

Joint Management Committee

21st June 2012



Canal Director's Report

Contact: Ian Brown

Direct Line: 01252 399005

E-mail: ian.brown@hants.gov.uk

1. Capital Funded Repair Programme

1.1 Deepcut Locks – most all of the identified priority repairs to Lock structures and replacement of gates is now completed. The towpath has been reinstated and made serviceable again. There is still outstanding structure repairs that will require attention (Jacobs Condition Survey Report 2009) and early consideration to a further capital funded programme for these should be made.

St John's and Woodham Locks – good progress with Lock Gate replacements on these Flights are being undertaken during May/June finishing the current project.

1.2 Hampshire Pound – embankment repairs at West Hart, Poulter's Bridge and Crookham have all been completed on schedule. Further bank protection work which has been identified is planned and will be carried out as soon as possible where the navigation will be unaffected or in the early autumn.

1.3 A design for new and improved stop plank facilities has been engineered and will be applied to existing sites where better control is required. HCC engineers and the BCA team are also looking at upgrading weirs and sluices as part of improvements to flood and emergency protection strategies after consultation with the regulatory agencies.

1.4 Full condition surveys on the culverts in Hampshire are now in progress by the term contractor. They will report on condition and recommend remedial action with minor repairs carried out on site as required. Any significant recommended repairs will be planned and carried out accordingly this year.

2. Volunteer Support

2.1 S&HCS weekend working parties are currently working on soft bank protection, towpath refurbishment and landing stage improvements on the stretch between Mytchett and Frimley. The Swingbridge Community Boat Group have been carrying out litter picking, removal of rubbish and some painting of lock furniture on the Woking Pound. To complement the repairs on the Deepcut Flight, the IWA / Waterways Recovery Group are due to carry out some repairs to certain upper / lower Wing Walls of Locks. Also hopefully towpath refurbishment in the Rushmoor area during a one week Summer Camp in July. The Tuesday 'drop in sessions' continue under the supervision of the canal ranger team and are well attended by local resident volunteers in carrying out basic maintenance tasks on the canal. [see performance figures item 8]

3. Revenue funding and Budget for 2012/13

3.1 An interim report from the Honorary Treasurer will be presented and shows the final financial position for 2011/12.

3.2 In line with the canal directors previous recommendation, the reserve account is now being returned to a positive level. The recommendation was that this be maintained between £150,000 to £200,000. This will be phased over the next two financial years, with transfers from direct savings as a consequence of the final restructuring.

3.3 High Level Stewardship Funding (HLS) as previously reported is now on track with payments being received from the Rural Payments Agency (RPA) for the Surrey based projects. These payments are project specific and are time bound and match funded with other capital funded work. A brief outline plan is appended [app 1] for further information.

The Hampshire based application is still to be approved, some difficulties with mapping the canal had been experienced with the RPA. These have now been resolved, so approval is expected soon.

3.4 A funding application to the Water Framework Directive by Natural England was unfortunately unsuccessful. This would have been for enhancing water quality by silt removal (dredging), control and removal of invasive non-native aquatic vegetation. This will now be transferred to revenue planned preventative maintenance where possible. However Natural England are again assisting us with another funding application as part of HLS for unmapped areas that do not fall within the usual criteria.

3.5 Grants awarded during 2010 and 2011 are reported on in the Finance Report.

3.6 Current income from private boat and mooring licence fees is poor, the canal director recommends that in line with the capital investment programme and as the canal is brought into a state of good repair, that these fees should start to increase after this current financial year and be implemented from April 2013.

Private moorings - private moorings on the River Wey are worked out at 50% of the Standard rate which works out as £1.20 per metre, per week (plus VAT). The BCA mooring charges are worked out as 75% of an annual (current) Boat licence.

The table below shows how much the BCA are charging for a mooring, in comparison to the equivalent length of boats on the River Wey, prices include VAT.

BCA (metres)	BCA Mooring fee	Wey (metres)	Wey Mooring fee
6.5m (20ft)	£64.97	6.10m (20ft)	£486.72
16m (50ft)	£77.67	15.30m (50ft)	£1198.08
21.7m (70ft)	£129.05	21.30m (70ft)	£1624.89

Although the BCA are not able to raise prices in line with the River Wey due to current navigation restrictions, it's obvious that moorings on the Canal should be significantly increased.

