

MINUTES: of the meeting of the Basingstoke Canal Joint Management Committee held at the Basingstoke Canal Centre, Mytchett, at 10.05am on Friday 25 June 2010

Members

Hampshire County Council
Cllr Keith Chapman (Chairman)
Cllr Brian Gurden
a Cllr Roger Kimber
a Cllr Jenny Radley

Hampshire Districts:
Hart District Council
Cllr Simon Ambler
a Cllr Sara Kinnell

Rushmoor Borough Council
a Cllr R Hughes
Cllr J H Marsh

Surrey County Council
Mrs Elizabeth Compton
a Ben Carasco
Mr Chris Pitt (Vice-Chairman)
Mrs Diana Smith

Surrey Districts:
Guildford Borough Council
Cllr Pat Scott

Runnymede Borough Council
Cllr J M Edwards

Surrey Heath Borough Council
a Cllr David Whitcroft

Woking Borough Council
Cllr G Preshaw

Special Interest Groups:

Natural England
Carole Mortimer

Parish Councils
Alastair Clark

Basingstoke Canal Houseboat Owners' Association
a Ms Kathy Williams

Surrey and Hampshire Canal Society
Mr P Redway MBE
Mr P Riley

Inland Waterways Association
a Paul Roper

Business Interests
a Galleon Marine - Mrs Peile

a = absent

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

PART 1

IN PUBLIC

10/10 **ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN** [Item 1]

Resolved: That Mr Chapman be elected Chairman for 2010/11.

11/10 **ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN** [Item 2]

Resolved: That Mr Chris Pitt be elected Vice-Chairman for 2010/11.

12/10 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS** [Item 3]

Apologies were received from Councillors Hughes and Radley and Ben Carasco and Mrs Peile

13/10 **MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING: 19 February 2010** [Item 4]

Subject to the following amendment, the minutes were confirmed and signed by the Chairman:

Minute 06/10 final bullet point, second line "deceased" should read "decreased"

In relation to Minute 07/10 Philip Riley reported that he is currently working on updating the value for money document.

The Committee noted with regret the death of Mike Nevins the previous representative from Guildford Borough Council. New members were welcomed to the committee

14/10 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST** [Item 5]

None.

15/10 **QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS** [Item 6]

No petitions or questions had been received.

16/10 **BASINGSTOKE CANAL ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN** [Item 7]

Noted under the section entitled "Next steps" "secondary" should read "principal".

Key Points Raised during the Discussion:

- The Committee felt that a contribution from the two County Councils of the order of £1.6m was to be welcomed in view of the current budget restrictions facing local authorities.
- Noted that the new Chief Executive of Surrey County Council and the Leader and Chief Executive of Hampshire County Council had visited the Canal to see the issues first hand.
- It was further noted that all the surveys had not been completed and it was possible that the money set aside may not be sufficient when the results of these are received.

Further Information to be Provided/ Actions:

None.

Recommendations:

None.

17/10 **CANAL DIRECTORS REPORT** [Item 8]

Key Points Raised during the Discussion:

- Noted that work was ongoing to find a more appropriate form of signage for the cycle paths around Woking. 13 km of towpath have been improved using funding from a variety of sources and further funding is available for future work.
- Cllr Scott asked for an update on the diseases associated with the Canal. The Director reported that Weil's Disease is not a significant risk although swimming in the Canal is discouraged and others using the Canal should be aware of the possible dangers. It was noted that it is not the water that attracts the rats, but the litter particularly in areas such as Ash Wharf where there are shops close to the Canal. Cllr Scott reported that she had been working closely with the businesses in this area to ensure that they were made aware of the need to keep bins secure.
- Cllr Scott also raised the issue of the area of land behind the shops near Ash Wharf that is detracting from the work done by the Borough Council to improve the area. The Canal Director reported that it had proved difficult to determine who owned this area of land and undertook to work with Cllr Scott to resolve the issue.

Further Information to be Provided/ Actions:

- The Canal Director and Cllr Scott to share information on the area of unsightly land at Ash Wharf Action: Ian Brown/Cllr Scott

Resolved:

- (a) That the Director be supported on items as suggested and discussed in this report.
- (b) That the partnership continues to support the canal through the adopted SLA approach in this challenging time.

18/10 **CHARITABLE TRUST STATUS REPORT** [Item 8]

Key Points Raised during the Discussion:

- Members congratulated those involved for producing a very comprehensive and clear report and generally supported its conclusions.
- It was suggested that there may be scope for cost sharing and collaborative working with for example the National Trust who own the neighbouring Wey Navigation. This would be dependant on the establishment of a mutualised conservancy approach being adopted, with most of the other waterways joining, possibly through a third sector model.

Further Information to be Provided/ Actions:

None.

