

MINUTES of the meeting of the **BASINGSTOKE CANAL JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE** held at Mytchett Canal Centre, Mytchett Place Road, Mytchett, Surrey, GU16 6DD on 3 November 2022
These minutes are subject to confirmation by the Committee at its next meeting.

MEMBERS

Hampshire County Council

Councillor Jonathan Glen
Councillor Rod Cooper
Councillor Stephen Parker
Councillor Timothy Davies

Surrey County Council

Councillor Marisa Heath
Councillor Riasat Khan
Councillor Paul Deach
Councillor Saj Hussain

Hart District Council

Councillor Peter Wildsmith
Councillor Tim Southern

Guildford Borough Council

Councillor Angela Gunning

Runnymede Borough Council

Councillor Scott Lewis

Rushmoor Borough Council

Councillor John Marsh
Councillor Paul Taylor

Surrey Heath Borough Council

Councillor Helen Whitcroft

Fleet Town Council

Councillor Ellie May

Woking Borough Council

Councillor Kevin Davis
Councillor Rob Leach

Special Interest Groups

Basingstoke Canal Society

Mr Ian Moore/Mr Tony Balch

Hart District Association of Parish Councils

Councillor David Jackson

Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council

Cllr Hayley Eachus

Natural England

Mr Adam Bates

Inland Waterways Association

Mrs Verna Smith

Basingstoke Canal Canoe Club

Mr Bill Hansell

Galleon Marine

Mr Arthur McCaffrey

1422 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE [Item 1]

Apologies were received from Saj Hussain, Adam Bates, Hayley Eachus, Helen Whitcroft, Angela Gunning, Verna Smith, Kate Tuck Ellie May, Tony Balch, Bill Hansell and Marisa Heath. A substitute attending on behalf of Bill Hansell.

It was noted that Jonathan Glen, Vice-Chairman, would act as Chairman for the meeting.

1522 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING: 15 JULY 2022 [Item 2]

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

1622 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST [Item 3]

There were none.

1722 QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS [Item 4]

There were no questions or petitions received.

1822 ACTION TRACKER AND FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME [Item 5]

Officers:

None.

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. The Chairman introduced the item. No comments were raised.
2. In regard to the Forward Work Programme, members were asked to contact the Chairman, Vice-Chairman or Committee Manager to put forward any suggestions for future items to consider.

Resolved:

The Joint Management Committee (JMC) agreed the action tracker and Forward Work Programme.

1922 RISK REGISTER [Item 8]

Officers:

James Taylor, Strategic Manager – Basingstoke Canal

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. Officers introduced the report and highlighted that the Risk Register was considered by the JMC annually at each November meeting.
Members noted:
 - a. That three risks had got worse or had become more likely in the past 12 months
 - b. That the risk associated with culvert inspections (BCA53) was now a red risk and that the cost of the inspection was three times higher compared to 10 years ago.
 - c. That a risk associated with the recruitment and retention of staff had declined.
 - d. That the risk associated with earthworks remained a red risk.
 - e. That a key area of risk which had increased was surrounding Reservoir Safety due to increased standards by the Environmental Agency.
 - f. Two risks related to staff had moved in the right direction.
2. The Chairman highlighted that the highest risk related to funding.
3. A Member of the JMC highlighted an issue related to bridges. The Strategic Manager informed Members that the majority of bridges were not managed by the County Councils as part of the Canal and therefore issues related to bridges were not included within the Risk Register. The Strategic Manager however highlighted that there was a

duty of care under the Occupiers' Liability Act to the public using the Canal.

