

**MINUTES:** of the meeting of the Basingstoke Canal Joint Management Committee held at Mytchett Canal Centre, Mytchett, at 10.05am on Friday 10 February 2012.

**Members**

- |                                      |                                     |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <b>Hampshire County Council</b>      | <b>Surrey County Council</b>        |
| a Cllr Keith Chapman (Vice-Chairman) | Mrs Linda Kemeny (Chairman)         |
| a Cllr Brian Gurden                  | a Mr Ben Carasco                    |
| a Cllr Roger Kimber                  | Mr Chris Pitt                       |
| Cllr Jenny Radley                    | a Mrs Diana Smith                   |
| <b>Hampshire Districts:</b>          | <b>Surrey Districts:</b>            |
| <b>Hart District Council</b>         | <b>Guildford Borough Council</b>    |
| a Cllr Simon Ambler                  | a Cllr John Randall                 |
| Cllr Sara Kinnell                    |                                     |
| <b>Rushmoor Borough Council</b>      | <b>Runnymede Borough Council</b>    |
| a Cllr R Hughes                      | a Cllr J M Edwards                  |
| Cllr J H Marsh                       |                                     |
|                                      | <b>Surrey Heath Borough Council</b> |
|                                      | Cllr Bob Paton                      |
|                                      | <b>Woking Borough Council</b>       |
|                                      | Cllr G Preshaw                      |

**Special Interest Groups:**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Natural England</b>                                 | <b>Surrey and Hampshire Canal Society</b>  |
| a Cressida Wheelwright                                 | Mr Roger Cansdale                          |
|  | Martin Leech                               |
|  | Mr Gareth Jones                            |
| <b>Parish Councils</b>                                 | a Mr P Riley                               |
| Alastair Clark   |  |
| <b>Basingstoke Canal Houseboat Owners' Association</b> | <b>Inland Waterways Association</b>        |
| a Mr Denis Betro                                       | Gareth Jones                               |
| a Ms Kathy Williams                                    | <b>Business Interests</b>                  |
|  | a Galleon Marine – Jan Peile               |
| <b>Basingstoke Canal Boating Club</b>                  | <b>Residential Boat Owners Association</b> |
| a Steve Dallen   | Julia Jacs                                 |

a = absent

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

**PART 1****IN PUBLIC****01/12 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS [Item 1]**

Apologies were received from Philip Riley, Steve Dallen, Ben Carasco, Roger Kimber, John Randall, Simon Ambler and Keith Chapman. Martin Leech and Katherine Dodington substituted for Philip Riley and Steve Dallen respectively.

**02/12 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING: 17 JUNE 2011 [Item 2]**

- The following amendments were agreed:
  - That Simon Ambler be recorded as present.
  - That John Marsh be recorded as present.
  - That Sara Kinnell be recorded as absent.
  - That the term 'an additional' be removed from minute 27/11, point two.
- The minutes were otherwise agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.

**Actions/further information to be provided:**

None.

**03/12 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS [Item 3]**

There were no declarations of interests.

**04/12 QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS [Item 4]**

There were no questions or petitions.

**05/12 PLANNING SOLUTIONS CONSULTING - UPDATE [Item 5]****Key points raised during the discussion:**

- The Committee was presented with an overview of Planning Solutions Consulting's action plan for the future of the canal. Key elements included engagement with the public, recreational value, sustainability, corporate governance, outsourcing management and apprenticeships.
- The case examples of Wey and Godalming navigations, Huddersfield Narrows, Lancaster Canal, and the Ribble Link were presented to the Committee. It was suggested that the Huddersfield narrows may not provide an appropriate example for the Basingstoke Canal to draw from as it had experienced problems with leakage. Rochdale was put forward as a possible alternative as it has SSSI status.

- Key themes to emerge from a recent consultation sent to Basingstoke canal users were restoring the navigation, use of the canal as a 'linear park', tourism and water supply. The consultation also discovered that the canal has a significant potential market, with 4,000,000 people living within a one hour radius.
- It was suggested that the canal's proximity to a railway line into London should be considered in any assessment for the viability of tourism, as it could prove to be an ideal means of transport for people who wish to walk along the canal.
- Concern was expressed that it may be difficult to acquire additional funding for the canal as the primary user group of boat owners represented a narrow demographic.
- The view was expressed that expansion of camping facilities and construction of a new shower and toilet block would be essential if the canal wished to benefit from new markets, such as caravan groups and similar organisations.
- It was suggested that the willingness of developers to pay 20% above market value for riverside land be taken in to account, and that a small amount of development in appropriate locations along the canal could prove to be financially beneficial. Stroud Council was cited as a positive example of this.