The proposal is to adopt the same formula as the River Wey, charging per metre, per week. The BCA recommend a two step increase, starting of with 48p per metre then going up to 72p per metre (both including VAT). Then an annual increase by the RPI.

Current mooring takings	=	£2892.64
48p per metre increase per week	=	£10320.90
72p per metre increase per week	=	£15537.52

All prices include VAT

(Premium moorings are not included)

3.7 Premium Moorings - premium moorings at the Canal Centre should be charged double the private mooring rate, which would be £1.44 per metre, per week (including VAT). Currently we have 3 boats waiting to come back up to the centre, with 95 people on our waiting list.

3.8 Commercial boats (hire companies) - any pricing structure would have to be agreed by both county councils and appropriate lease / licences issued and applied.

4. Open Navigation Access Strategy

4.1 A trial was carried out over the Easter period in April and was very positive in producing essential information that will enable the BCA to work further with the working group to take this strategy forward. The target here is to invite and encourage more visiting boats onto the canal in an unrestricted manner.

5. Installation of Boat Loggers

5.1 The installation of boat loggers (to count and monitor boat movements) in accordance with the Conservation Management Objectives is now being undertaken and these will be installed at Dogmersfield and Woodham. Funding for this was provided by the Water Framework Directive through Natural England.

6. Canal Visitor Centre Development

6.1 It is regrettable that no progress has been made so far with the plan to build a new toilet and shower block that would be shared by the canoe club and the campers using the field. This is especially disappointing as the SCC Planning Committee had approved the provision with an increase of camping up to 75 units. This would have resulted in the doubling of potential income from camping for the BCA. Funding for this project is an issue and still needs to be secured in the near future.

However;

6.2 The development and wider commercial potential of the Canal Centre and the Canal would clearly benefit from a full consultation on a vision and sustainability study. Planning Solutions Consultancy have now produced a draft report which should be distributed in due course. Further additional work is in train to look at the specific management and development of the Canal Centre and its land. Once these evaluations and assessments are completed, a full report with an action plan can be produced.

6.3 The canal director had previously recommended that based on the above studies that a full business and sustainability plan be produced by the consultants for the county owners to take forward.

6.4 Ash Lock Depot having been identified as a suitable site for a new operations base for the canal, is being progressed. Work to establish a foot print for the above requirements and to scope the dependencies along with agreement with the MOD Defence Estates on the acquisition of land, which is essential has been positive. Again funding needs to be secured and a pre-planning application discussed with the local authority.

7. Potential Heritage Lottery Funding for the Basingstoke Canal

7.1 No further progress to date, the next step is to evaluate the draft visioning report and consultation on the potential commercial development of the canal visitor centre and to hold a workshop with stakeholders.

8. Income Generation Performance to date (last quarter)

Events	No.	Income	Target
Education Visits	14 (833 children)	£1,299.95	
Clubroom	5 regular groups	£460.35	£5,500.00
Camping		£11,115.95	£35,000.00
Activities	4	£438.00	£20,000.00
Volunteer Days Worked	374 days with an average of 4 separate groups	Equivalent of approximately £35,000	

Recommended Actions [Summary] :

That Members support the Canal Authority in;

- On the Deepcut Flight of Locks there is still outstanding structural repairs that will require attention (Jacobs Condition Survey Report 2009) and early consideration to a further capital funded programme for these should be made. In particular the subsidence issues around lock structures and a further survey of these structures needs to be carried out.
- The proposal to adopt the same formula as the River Wey Navigation, charging per metre, per week. The BCA recommend a two step increase, starting of with 48p per metre then going up to 72p per metre (both including VAT). Then an annual increase by the RPI to be implemented from the next (2013) financial year.
- An 'Open Navigation Access Strategy' should be further developed and implemented as soon as practicable to invite and encourage more visiting boats onto the canal in an unrestricted manner. BCA to work closely with the 'open access group to try and achieve this'.

See appendix 1 reference High Level Stewardship (HLS) Funding Outline Plan for information