

MINUTES of the meeting of the **BASINGSTOKE CANAL JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE** held at Mytchett Canal Centre, Mytchett Place Road, Mytchett, Surrey, GU16 6DD on 22 November 2018
These minutes are subject to confirmation by the Committee at its meeting 26 June 2019..

Hampshire County Council

- * Councillor Jonathan Glen
- * Councillor Rod Cooper
- * Councillor Anna McNair-Scott
- * Councillor Charles Choudhary

Hampshire Districts:

Hart District Council

- * Councillor Simon Ambler
- * Councillor Wendy Makepeace-Browne

Rushmoor Borough Council

- Councillor Nadia Martin
- Councillor John Marsh

Fleet Town Council

- * Councillor Peter Wildsmith

Special Interest Groups

Basingstoke Canal Society

- * Martin Leech
- Mr Philip Riley

Parish Councils

- * Alastair Clark

National Trust,

River Wey and Godalming Navigations

- * John Gibson

Substitutes:

- * Councillor Veronica Graham-Green
- * Mr Ken Sankey

Surrey County Council

- * Councillor Mike Goodman
- * Councillor Ben Carasco
- Councillor Paul Deach
- Councillor Colin Kemp

Surrey Districts:

Guildford Borough Council

- Councillor Nigel Kears

Runnymede Borough Council

- * Councillor Stephen Dennett

Surrey Heath Borough Council

- * Councillor David Lewis

Woking Borough Council

- * Councillor Kevin Davis
- Councillor Deborah Hughes

Natural England

- * Adam Bates

Inland Waterways Association

- * Verna Smith

Basingstoke Canal Boating Club

- * Liz Murnaghan

1218 ELECTION OF THE CHAIRMAN [Item 1]

Cllr Mike Goodman as Vice-Chairman opened the meeting as acting Chairman. He proposed Cllr Jonathan Glen as Chairman of the Joint Management Committee. This was seconded by Cllr Rod Cooper. It was agreed unanimously by the Committee that Cllr Jonathan Glen be elected Chairman.

The Chairman made a statement suggesting that interested Members of the Committee submit a briefing of their professional background to the Chairman of the Committee, with the aim of creating a Business Member Reference Group, which could focus on ideas to improve the commercial viability of the canal.

It was stressed that Members should submit their application to the Chairman of the Committee and that these would be considered as part of the formulation of this group.

1318 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE [Item 2]

Apologies were received from Nadia Martin (Rushmoor), John Marsh (Rushmoor), Colin Kemp (Surrey), Paul Deach (Surrey), Philip Riley (BCS), Deborah Hughes (Woking)

Veronica Graham-Green substituted for John Marsh
Ken Sankey substituted for Philip Riley

1418 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING: 28 JUNE 2018 [Item 3]

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

1518 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST [Item 4]

There were no declarations of interest received.

1618 QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS [Item 5]

There was one question received. A response was provided. These are attached as **ANNEX A**.

1718 FORECAST OUTTURN 2018/19 AND FORWARD BUDGET 2019/20 [Item 6]

Declarations of interest:

None

Officers:

Jane Lovett, Honorary Treasurer of the Basingstoke Canal Authority

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. Officers outlined the report and noted that the Committee was asked to review and agree the revenue budget for the financial year 2018/19 and agree the future revenue budget for 2019/20.
2. Officers highlighted that there had been a lower draw on reserves than was anticipated, and that there had been a draw of £9000 rather than the expected draw of £49000. It was explained that this was due to increased revenue and that costs of maintenance had been lower than expected.
3. Officers explained that there had been increased revenue from unpowered boat licenses and an increase in Mytchett Canal Centre function room usage, which had improved revenue.
4. Officers noted that, following consideration of the number of current employees of the Basingstoke Canal Authority (BCA), the state of the asset, and the contributions of the owning authorities and other factors, the levels of reserves as were currently held were considered to be adequate.

