

MINUTES: of the meeting of the Basingstoke Canal Joint Management Committee held at the Basingstoke Canal Centre, Mytchett, at 10.05am on Friday 18 April 2008

Members

Hampshire County Council Cllr K G Chapman(Vice-Chairman)	Surrey County Council Mrs Elizabeth Compton
a Cllr B T Gurden	a Mr John Doran
Cllr P Hutcheson	Mr David Munro (Chairman)
Cllr R J Kimber	Mrs Diana Smith
Hampshire Districts:	Surrey Districts:
Hart District Council Cllr Simon Ambler	Guildford Borough Council
a Cllr Kenneth Crookes	a Cllr Mike Nevins
Rushmoor Borough Council Cllr J H Marsh	Runnymede Borough Council Cllr A J Davis
a Cllr M J Tennant	
Co-opted Member Appointed by Committee Cllr Alan Rice TD Mr Michael Gammon	Surrey Heath Borough Council Cllr Craig Fennell
	Woking Borough Council Cllr Mrs B A Hunwicks

Special Interest Groups:

Natural England Ms Catherine Chatters	Surrey and Hampshire Canal Society Mr P Redway MBE
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a = Absent

[All references to Items and Appendices refer to the Agenda for the meeting bound with the Minutes]

PART 1

IN PUBLIC

01/08 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS** [Item 1]

Apologies were received from Councillors Gurden, Crookes and Tennant and Mr Doran.

02/08 **MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING: 19 October 2007** [Item 2]

The minutes were confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

It was noted in relation to Minute 17/07:

Paragraph 4 that discussions had taken place and progress had been made;

Paragraph 5 the proposal from the Basingstoke Canoe Club to build a club house at Odiham is still at the planning stage. Progress will be reported to the next meeting.

03/08 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST** [Item 4]

None.

04/08 **QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS** [Item 5]

No questions or petitions were received.

05/08 **CANAL DIRECTOR'S REPORT** [Item 6]

The Director highlighted the main points of his report and the Committee noted the progress achieved in a number of areas. The following additional points were made:

Conservation Management Plan

Members discussed the policy in relation to trees adjacent to the Canal. The Director reported that tree management is taken very seriously as this is important for the safe operation of the Canal and conservation. It will be necessary to reduce tree cover by about 10% over a period of years to maintain light levels and to protect the structure of the Canal. No new trees will be planted within 5 metres of the Canal.

It was noted that further drafting and consultation will take place over the summer with stakeholders in preparation for a final draft to be presented to Natural England for Assent with final approval for implementation by the next JMC in October 2008.

Service Level Agreements

The Committee expressed its appreciation to Hart District Council for making a full financial contribution this year despite financial pressures. The representative from Hart District Council urged other authorities who have not been able to make the full contribution to do so by building up the contribution from a variety of budget heads.

It was reported that Runnymede Borough Council still have some concerns about the formula as if it is calculated on the population figures 5 miles either side of the canal this will include people who are not residents of the Borough. Runnymede is not able to contribute the full amount, but it is possible that landfill tax credits could be recycled as work in kind.

Resource Management

The Chairman undertook to write to express appreciation to the retiring operations manager. The Director was asked to notify the Chairman if any other long-term members of staff were retiring.

[Post meeting note: Letter has been sent by Chairman.]

Risk Management

Noted that there is still much work to do in this area. A significant shortfall in capital funding has increased the level of risk, but it is controllable and there is a robust policy in place to deal with emergency situations.

Major Engineering Work and Disruption to Operation

There was disappointment that it had not been possible to complete the works on the canal during the closed season and that the work is now causing considerable disruption and potential loss of income. The Director reported that the work on the replacement rail bridge was a massive engineering project the like of which had not been carried out anywhere previously and it would not have been possible to complete it within the 3-4 month closed season. Network Rail had paid the cost of craning out the John Pinkerton from below the engineering obstruction and back into the Canal for continued operation. Compensation payments for others affected by the closure were under discussion. The Committee requested that a realistic policy on handling this type of project should be submitted to the next meeting.

Towpath Improvement Project in Woking

Noted that ways of diverting cyclists around narrow underpasses are being considered. There was concern that some cyclists are inconsiderate and dangerous. Whilst they are in the minority it is hoped that they can be restricted by means of barriers and notices requesting users to report antisocial behaviour. It was suggested that it should be a requirement for all bikes using the tow path to be fitted with a bell.

Twinning

Members endorsed the progress towards twinning, but felt that a measured approach should be taken and that resources should not be diverted to any large extent from the Canal. It was noted that Rushmoor Borough Council was a twinning champion and may be able to help with the process.

Resolved:

That the Director be supported in his work and permitted to carry out items as suggested within the report and appendices.

06/08 ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN [Item 8]

Noted the report.

It was reported that the car park for the Canal at Fleet, owned by Hampshire County Council, is used all day by business users and makes visiting the Canal by car in that area difficult. Mr Tickle agreed to investigate and to report back to the next meeting on any possible solution.

07/08 REPORT OF THE HONORARY TREASURER [Item 8]

Noted that current indications were that last years budget would be overspent by approximately £25-30k as a result of structural failures, but this had been offset to some extent by a increase in income of £8-10k and a reduction in the transport budget.

The decision of Hart District Council to make the full scale contribution in 2008/09 was welcomed. This will reduce the funding deficit in 2008/09 to 3.7%.

Resolved:

- (a) That the Canal Director be authorised to take the necessary steps as outlined in paragraph 3 of the report to contain the net expenditure during 2008/09 to meet the shortfall in contributions from the partner authorities.
- (b) That Runnymede and Surrey Heath Borough Councils be encouraged to honour the requested scale contributions for 2008/09.

08/08 **REPORT OF THE SURREY AND HAMPSHIRE CANAL SOCIETY** [Item 9]

Members thanked the Society for its hard work.

A Members asked whether now the banks had been cleared in Woking, it would be possible to put up some kind of screen along the Canal so that the Victoria Way traffic is less visible from the Canal. It was reported that some ideas were being considered as part of the Conservation Management Plan.

09/08 **DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS** [Item 10]

Agreed that the next meeting would take place on Friday 17 October 2008 at 10.05 am at the Canal Centre.

[Meeting Ended: 11.50am]

Chairman