4. In regard to Risk BCA 54, a Member stated that COVID-19 was a declining risk and therefore should be reduced within the Risk Register. The Strategic Manager stated that the risk had declined due to the vaccination programme, increased number of staff, and reduced legal restrictions.
5. A representative from Rushmoor Borough Council stated that they needed to cut funding to the Basingstoke Canal for 2023/24 due to the need to create a balanced budget. The Member state that they did not intend for the funding to be cut permanently. The following comments were made:
 - a. The Chairman noted that, under the Memorandum of Agreement, a year's notice was required to amend agreed funding allocations. Following discussion, it was noted that a letter was sent to the wrong addressee and therefore was not sent to the Canal Authority to provide notification of the change.
 - b. The Chairman asked that a letter be sent to the Leader of Rushmoor Borough Council to highlight the year's notice requirement, to confirm that no letter of notification had been received, and to ask the Leader to reconsider the decision to withdraw funding.
 - c. A Member suggested that a letter be sent to all chief executive officers of council's that provide funding to the Canal to remind of the requirement to provide a year's notice.
 - d. A Member suggested that council's have their voting rights removed from the Basingstoke Canal Joint Management Committee in the event of funding withdrawal.
 - e. The representative from Rushmoor Borough Council stated that he would bring back comments to his council's leadership.
 - f. An officer highlighted the responsibility for council's to provide open spaces to local residents. In response, the representative from Rushmoor Borough Council provide detail on the open spaces already provided by the council.
 - g. The Chairman suggested that a face-to-face meeting be organised with the relevant executive Member, Leader and lead officer at Rushmore Borough Council. This suggestion was later superseded by A6/22 within Minute 1922.
 - h. A Member urged Rushmoor Borough Council to reconsider their decision.
 - i. A Member suggested that boating charges were increased in areas of reduced funding by councils. Following discussion, another Member suggested the introduction of carparking charges in areas of reduced funding by councils.
 - j. The representative from Rushmoor Borough Council said that there was a possibility of providing reduced funding instead of cutting funding altogether. The representative reiterated the need to produce a balanced budget at Rushmoor Borough Council.

Actions/ further information to be provided:

That a letter be sent to the Leader of Rushmoor Borough Council to highlight the year's notice requirement, to confirm that no letter of notification had been

received, and to ask the Leader to reconsider the decision to withdraw funding.

Recommendations:

The JMC noted the annual revision to the Risk Register.

2022 REVISED BUDGET 2022/23, FORECAST OUTTURN 2022/23, FORWARD BUDGET 2023/24 [Item 6]

Officers:

Jenny Wadham, Honorary Treasurer
James Taylor, Strategic Manager Basingstoke Canal
Katie McDonald, Natural Capital Group Manager (SCC)

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. Officers introduced the report and provided a brief summary. It was noted that the the revised budget for the 2022/23 financial year was presented for approval to reflect extra works agreed for 2022/23 at the previous JMC meeting on 15 July. This increased the budgeted draw from reserves for 2022/23 from £30,000 to £82,000. Members further noted that the forecast outturn for the year to 31 March 2023 showed an £121,000 draw on reserves, compared to the revised budget draw of £82,000. Expenditure was forecast to be £21,000 under budget and income was forecast to be £60,000 lower than planned. In regard to the forward budget, officers had tried to create a balanced budget despite the increased pressures on income and expenditure. Issues related to there being no inflationary uplift on Partner contributions and there being a significant inflationary pressure on expenditure. The proposed overall income budget had been reduced by £12,000, primarily reflecting the reduction in Partner contributions. Several fee increases were expected to generate additional income; however, some income sources were suffering reduced demand. The Canal Maintenance Budget had been reduced to reflect the shortfall. Member noted details of the Capital Expenditure Programme and Reserves as outlined in the report. The officers went on to state that it was looking increasingly likely that there would be a need to draw from reserves just to cover annual expenditure and therefore there was need to consider other operating models.
2. The Natural Capital Group Manager informed the JMC that officers were concerned with how they would deliver services as expected and therefore it was agreed to commission consultants to provide advice and identify other possible funding models. The consultants would be speaking with members of the JMC to understand priorities for the Partnership. Members noted that an additional meeting would be scheduled in March 2023 to explore any options.
3. A Member of the JMC raised concerns around the reduction of the maintenance budget and stated that it would likely cause further issues in the long-term.
4. Members noted that consultants would consider all possible options to allow additional revenue to be produced for the Basingstoke Canal Authority.

