

MINUTES: of the meeting of the Basingstoke Canal Joint Management Committee held at Mytchett Canal Centre, Mytchett, at 10.05am on Friday 14 October 2011

Members

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| <p>Hampshire County Council
 Cllr Keith Chapman (Vice-Chairman)
 Cllr Brian Gurden
 Cllr Roger Kimber
 Cllr Jenny Radley</p> | <p>Surrey County Council
 Mrs Linda Kemeny (Chairman)
 a Mr Ben Carasco
 a Mr Chris Pitt
 Mrs Diana Smith</p> |
| <p>Hampshire Districts:
 Hart District Council
 a Cllr Simon Ambler
 Cllr Sara Kinnell</p> | <p>Surrey Districts:
 Guildford Borough Council
 a Cllr John Randall</p> |
| <p>Rushmoor Borough Council
 Cllr R Hughes
 a Cllr J H Marsh</p> | <p>Runnymede Borough Council
 Cllr J M Edwards</p> |
| | <p>Surrey Heath Borough Council
 Cllr Bob Paton</p> |
| | <p>Woking Borough Council
 Cllr G Preshaw</p> |
| Special Interest Groups: | |
| <p>Natural England
 a Cressida Wheelwright</p> | <p>Surrey and Hampshire Canal Society
 Mr Roger Cansdale
 Martin Leech
 Mr Gareth Jones
 Mr P Riley</p> |
| <p>Parish Councils
 Alastair Clark</p> | <p>Inland Waterways Association
 a Paul Roper
 Gareth Jones</p> |
| <p>Basingstoke Canal Houseboat Owners' Association
 a Mr Denis Betro
 a Ms Kathy Williams</p> | <p>Business Interests
 Galleon Marine – Jan Peile</p> |
| <p>Basingstoke Canal Boating Club
 a Steve Dallen</p> | <p>Residential Boat Owners Association
 Julia Jacs</p> |

a = absent

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

PART 1**IN PUBLIC****21/11 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS [Item 1]**

Apologies were received from Ben Carasco, Steve Dallen, Sara Kinnell, Chris Pitt and John Randall. Tony Clark substituted for Steve Dallen.

22/11 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING: 17 JUNE 2011 [Item 2]

The minutes were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.

Actions/further information to be provided:

- A Member requested that both Network Rail and Surrey County Council Highways Department be contacted with the request that canal bridge maintenance works be coordinated so as not to impact upon the canal's peak seasonal periods.

23/11 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS [Item 3]

There were no declarations of interests.

24/11 QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS [Item 4]

There were no questions or petitions.

25/11 BASINGSTOKE CANAL ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN UPDATE [Item 5]**Key points raised during the discussion:**

- The Committee was informed that the culvert survey was complete in Surrey but is not yet complete in Hampshire, though will be included in the fifth version of the Asset Management Plan (AMP). However the risk register is now complete.
- Officers confirmed that structural repairs to the Deepcut flight were due to begin on Monday 17 October.
- It was stated there is a significant amount of work to be undertaken if the canal is to be re-opened next season. In order to achieve this there will be a co-ordinated effort between volunteers and contractors, with the latter focusing on heavy engineering work.
- Officers confirmed that a schedule has been prepared for the replacement of lock gates. This work will be carried out by a separate gang from the contractor, with the aid of Rangers. Many of the gates in question have been delivered and will be fitted soon.

- The Chairman informed the Committee that the new Leader of Surrey County Council has pledged his support to the future development of the canal.
- Officers stated that consultants were to be invited to prepare a single vision for the canal. This was welcomed by Members of the committee, as by engaging with partners it was perceived that financial contributions could be improved and a long-term vision developed. The Chairman informed the Committee that the Leaders of Surrey County Council and Hampshire County Council are planning to meet in the near future in order to discuss a co-ordinated vision for the canal.

Actions/further information to be provided:

- Officers will submit a fifth edition of the Asset Management Plan when further asset data is available and complete.

Recommendations:

None.

26/11 **CANAL DIRECTOR'S REPORT** [Item 6]

Key points raised during the discussion:

- The Committee was informed that a total of £38,000 in savings will be made this year, and £150,000 will be made next year. As such, all financial targets are being met.
- It was confirmed that work has begun by the term contractor on the repairs to a leaking bank in Woking which is now nearly complete, with work also due to commence on locks 19, 20 and 25 the following week. A draft sustainability plan has also been prepared in order to help bring the canal into full operation.
- It was suggested that any attempt to explore potential Heritage Lottery Funding should form a strategic partnership approach.
- It was confirmed that a comprehensive programme for Hampshire is currently being developed, with work due to focus on earthworks, bank protection, installing stop plank grooves for flood alleviation and completion of a culvert survey.
- The Chairman asked all Members to investigate which commercial businesses were located in their Districts, Boroughs or Parishes, close to the Canal, whom we might approach for future sponsorship, financial or in kind.
- The Committee received an update regarding the progress of the development of a new shower and toilet block. The Canal Director confirmed that a final survey and check of nearby bat boxes had been completed, and that a full report would be ready by the end of October. It was suggested that the Committee be provided with a roadmap of when work will be complete. Officers responded that they will be able to confirm the schedule of work once they have received input from Surrey

Wildlife Trust (SWT), who have been consulted regarding the work. It was agreed that SWT should be given a deadline by which to respond. However, the Canal Director suggested that construction of the block may be able to commence at the end of 2012, with work being completed by April/May 2013, with a lack of funding being a reason for the delay. A member of the Committee suggested that Aldershot Building College be approached to aid the construction work, and that other sources of funding should be explored to see if the work could commence before the end of 2012, and that other sources of funding should be explored to see if construction can be carried out earlier.

