

BASINGSTOKE CANAL JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE AND JOINT ADVISORY GROUP

INLAND WATERWAYS ASSOCIATION REPORT MAY 2012

After a period of real progress to the JMC in February 2012 and a number of new initiatives , progress slowed in March and April . There are management changes in both SCC and HCC which are welcomed . This should be an opportunity for public servants, politicians and volunteers working in partnership and ensuring that the canal achieves its potential particularly in the area of navigation.

1. Economics

Canals as working navigations brings considerable economic benefit to the area surrounding them . For example it is estimated that canalside properties have a value 20% greater than similar properties not contiguous to a navigation. The attraction of the canal by visitors simulates economic activity in the surrounding area. The use of the canal by boaters, cyclists , anglers and walkers gives rise to more or less economic activity associated with each pursuit. It is argued that boating is attractive and enhances the experience of other visitors. It is clearly the case that a derelict canal is much less attractive than a lively navigation.. There is a methodology for such calculations and this has been done by other canals/navigations often in connection with a HLF bid. The economic benefits to the area through which the canal travels are likely to be very significant if there is an open navigation. Figures of £100million plus are not unlikely. For the restored at the millennium lowland canals in Scotland there has already been a return of 5 times the investment. They are Scotland's third most popular tourist attraction. I am in the process of researching the data that exists for other waterways with a view to sharing it with JMC and JAG committees. This should be a strong incentive for fully reopening the navigation, ensuring water supply is adequate and attracting boats to the navigation. **JMC and JAG are asked to endorse this approach and input to it.**

2. Water supply

The report on water supply compiled by the water strategy group has been appended to the Canal Director's Report. It is proposed that John How of IWA (a member of the water strategy group) attends both JMC and JAG to ensure that members understand the water supply issues and what needs to be done to ensure that navigation is maintained throughout the year. This is mainly a question of increasing supply above Deepcut, additional back pumping at Woodham , the introduction of telemetry to make more efficient use of existing supply and a programme of water management which harvests in the wet seasons so that supply is available when it is dry. It is important that stoppages leading to dewatering of the canal are timed to harmonise with good water management. **JMC and JAG are asked to take on board the implications of the study and endorse the actions and charge those involved including the Water Strategy Group with implementing a policy to maximise water utilisation.**

3. Navigation

The Canal and River Trust will take over the canals, rivers and waterways administered by British Waterways. In future it may take over those waterways administered by the Environment Agency .

In setting up the Canal and River Trust the objectives of the new charity were debated by parliament. They concluded that the prime purpose of the new charity should be maintenance of navigation. This was not to give undue preference to boaters. Their logic was that if navigation is maintained all the other objectives be they safety, SSSI's, anglers, walkers, houseboats canoeists and cyclists would also be in good order. It also recognises the broad economic benefits that flow from navigation. **The JMC and JAG are asked to imitate this and make the prime purpose of the canal the maintenance of navigation.**

4 Capital Works

The numerous capital projects and the financial contributions by the SCC and HCC are most welcome. If some project planning issues were addressed the considerable volunteer efforts from IWA in the form of WRG and the S & H C S inputs could be even better utilised, water usage would be optimised and navigation enhanced. It is suggested that there is greater involvement by the volunteer bodies in the planning of capital works whether they be volunteer or contractor.

5 Marketing

The canal has an excellent website. However the overall publicity the canal puts out does not always encourage navigation. Posting on the website should be clear and stoppages need to be minimised. The BCA also needs, in particular, to visit the Wey navigation to encourage traffic from this waterway. It also should be encouraging hire firms both on and off the canal to promote and use the canal actively. All the thinking at the BCA needs to be redirected to prioritise navigation and increase income. There is a need for more moorings on the canal. A "Boris bike" hire opportunity could be explored. The canal needs more trip and day boats. Development of canal aside retail and leisure activities needs higher profile.

6 Open Access for Navigation

This was agreed at the JAG/JMC in Jan/Feb 2012. The navigation trial was very successful. This now needs to be followed through. As has already been agreed this needs to recognise that the navigation has a number of users and policies need to be constructed to maximise harmony and minimise friction. This open access navigation policy needs to be implemented forthwith.

7 Vision and HLF

Both the Vision document and the HLF bid are greatly to be welcomed. IWA has made with the Canal Society an input to the draft vision statement and wishes to actively participate in the HLF bid.

Gareth Jones

Inland Waterways Association