5. Members asked whether the Authority could use capital funding to produce revenue streams. Officers stated that they would pass the comment on to the consultants however there could be issues related to the use of capital funds as they were usually only used for major maintenance on the Canal.
6. Members noted that the consultants selected had experience working with other waterways. Two meetings had been held between officers and the consultants and they had been signed off to begin work. Stakeholder meetings were expected to begin in December 2022.
7. A Member of the JMC stated that an asset register would be helpful to understand ownership of the assets belonging to the Canal. Furthermore, the Member suggested the creation of a depreciation reserve.
8. The Chairman felt it was important to relay the issues of the Canal back to each respective executive Member and officers.
9. A Member suggested that a face-to-face meeting be organised between all Partner council Leaders and executive Members to highlight the issues currently faced. A representative from the Basingstoke Canal Society (BCS) highlighted that there was ongoing work to create a pitch to highlight the importance of the Canal. It was suggested that the BCS be included within the face-to-face meeting. Furthermore, a representative from the BCS agreed to send photographs of the canal breach in 1968 to the Strategic Manager – Basingstoke Canal.
10. A Member asked whether it was possible to divest the Canal to a charitable trust. Officers stated that the option had been previously considered however it was not financially viable due to the number of significant liabilities.
11. It was noted that the Basingstoke Canal Society would form part of the stakeholder interviews within the consultation.

Actions / Further information to be provided:

Action A7/22 - To organise a meeting in March 2023 to discuss the outcome of the consultation.

Action A8/22 - That the Chairman send an invitation to all Partner council Leaders and relevant executive Members to attend a face-to-face meeting to highlight the issues currently facing the Basingstoke Canal. It was further agreed that officers and representatives from the Basingstoke Canal Society (BCS) attend the meeting to provide a presentation highlighting the importance of the Basingstoke Canal and its maintenance. All relevant Joint Management Committee members were asked to encourage their respective leaders and executive Members to attend the meeting.

Resolved:

1. That the Committee approved the revised budget for the 2022/23 financial year.
2. That the Committee noted the forecast outturn for the 2022/23 financial year.
3. That the Committee approved the forward budget for the 2023/24 financial year.

4. That the Committee supported a review by officers of possible alternative operating models to ensure the long term financial sustainability of the Basingstoke Canal.

2122 CANAL MANAGEMENT REPORT [Item 7]

Officers:

Fiona Shipp, BCA Canal Manager

James Taylor, Strategic Manager – Basingstoke Canal

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. The officer introduced the report and provided a brief summary. Members noted details related to:
 - a. That the two key themes were related to water level and staffing.
 - b. In regard to water levels, Members noted that the levels of input from the aquifer held well and were able to continue to pass water down the Canal until on 22nd June when the Deepcut and Brookwood lock flights were closed. Ash Lock was closed on Fri 24th June. There was an unprecedented closure of the Mytchett pound to unpowered boats on 15th August and that this was the first time since restoration that this has had to happen due to drought and lack of water. The BCA were able to maintain powered and unpowered navigation in the Hampshire Pound for the full season. The Mytchett Pound remained extremely low but rainfall at the end of August allowed re opened to unpowered boats on 14th September.
 - c. Officers were concerned with the long-term impact of the recent drought however currently there were no signs of significant harm to either assets or wildlife. Members noted that there was no loss of fish stock.
 - d. In regard to staffing, two Assistant Rangers left in the last 6 months however there was recruitment to one of the vacant Waterway Ranger Posts. Five ranger posts were now filled with two currently undergoing training. One of the lock keeping positions had been moved to a seasonal position rather than a full time permanent position.
 - e. Noted details of the Safer Street Project related to a number of indecent exposure incidents in Woking.
 - f. Noted details related to the income lost due to the drought.
 - g. Noted that a Police Sergeant from Hampshire Police force had a two week placement and would be spending a further two weeks in the Winter. Officers stated that it was important for the Canal Authority to have contact with local police officers.
 - h. Thanked the Basingstoke Canal Society for their work with volunteers.
 - i. Provided an update on the Conservation Steering Group meetings which were held twice a year. An independent company had been asked to review records from the last 20 years to consider any correlations between the different factors that affect the Canal. The outcome of this would be a review of the Conservation Management Plan to try and import the

quality of Special Scientific Interest. Members noted that this was a statutory duty.