Resolved:

That the two County Council owners be recommended to address the following:

Recommendations that could be undertaken regardless of a move to charitable trust/third sector to put the Canal's "house in order"

- (a) Consider the case for updating the objectives of the BCA to reflect the need for a more commercial outlook in generating significant income levels. If this was agreed a skills audit would be required, a training needs analysis completed, training provided and subsequent income performance related targets set.
- (b) That the cost base of the Canal is reduced, with a realistic target established to compensate for the reduced revenue contributions.
- (c) Re-establish the income generation sub-group, including stakeholder representatives such as the Surrey and Hampshire Canal Society, the Inland Waterways Association and the Director of Development HMG and Manager of Milestones Museum, and task its membership with realising specific income targets. The starting points could be the proposals within the 2007 report produced by the Director of the Hampshire Museums and Galleries Trust, along with the recent joint working initiatives announced with Milestones and the Canal Society.
- (d) Through the income generation sub-group:
 - (i) Work closely with the Surrey and Hampshire Canal Society to identify and agree where their trust could be beneficial in accessing specific targeted grants that would otherwise not be available to the local authority owners.
 - (ii) Explore the potential income generating opportunities from land and property adjoining the Canal.
 - (iii) Work in partnership with the Director of the Hampshire Museums and Galleries Trust to utilise the available income generation expertise.
- (e) Consider changing the branding and enhancing the marketing to increase engagement of funders and participation of volunteers and the local community.
- (f) Work in partnership with the Surrey and Hampshire Canal Society, and other interested volunteer groups, to overcome the current barriers to effective volunteer working.
- (g) Work in partnership with the Surrey and Hampshire Canal Society to increase the active volunteer base on the Canal.
- (h) That progress in achieving these recommendations, including the income levels and savings achieved, is formally reported to and monitored by the Joint Management Committee as part of the Canal Directors report.

Recommendation relating to the further exploitation of charitable trust status

- (i) If there is still support to further investigate the potential move of the Basingstoke Canal into the third sector that the two County Council owners jointly commission a legal report to assess and recommend the most appropriate governance model at some mutually agreed future point.
- (i) At a suitable future point, when the Canal represents a more attractive proposition as a financially sustainable organisation, open discussions with British Waterways regarding the potential for consolidation into their mutualised structure, assuming this progresses as currently proposed.

19/10 **VISITOR SERVICE AND RECREATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN**
[Item 10]

Key Points Raised during the Discussion:

- It was recognised that it will be necessary to draw up a clear business plan setting out what needs to be done by when. The Canal Director does not have the expertise to achieve this alone and may need support from within the County Councils or externally.
- It was suggested that the Plan should focus on quick wins to prioritise actions on things that can bring in income quickly such as the field at the Canal Centre
- It was suggested that a student from the Government funded Future Jobs fund may be available and could be used to help draw up the Plan.

Further Information to be Provided/ Actions:

None.

Resolved:

That the Basingstoke Canal Authority be asked to address and implement the following:

- (a) The cost base of the Canal is reduced, with realistic savings being transferred into maintaining the canal as a viable recreational facility that is sustainable measured against the reduced revenue contributions.
- (b) Set up an income generation steering group, comprising stakeholder representatives such as the Boating and Canoe Clubs, Surrey and Hampshire Canal Society, the Inland Waterways Association, Natural England and the Basingstoke Canal Angling Association to assist the Canal Director and task its membership with realising realistic income targets based on solid feasible activities in balance with the ecological value of the canal through this plan;
- (c) Work in partnership with county countryside and museum partners and utilise their income generation expertise.
- (d) Cost base reduction and income generation targets should be set progressively with the intention to recover at least the current £32,000

shortfall in revenue funding, and then build from there.

- (e) Work closely with Surrey and Hampshire Canal Society to consider what external funding initiatives could be accessed through their registered business and charitable status to further support the Canal.
- (f) Consider changing the branding and enhancing the marketing to increase engagement of future funders and greater participation of volunteers.
- (g) Work in partnership with the Surrey and Hampshire Canal Society to increase the active volunteer base on the Canal.
- (h) Encourage and foster a more robust and formal cross partnership working model.
- (i) That the final business case and action plan be delivered to the next meeting of the Basingstoke Canal Joint Management Committee in October 2010.

20/10 **FINAL ACCOUNTS 2009/10** [Item 11]

Key Points Raised during the Discussion:

- It was pointed out that as an increasing number of the District and Boroughs Councils fail to pay their full contribution it will become more difficult for those paying the full amount to justify continuing to do so.
- Members felt that there were significant risks associated with failing to properly fund the Canal and that those not currently contributing fully should be made aware of both the risks and the benefits of the Canal.

Further Information to be Provided/ Actions:

None.

Resolved:

- (a) That the final accounts of the Basingstoke Canal Authority for the year ended 31 March 2010 be approved.
- (b) That £20,000 be transferred from the Canal Infrastructure reserve to cover the 2009/10 revenue deficit.
- (c) That £3,589 be transferred from the Canal Centre and Mooring Basin reserve to cover the 2009/10 revenue deficit.

21/10 **ANNUAL RETURN AND GOVERNANCE STATEMENT – 2009/10** [Item 12]

Key Points Raised during the Discussion:

- Noted that Canal accounts had been subject to external audit last year and no areas of concern had been found.

Further Information to be Provided/ Actions:

None

Recommendations:

- (a) That the Annual Governance Statement for 2009/10 be approved and signed off
- (c) That the Annual Return for 2009/10 be approved and signed off.

22/10 **REPORT OF THE SURREY AND HAMPSHIRE CANAL SOCIETY** [Item 13]

Key Points Raised during the Discussion:

- There was concern expressed in relation to the highway type signs on the cycle ways adjacent to the Canal which were not felt to be appropriate in this setting. It was felt that countryside or waymark type signs should be used.
- In response to a question, it was noted that the dead fish seen in the Canal in the Woodham area were as a result of some spot dredging activity in association with bankside maintenance and repairs.

23/10 **DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS** [Item 14]

Friday 22 October 2010 at 10.05am:

[Meeting Ended: 11.35am]

Chairman