5. Officers noted that there had been change to the scheme of charges which included charges to cover closures of the towpath and navigation when requested by third parties and that the price range was designed to encourage works to be planned outside of peak use time.
6. Members questioned the contributions of the owning authorities and noted that Runneymede and Surrey Heath did not pay full contribution. Members noted that this was a longstanding issue and that representations had been made to both of these authorities. It was explained that there had been work undertaken with Runneymede regarding Scotland Bridge Car Park and the agreement for the BCA to retain revenue upon completion, which was a positive alternative source from Runneymede. Finance officers noted that contributions were assumed to be at the current rate and that this was factored into the BCA budget.
7. Members questioned the timescale for the completion of Scotland Bridge Car Park to ensure a revenue stream. Officers noted that capital had been allocated for the next year for the project and that it was scheduled for completion in late 2019. It was noted that this was constrained by staff resource and delays caused by Planning and other permissions.

RESOVLED:

That the Committee:

1. Agreed the revenue outturn forecast for the year 2018/19; and
2. Agreed the revenue budget for 2019/20; and
3. Agreed the proposed scheme of charges for 2019/20

1818 CANAL MANAGEMENT REPORT [Item 7]

Declarations of interest:

None

Officers:

James Taylor, Strategic Manager, Basingstoke Canal Authority
Fiona Shipp, Canal Manager, Basingstoke Canal Authority

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. Officers provided a brief outline of activities undertaken by the Basingstoke Canal Authority over the period since the last meeting of the Committee. Officers did highlight the closure of Lock 18 and the subsequent loss of boating revenue. It was noted that the Deepcut Locks had just reopened due to difficulties in repair and issues with water levels. Officers assured Members that costs for the repair of Lock 18 were received from the damaging party.

2. It was noted that planning permission work was underway for the Canal Centre Campsite agreed by the Committee in November 2017, and that this was proceeding as expected.
3. Officers highlighted that work had been completed on Woking Town Wharf and that this had represented a significant volume of work.
4. Officers noted that work had been undertaken with the engineer of the Inland Waterways Association and Hampshire County Council's engineers relating to Swan "Cutting." Officers noted that, following inspection, there were significant topographical issues that needed to be further explored and that there would need to be discussions with the 12 riparian landowners to begin to find a resolution.
5. Officers explained negotiations with the Canal and Rivers Trust (CRT) regarding the transfer of the canal and explained that the BCA would be pursuing other options regarding the future of the Canal. It was stressed that the BCA would not be severing the connection with the CRT.
6. Members stressed that the asset of the canal must be carefully managed and that any transfer must consider the future sustainability of the canal.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Committee notes the report.

1918 BASINGSTOKE CANAL AUTHORITY RISK REGISTER [Item 8]

Declarations of interest:

None

Officers:

James Taylor, Strategic Manager, Basingstoke Canal Authority

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. Officers explained the risk register and noticed that the majority of the risks identified by the BCA had remained static.
2. Officers highlighted that the only risk with significant change and downwards trend was due to the change in supplier for Reservoir Inspections, and that this would be resolved upon appointment of the new supplier. Members queried the cost of the new supplier. It was noted that the cost had risen by a few hundred pounds.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Committee noted the report

2018 CYCLING POLICY - DECISION REPORT [Item 9]

Declarations of interest:

None

Officers:

James Taylor, Strategic Manager, Basingstoke Canal Authority
Fiona Shipp, Canal Manager, Basingstoke Canal Authority

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. Officers explained that this report followed on from a query to the Committee regarding shared cycle usage. It was requested that officers undertake some research on cycling policy and how the BCA could potentially manage cycle usage.
2. Officers explained to the committee that there were several options available:
 - a. Widen areas to fit within the three metre guideline and create joint cycle and pedestrian pathways.
 - b. Prohibit all cycle usage along the towpath
 - c. Implement a scheme of signing and minor works designed to reduce cycle speed and implement other soft measures to encourage better relations between cyclists and pedestrians.
3. Officers noted that the towpath would not be considered a public right of way. It was noted that the BCA and County Councils invite cyclists to use the towpaths for cycling. It was noted there had been several incidents of disputes between cyclists and pedestrians.
4. It was informed by Surrey County Council's Legal Directorate that as the BCA/County Councils had invited cyclists to use the towpath, that the BCA does have a duty of care to these users.
5. Officers noted that national policy indicates that any joint pedestrian and cycle route should be three metres wide. It was noted that much of the canal does not fit within this parameter. Officers did note that this was a national waterways issue, and that there were several campaigns that were able to be used by the BCA, which had formed part of the cycle strategy draft plan to the Committee.
6. Officers explained that an area of significant contention was in between West Byfleet and Brookwood where the towpath is used by commuter cyclists.
7. Officers explained that the BCA was prepared to allocate £10,000 to design signage and minor works to reduce cycle speed and encourage considerate usage. Members suggested designing a sign which stated that pedestrians have priority on the canal towpath.
8. Members questioned the liabilities in case of cycling accidents. Officers noted that this was dependent on the circumstance, but, generally, it would be the case that if the route was at fault then the

BCA/County Councils who may bear part of the liability.