- The Committee was informed that a number of complaints had been received regarding cycling at speed along canal towpaths. It was agreed that more formal signage and face-to-face engagement with cyclists is required in order to resolve the issue. The Chairman asked the Canal Director to circulate details of specific problems to Committee members. It was suggested that it be made compulsory for cyclists to use bells while using the towpaths, though the Committee acknowledged that this would be difficult to enforce.
- The Canal Director confirmed that £200,000 of annual revenue funding is required in order to maintain the canal in a steady state and that this included an element for towpath maintenance. However, due to budget cuts a budget of just £50,000 was available. It was suggested that the amount of additional funding required to bring the towpaths up to standard be quantified.
- Several issues concerning the Canal Houseboats were highlighted. It was suggested that further Houseboats could be located on the Canal and might provide significant revenue if managed appropriately. SCC were continuing to progress the renewal of existing Houseboat leases.
- It was suggested that an open navigation access policy for the canal is required, and that a working group was being convened in order to consider this. It was also confirmed that a working group will be convened in order to address the issue of water levels.
- Problems associated with caulking and backpumping on the canal were raised. At present the income received from boat licenses more than covers the administrative costs of managing boats on the canal, however ranger time in attendance costs cancel this out. It was noted that the Basingstoke Canal Boating Club has presented solutions to these problems to both Surrey and Hampshire County Councils.

Actions/further information to be provided:

- That the Canal Director reconvene the working group consisting of SCC, the BCA, the SHCS and the Canoe Club to progress the funding issue and agree a likely schedule of work for the construction of the new shower and toilet block.
- That the level of additional funding required for the maintenance of the canal's towpaths be quantified, and submitted to Woking Local Committee for consideration.

- To recommend to Surrey County Council that as part of the process for the renewal of houseboat leases, SCC should ensure that boat owners are responsible for ensuring they comply with safety standards are occupying appropriate locations on the canal.
- To recommend to Surrey County Council to take action to address problems with a small minority of Houseboat owners.
- All Members to investigate which commercial businesses are located in their Districts, Boroughs or Parishes, close to the Canal, whom we might approach for future sponsorship, financial or in kind.

Resolved:

- That the director be supported on items as suggested and discussed in the report.
- That action points identified are carried out by the service with full co-operation of partners,
- That while acknowledging the current difficult economic circumstances facing all partners, it is imperative that partners be encouraged to contribute their full share so that the safety and enjoyment of visitors and users of the Canal can be ensured.

27/11 **TREASURER'S REPORT** [Item 7]

Key points raised during the discussion:

- It was suggested that user groups ask their members to individually lobby their local Councils to increase contributions to the canal.
- It was stated that contribution figures have no adjustment to reflect inflation, and that as a consequence some local authorities have been paying the same amount for a long period of time. However, it was also confirmed that Surrey Heath would be contributing an additional £25,000 to the canal this year.
- It was suggested that if the canal remains closed at Deepcut, license fees should be discounted because boat owners would be unable to utilise the entire canal. It was therefore also suggested that approval of the license fees proposed in the report should be delayed until the entire canal is open for navigation.
- Problems associated with the payment of license fees were also raised. Specifically, that there are different 'groups' of fee-payers: those that refuse to pay, those that argue for a reduction on a case-by-case basis, and those that pay in full. In order to alleviate these issues it was suggested that there be greater transparency in the fee creation process.

Actions/further information to be provided:

- None.

Resolved:

- That the recommendations set out in the report be supported, subject to the Committee's concerns regarding the cost of license fees being addressed.

28/11 **REPORT OF THE SURREY AND HAMPSHIRE CANAL SOCIETY** [Item 8]

Key points raised during the discussion:

- The Committee was informed that the John Pinkerton had contributed £30,000 to the canal's income in the past year, and that plans are being developed to construct another boat at a cost of £150,000 with a view to it establishing a similar income stream.
- The Committee was informed of initiatives underway on the canal at Woking, including work on possible further back-pumping, a potential site for a canal basin, and plans for new secure mooring facilities close to Woking Town Centre.
- It was suggested that planning and engagement with SWT be improved, and a representative of the Trust attend the JMC regularly. The Chairman confirmed that she may have the opportunity to sit on the SWT board, and will use this position to enhance engagement.
- The Committee was informed of projects that had been completed as part of the Peter Redway Memorial Weekend. This included work on the mooring at lock 1, bank washout repairs, tree felling, scrub clearance, brickwork repair and tree removal. It was also stated that volunteers had contributed a total of £19,800 of work to the canal over this weekend.
- It was confirmed that the weed problem along the canal was being dealt with by the Waterplant contractor.
- It was noted that local prisoners and the army have helped to maintain the canal in the past. It was therefore suggested that Community Payback offenders be used in a similar capacity. The Chairman also suggested that local businesses be approached to make contributions to the maintenance of the canal as part of Corporate Social Responsibility obligations.

Actions/further information to be provided:

- That information regarding the projects completed as part of the Peter Redway Memorial Weekend be circulated to Members of the Committee.
- It was requested that Natural England be asked to provide a presentation at the next meeting of the Committee on the topic of the Conservation Management Plan.

Resolved:

That the recommendations for action in the report be noted.

Recommendations:

None.

29/11 **DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING** [Item 12]

Friday, 10 February 2011.

The meeting ended at 12:24.

Chairman