**Actions/further information to be provided:**

It is expected that the final report from Planning Solutions will be completed around end March/early April 2012.

**Recommendations:**

None.

06/12 **CANAL DIRECTOR'S REPORT** [Item 6]

**Key points raised during the discussion:**

- The Canal Director provided an overview of progress at the canal to date. A number of activities were underway including the installation of soft bank protection, a tree risk survey for the whole canal and culvert condition surveys in Hampshire.
- The recent support of volunteer groups was commended.
- The Committee was informed that work was taking place to improve lock 25. The mid channel of the canal needs to be made at least four feet deep and markers put in place in order to guide boaters. Users will be consulted on the work.
- The Committee was informed of work that volunteers had undertaken to extend towpaths along the canal. However, there were still problems with a section of towpath in the Surrey Heath area where washouts brought about by animal activity, poor maintenance and undercutting were

causing serious erosion. Soft bank protection and marginal plant shelves would be required in order to resolve the problem.

- It was noted that a number of dogs had become unwell from swimming in the canal, despite the fact that there are by-laws which stipulate that animals should be kept on leads. It was suggested that there be greater engagement with dog owners in order to remind them of this.
- It was suggested that targets be set on income generation going forward. It was also requested that aims regarding the re-opening of the navigation be quantified in order for success to be measurable.
- It was suggested that potential revenue from a reopened navigation be analysed. The Committee was informed that the Montgomery Canal currently has 2,500 boat movements a year and this should be a target that the Basingstoke Canal should aspire to, with an aim to increase this to 5,000 in future years. It was noted however that, for this to be achievable, the current trend of boat usage costing Surrey and Hampshire Councils money rather than providing income needed to be reversed.
- The Committee was informed that a recent consultation had been assessing the commercial potential for development of the site at Mytchett, with the aim of drawing up a business plan shortly following the completion of the Consultant's work.
- The need to reach an agreement with the Ministry of Defence over land and utilities services that fall into their property portfolio was emphasised. A new operations base at the Ash Lock Depot needed to be given high priority because the base at Deepcut is virtually derelict and therefore unusable.
- The Chairman thanked the BCA and Katherine Dodington for their work with volunteers.

**Actions/further information to be provided:**

None.

**Recommendations:**

- a) That the Director be supported on items suggested, discussed and recommended in this report.
- b) That while acknowledging the current difficult financial circumstances facing all the partners, it is imperative that partners contribute their full share of maintenance funding so that the safety and enjoyment of visitors and users of the Canal can be assured.

07/12 **TREASURER'S REPORT** [Item 7]

**Key points raised during the discussion:**

- The Committee expressed its gratitude to the treasury team for successfully increasing resources while managing a small budget.

- Clarification was sought on the level of financial contributions made by relevant Parish, Town and District Councils to the canal. The Chairman agreed to discuss this further with Surrey County Council.
- The Chairman requested that information relating to shortfalls be included in future reports.
- It was suggested that budgets and projects for 2012/13 be brought to the Committee for information. Officers responded that traditionally this is reviewed in October.
- It was requested that officers provide specific details of capital schemes work undertaken to date to the Committee. Officers stated that Surrey County Council had spent £580,000 on works, with £100,000 to be carried forward for next year.

**Actions/further information to be provided:**

- Officers to provide details of capital schemes work to date to the Committee.

**Recommendations:**

- a) That the Committee note the figures for the current financial position and forecast outturn as set out in Appendix A.
- b) That all partner authorities be urged to make their full financial contributions and to honour the proposed scale of contributions for 2012/13.

08/12 **HERITAGE LOTTERY FUND BRIEFING** [Item 8]

**Key points raised during the discussion:**

- The Committee received an overview of a proposed lottery fund bid. Key benefits the funding could bring include strengthening the use of volunteers and improving the canal centre, with the overall aim of giving the centre a brand and placing it at the centre of the community.
- It was stated that a contribution from the partnership would be required to secure the £5 million grant, though some money that had already been submitted could count towards the contribution.
- Officers informed the Committee that the bid represented good value for money, particularly when compared with previous lottery grants for canals, and had a good chance of being successful.
- The Chairman asked officers whether timescales for round two of the bid had been agreed, with particular regard to partner contributions.

**Actions/further information to be provided:**

None.

**Recommendations:**

- a) That the proposal to seek funding from Heritage Lottery Funding and the application timetable be agreed.
- b) That the Partnership supports the Heritage Lottery Fund application.