9. Officers stressed that widening the towpath would be a very expensive solution and not recommended.
10. Members questioned whether officers had met with cycle forums to discuss this. Officers noted that they had discussed this issue, but that many commuter cyclists do not engage with these groups. Members did stress that more outreach could be done on social media.
11. Members questioned whether the canal towpath could be removed from cycle route maps. Officers noted that this would be contrary to most local authorities' wish to promote wellbeing.
12. Members did note that there were some reported issues with night cyclists and bright and intrusive lights blinding canoers and startling animals which could be taken into account with regard to any policy, and that this could be a point of research for the BCA to undertake.
13. Officers stressed that any group cycle events would be required to inform and pay a charge to the BCA for their use of the towpath under the existing scheme of charges.

RESOLVED:

1. Approve the BCA Cycle Policy to be used in reference to the Basingstoke Canal.
2. Authorise BCA officers to keep the Policy Statement under review adding items and making adjustments as appropriate.
3. Authorise officers to draw up and implement a scheme of signing and minor works designed to reduce cycle speed in the Woking section of the Canal towpath, and promote a positive shared space in which pedestrians have priority.

2118 CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT PLAN [Item 10]

Declarations of interest:

None

Officers:

James Taylor, Strategic Manager BCA
Fiona Shipp, Canal Manager BCA

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. Officers explained that 90% of the canal is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and that, resultant of this, the owning authorities had a duty to protect and enhance this status.

2. It was explained by officers that there was a requirement to implement a conservation management plan in order to ensure that conservation of the SSSI was considered and to satisfy the regulator. It was highlighted that, if no management plan was in place, there would be a need to negotiate with the regulator for most of the canal's business. Officers explained that the plan was in need of review as the last iteration had come to the end of its ten-year life. .
3. It was explained that the Conservation Management Plan was a technical document developed in partnership with the BCA, Basingstoke Canal Society (BCS), Natural England and other experts as part of the Conservation Steering Group.
4. It was noted that the agreed Conservation Management Plan had been formally Assented by Natural England. The representative from Natural England stressed that they had confidence in the report and that it was a good compromise between conservation and recreation interests.
5. Members from the BCS noted the powered boat limit and stressed that in some areas of the canal there may be a potential for increasing the limit. It was suggested by the BCS that conservation efforts should not constrain financial viability. Officers and Natural England stressed that the limit on powered boat movements was agreed at the upper limit to ensure commercial viability and that they felt that this was adequate to retain commercial viability whilst ensuring that the SSSI was maintained. Officers explained that the formula of the upper limit of boat movements was contained in an appendix to within the plan, based on a piece of research published previously by Dr Eaton (a leading botanist and former advisor to the CSG).
6. Members questioned what the effects of increased boat movements would be on the SSSI. Officers explained that boat movements had the effected of displacing silt material on the bed, which increased turbidity and restricted sunlight to plants and aquatic life. It was also noted that it had the potential to reduce vegetation width across the canal, cause bank erosion and damage submerged plants.
7. Members questioned whether the SSSI was deteriorating and whether it would be considered to be an SSSI in the future. The representative from Natural England stressed that the canal was a site of national importance. An SSSI could be de-notified where the protected features had ceased to exist through natural processes, but it was very unlikely that Basingstoke Canal SSSI would be de-notified in the foreseeable future.
8. It was noted that the BCA had applied for some funding through the Water Environment Grant to aid the authority to undertake its conservation priorities.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Joint Management Committee noted the report

2218 REPORT OF THE BASINGSTOKE CANAL SOCIETY [Item 11]

Declarations of interest:

None

Witnesses:

Martin Leech, Basingstoke Canal Society

Ken Sankey, Basingstoke Canal Society

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. Members congratulated the BCS for their Queen's Award for Voluntary Service. It was noted that the event was well attended and that HRH The Duke of Kent presented the award.