- j. In regard to asset management, Members noted details of the Deepcut Towpath Improvement, Swan “cutting” in Hampshire, Weirs and Sluices updates, as noted in the report.
2. The Chairman felt the introduction was very detailed and asked that the Canal Manager attend the meeting held with the Leaders and Executive Members, as noted and agreed earlier in these minutes, to give an overview of the work done by the Canal Authority.
3. In regard to the weed-cutter, Members noted that it had been out of action for around a year due to issues with procuring replacement parts. Work to design a new rake-head had taken place and officers were now close to having the new part made. Officers stressed that the procurement of replacement parts was usually a difficult process.
4. Members asked how long it would take for Deepcut Locks to be reopened. Officers hoped to reopen within the next month, depending on rainfall.
5. The Joint Management Committee congratulated the Canal Manager and her team for their work over the previous six months.
6. In regard to the aquifer, a Member highlighted that a water company’s abstraction licence ended in March 2023 and did not expect for it to be renewed.
7. Members reiterated their thanks to the team for all their efforts and praised their commitment to the Basingstoke.

Actions/ further information to be provided:

None.

Resolved:

The Joint Management Committee noted the report.

2222 ALTERATION TO THE PLANNED MEMORIAL BENCH SCHEME [Item 9]

Officers:

Fiona Shipp, Canal Manager

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. Officers introduced the report and provided a brief summary. Members noted the current issues with the current bench process and were asked agree an alternative method of bench management on the Basingstoke Canal to be able to better manage the Canal’s bench provision.
2. A Member noted that the benches were well-used along the Canal. In regard to fund-raising, the Member also said that funds needed to be raised to also maintain existing and future benches.
3. Members acknowledged that the bench scheme could be an emotional subject for some people.
4. Members asked whether members of the public could pay for a memorial bench in full. Officers explained that this option was considered however there were additional costs related to administration and maintenance so the option was not viable. A

- Member suggested that, when paying for a memorial bench, additional funds were requested for administration and maintenance.
5. A Member suggested calling the scheme a 'Bench Facilitation Scheme' and framing the scheme around working with the client to find a mutually agreed bench and location. Officers acknowledged that not all benches would be 'in memorial' to something.
 6. The JMC noted issues related to their being preferred locations for benches and other areas less preferred.
 7. Members noted that the provision of benches in memorial was an issue across Surrey and Hampshire.
 8. A Member suggested the use of recycled materials to create benches which had the benefit of reduced maintenance.
 9. Members noted the option to allow members to the public to make donations towards benches in general rather paying to have a specific bench with a plaque placed along the Canal. In response, some members felt that members of the public would not find it as an appropriate option.
 10. A Member stressed the importance of benches to some residents and the issues standardising benches could cause.
 11. A Member stated that the thrust of the paper was to reduce administration for benches which in the scheme of things was a more minor matter given the overall concerns about staffing and funds.

Actions/ further information to be provided:

None.

Resolved:

The JMC agreed to authorise the BCA Canal Manager and Strategic Manager to work with the BCS to implement the alternative bench policy and scheme of provision of benches for the Canal as an alternative to a memorial bench scheme.

The Chairman requested that, if following consideration of the comments raised during the meeting an amended scheme was considered worthwhile, a further report should be brought to the JMC for agreement.

2322 BASINGSTOKE CANAL SOCIETY REPORT [Item 10]

Officers:

Ian Moore, Basingstoke Canal Society

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. The representative introduced the report and provided a brief summary of the Societies achievements. These included:
 - a. Sustained membership numbers at around 1,000 and reached over 8,000 per week followers on social media sites
 - b. Organised and led a number of Corporate Volunteer teams delivering over 850 hours of labour on Hydrocotyle weed, lock gate painting towpath clearing. Members noted the various organisations that had attended.
 - c. Noted various projects to reduce the carbon dioxide produced on the Canal.

- d. Noted details of the Safer Streets Project. The scheme included increased patrolling of Police and Canal Watch Volunteers, and a reduced crime environment, and that the case study of Canal Watch on the Basingstoke Canal had won a public safety award and was now representing the United Kingdom at the international awards held in the United States of America. Members noted that part of the project included the removal of graffiti and the placement of CCTV cameras in some areas.
- e. Members felt it was important to publicise the work of the Safer Streets Project.
- f. A Member raised the possibility of asking asylum seekers to volunteer their time to work on the Canal.

Actions/ further information to be provided:

None.

Resolved:

The JMC noted the report.

2422 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING [Item 11]

The Committee noted that its next meeting would be on 7 June 2023.

Meeting ended at: 12.27 pm

Chairman