

**Hampshire County Council**

**Basingstoke Canal Joint Management Committee          Item 8**

**21 October 2005**

**SECURING THE FUTURE MANAGEMENT OF BASINGSTOKE  
CANAL**

**Report of the Director of Recreation and Heritage**

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**1. Summary**

This report provides members with a copy of the report recently considered by the Joint Advisory Group (Appendix 1), and updates members on discussions concerning the future management of the Canal. In response to a request by members to look at options for the future the report provides an initial assessment and highlights those potential options which could benefit from detailed feasibility study. The report seeks the views of Elected Members in confirming those options which they would like to see progressed to such a detailed feasibility stage.

**2. Background**

- 2.1 In the face of ongoing financial constraints faced by many local authorities some members of the JMC have expressed concern over the long-term financing of the Basingstoke Canal Authority.
- 2.2 Despite considerable work by the Canal Director and others in terms of highlighting the value and benefits brought by the Canal including an advocacy document and presentation, these concerns remain.
- 2.3 As a consequence of these circumstances Hampshire County Council, working with colleagues in Surrey County Council, commissioned work to consider potential options for the future of the Canal.
- 2.4 This process was opened to all the key players associated with the Canal through a process set out in section 2 of the attached report (Appendix 1). This was a very open process and allowed all contributors to put forward ideas some of which were radical in terms of potential impact. From this perspective it was felt that all options should be considered.
- 2.5 The outputs of this process have been shared with all participants and considered through the process set out in section 3 of the attached report (Appendix 1).

**3. The Views of the Joint Advisory Group**

- 3.1 The Joint Advisory Group have fully supported the process to date and have contributed very positively to that process. All parties involved welcomed the attempt to look constructively at this matter, and to try and secure a sustainable future for the Canal.
- 3.2 The list of options put before the Joint Management Committee has been considered and supported by the Joint Advisory Group, albeit it is very important

to highlight the position taken by the Canal Society. The Society understood why some of the more unpalatable options concerning restrictions to navigation on the Canal are being considered, but expressed their unequivocal opposition to any such move. It also expressed deep concern over the potential impact of any such proposal. The Society do however wish to participate fully in any further discussions as set out in section 4 of this report.

3.3 The evaluation and success criteria considered by the Joint Advisory Group are attached as Appendices 2 and 3 respectively.

#### 4. **Next Steps**

4.1 Should Members support the proposals set out in the Joint Advisory Group report and the recommendations within this report it is proposed that detailed feasibility work will be undertaken over the winter and spring period.

4.2 The new Canal Director will need to help lead this process and will be a pivotal player as soon as he/she is in post.

4.3 Some options may require more technical feasibility work than others and as such the timescale for the work will need a degree of flexibility. A detailed progress report will be brought to the next JMC.

#### **Recommendations**

The Joint Advisory Group recommend that members of the JMC:

- Ratify and support the key success criteria established to assess possible future management options
- Consider the evaluated options and confirm their preferred positions in terms of the options
- Confirm which options should be short listed and subject to detailed feasibility work
- Agree to supporting this process through the involvements of members and officers where appropriate

On the basis of the scoring shown in Appendix 2 it is recommended that members of the JMC support options (numbers and lettering relates to Appendix 2):

- 1) Revised management arrangements
  - (a) cutting level of service
  - (d) formalise funding arrangement
- 2) Management by a third party
  - (a) British Waterways
  - (b) National Trust
  - (d) Set up an independent body such as a charitable trust or private company
- 3) Stop or limit navigation
  - (b) Retain water but stop through boat movements.