Steven Dennett left the meeting at 11.15am

2. The representatives for the BCS noted that work on the Farnborough Road mooring had been delayed and that work would continue next spring. It was noted that work was expected to be completed by the end of 2019.
3. The representatives for the BCS explained that significant engagement work had been underway on social media and that teams were working with local authorities to help promote the canal as an asset.
4. Members questioned the age range of volunteers for BCS. It was explained that most volunteers were of retirement age, but that there was a growing number of younger members resultant of the social media campaigns. It was stressed that the BCS wanted to do engagement work in schools and businesses in future and would be developing a plan to do this.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Joint Management Committee noted the report

2318 ACTIONS TRACKER [Item 12]

Declarations of interest:

None

Officers:

Richard Plummer, Democratic Services Officer

Lisa Creaye-Griffin, Countryside Group Manager, Surrey County Council

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. Members questioned the status of houseboat income, one of the actions on the tracker. It was explained by Surrey officers that there would be a report considered by Cabinet in the near future which would clarify this issue further, but that there was no substantial

update at this time.

2. Members noted and agreed the actions tracker.

2418 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING [Item 13]

The Committee noted that its next meeting would be on 26 June 2019 at the Mytchett Canal Centre.

Meeting ended at: 12.04 pm

Chairman

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QUESTION submitted by Julia Jacs to the Basingstoke Canal Joint Management Committee
22 November 2018:

I am astounded to read in Item 6 on the agenda, the Forecast Outturn 2018/19 and Forward Budget, at page 14, item 7.2 the following:

Related Income and Expenditure

At the last meeting Members asked for details of the income retained by Surrey County Council that related to the Canal. In order to present the complete picture Hampshire has also been included as is information on the expenditure incurred.

Surrey – Income from rents, houseboats and fibre optic cables totals approximately £205,000. The income is partly offset by the costs (approximately £45,000) of managing the houseboat estate which is borne by SCC.

This appears to state that the cost of 'managing' the houseboats is £45,000.00 per year. I see no evidence of any such spending, and only neglect, on the moorings at Scotland Bridge where I live, and where we have been refused a key safe in which to keep the key to our main electricity supply on account of the cost. This is in return for total mooring fees of around £94,000.00 per year.

Therefore, as a houseboat resident myself, I request that a detailed breakdown of this expenditure is provided to the meeting so that we can see clearly where and how this amount of money has been spent, and for how many years this has been the level of expenditure.

I also request a copy of the accounts for the houseboat moorings, income and expenditure (excluding payment for electricity) for the last 5 years.

RESPONSE:

The Basingstoke Canal Joint Management Committee oversees the day to day management of the Canal as a navigation and recreational resource. The 22 houseboat moorings and three canal cottages within the Canal estate in Surrey are managed directly by Surrey County Council's Property & Estates, not by the BCA, nor even the SCC Countryside Group. This detailed question therefore refers to matters which are beyond the remit of the JMC. The Strategic Manager and Hon Treasurer in compiling the Finance Report have used information supplied to them by officers of Surrey County Council's Property & Estates department to answer a specific point raised by Members at a previous JMC meeting, and have no further breakdown of the information supplied. A copy of the question will be sent to the Surrey County Council Cabinet Lead for Place who will ensure officers supply a written answer.

Cllr Jonathan Glen, Chairman of the Basingstoke Canal Joint Management Committee

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SUPPLEMENTARY RESPONSE TO QUESTION submitted by Julia Jacs to the Basingstoke Canal Joint Management Committee 22 November 2018:

ANSWER: submitted by Michael Tye, Estates Lead, Surrey County Council, Michael.tye@surreycc.gov.uk

Thank you for your question to the Basingstoke Canal Committee. I can provide the following information.

For the financial year 2017/18, the total running costs (utilities and maintenance) for all of the houseboats was around £45K. In summary, circa £41K of this was to provide electricity, reactive maintenance and statutory cyclical inspections, with the balance related to works on the Canal Centre.

This is not dissimilar to previous years where around 70% of the expenditure is related to electricity costs and the balance being on maintenance and inspections.

We are not able to provide to you a copy of the accounts for the houseboat moorings, income and expenditure for the last 5 years due to this being against data protection regulations. However, I hope that the above provides you with enough detail to understand where the finance has been spent.

Once again thank you for your interest.

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