is the scoring mechanism that will be used for each option to judge how well it meets each of the success criteria.

1	Fully meets the criteria
2	Meets the criteria in part
3	Marginally meets the criteria
4	Does not meet the criteria
5	Adverse impact on criteria

Basingstoke Canal Options Appraisal**Success Criteria**

The success criteria explained in more detail**Financial sustainability/cost effectiveness**

The Canal is reliant on regular revenue income to meet its operational management requirements. Local Authorities are a key contributor. For the past seven years the revenue funding has been insufficient to meet the Canals obligations by approximately 10% per annum (circa £50,000). There have been reductions in maintenance work and dredging work has been repeatedly postponed. Any option would:

- Need available funding to meet the daily requirement
- Need flexibility and resources available to be able to raise additional revenue income, through those suggestions raised at the stakeholder workshop 11 July 2005
- Ensure any Local Authority contributors meet their requirements
- Any option must be cost effective to implement and operate

Structural integrity

The Canal is a 200 year old structure which needs regular routine maintenance and surveying to ensure it remains a safe and stable facility. Any option would:

- Need to have staff with the appropriate expertise and knowledge in place, for example, surveying embankments and dangerous trees
- Plant and equipment available to maintain, for example, banks, trees, lock structures, gates
- Need sufficient staffing to ensure 24/7 safe management of water
- Protect flood defence responsibility

Environmental value

Most of the Canal attracts SSSI status (except Woking town centre), and this has a statutory obligation for ongoing maintenance to retain the environmental value. It is the water that attracts the SSSI, not the banks or towpath. This means that the rare and interesting aquatic plants and associated fauna (dragonfly and insects) all need to be retained and the area managed.

However, the SSSI status is in severe decline and this trend needs to be reversed. Any option would need to:

- Maintain and enhance the water quality and levels to retain the SSSI to the required level (if water levels are not maintained the SSSI will be removed with associated penalties)

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Success Criteria

Accessibility – use of towpath and recreational asset

The Canal has approximately 1/3 million regular users and the aim is to encourage and increase use into the future. Any option would therefore need to ensure that:

- There is a well maintained towpath open 365 days per annum
- There is free and open access to the Canal and its facilities 365 days per annum
- Effective licensing is maintained (for boats, gardens, gates and fishing)

User representation and support

Currently there is a large volunteer input, and this includes:

- Canoeing club run on voluntary basis for canoeing opportunities on the Canal
- Angling society managed and baliffed
- Boating interests by Boatclub, IWA
- Canal Society undertake large amount in voluntarily maintenance on the towpath and water structure
- Three organisations run by volunteers for special needs using adapted boats

The user groups are currently supported and aided in their work by the Canal centre. There are specific joint working group established, for example, Recreation Development Group, Conservation Working Party, Joint Advisory Group plus other ad hoc forums and workshops.

Any option would need to ensure that the current joined up and co-operative working with user groups is maintained and that their views are listened to.

Current arrangements through a Joint Advisory Group and Joint Management Committee provide opportunities for open discussion and decision making on all significant areas of operation. Future options would need to address the same issues.

Navigation

Navigation forms the historic basis for the existence of the Canal. All or significant parts of the Canal should remain navigable for users during the year. Use by boats adds a key dimension to the experience of all Canal users albeit that comes at a cost. Water supply and levels remains a major challenge in forms of sustaining navigation at certain times of the year albeit major effects have been made to tackle this.