09/12 **SURREY AND HAMPSHIRE CANAL SOCIETY REPORT [Item 9]****Key points raised during the discussion:**

- The Committee was informed that work was about to commence on repairing the landing stage between Mytchett and Frimley Park. It was also stated that volunteers had contributed 834 days of work to the canal this year.
- The view was expressed that work at Deepcut should be encouraged to progress swiftly, as it would be a key element in establishing the canal's reputation as one that is open for navigation. Members of the Canal Society have been consulting with engineers at Deepcut to ensure that drainage can benefit the local community. It was stated that the upcoming boat rally on Jubilee weekend would hopefully incentivise this work to be completed quickly.
- The Chairman thanked the Canal Society for their continued work and support.
- Concern was expressed that the timing of the boat rally on Jubilee weekend may impact upon public participation. The Committee was informed that the date was chosen to reach a compromise between allowing time for improvement works to finish and opening the navigation as soon as possible. The view was also expressed that the canal's proximity to a London-bound railway line may encourage people to attend the rally and travel to the Jubilee celebrations afterwards.
- It was suggested that pushing forward with the canal's increased back pumping application would help to re-open the navigation.
- The Chairman suggested that publicity for the Frimley Boat Club rally be passed on to Surrey and Hampshire County Councils in order to assist with promotion of the event.

**Actions/further information to be provided:**

None.

**Resolved:**

That the recommendations for action in the report be noted.

10/12 **WATER STRATEGY GROUP REPORT** [Item 10]**Key points raised during the discussion:**

- The Committee was given a presentation on the subject of water shortage in the Basingstoke Canal. This was regarded as a significant issue because a lack of water would not encourage a wider audience to visit the canal.
- A key objective of the Water Strategy Group is to work towards achieving a water balance for the canal. The Committee was informed that this was very difficult at present, though it had been established that there was a correlation between water flow of the Whitewater River and the Basingstoke Canal, and this would be measured in the future.
- The Committee was informed that a total of approximately 10-15 mega litres of water was lost from the canal per day as a result of evaporation, transpiration and seepage. Dry weather also creates further water shortage problems.
- The possibility of constructing a reservoir had been investigated, however it was deemed unviable because the area required for one of a sufficient size was the equivalent of between 90-100 football pitches. Other potential solutions to the canal's water shortage included doubling back pumping at Woodham from the River Wey and investigating underground pockets of water. To increase backpumping SCC would need to apply for an increase to the existing extraction licence. The view was expressed, however, that there was no guarantee any of these approaches would work and that a lack of rainfall will create serious problems for all of them.
- Five reservoirs on nearby army land had been considered as potential sources of water; however only one was deemed to be usable and this would provide just 10 day's worth of supply at a rate of 1 mega litre per day.
- The Chairman informed the Committee that she had made a request to the Chief Executive of South East Water to increase the amount of water available to the canal.
- It was suggested that Brookwood Cemetery and the nearby golf club be looked at as potential sources of water, as the latter successfully makes use of a borehole.
- The Committee was informed that it was difficult to measure the water level at lock 20 because the current was slow-moving and a high cost would be incurred.

**Actions/further information to be provided:**

None.

**Recommendations:**

- a) That work be continued to support SCC making a new application to the Environment Agency for a licence to substantially increase abstraction at Woodham.

11/12 **INLAND WATERWAYS ASSOCIATION REPORT** [Item 11]

**Key points raised during the discussion:**

- The Committee was informed that work is underway to secure charity funding to cover the £25,000 cost for automated back pumping.
- Members were informed that positive work was taking place for possible boat moorings and other developments in Woking which will aim to improve the viability of the canal.

**Actions/further information to be provided:**

None.

**Resolved:**

That the actions in the report be noted.

12/12 **HAMPSHIRE MANAGEMENT RESTRUCTURE** [Item 12]

**Key points raised during the discussion:**

- The Committee received an overview of the proposed management restructure for Hampshire County Council employees at the Canal Centre.
- Key elements to the restructure included bringing the Blackwater Valley and BCA under one manager and putting more resources into the operational management of the canal.
- Officers informed the Committee that the restructure was currently out to consultation with staff, and that it had received widespread support. It was also stated that Planning Solutions Consulting visioning report would support the proposed structure.
- The Committee approved of the fact that the Site Manager would now be primarily responsible for operational management as opposed to other activities such as strategic development and new funding sources.
- Members were informed that the proposed structure should be implemented later this year.

13/12 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING** [Item 13]

The next meeting of the Committee will be on 7 June 2012.

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**Chairman**