

Key Issue

To update the Committee on the progress of the asset and risk improvement programme funded by Surrey and Hampshire County Councils.

Summary

The Capital Programme has made greater in-roads into the works backlog in Surrey than in Hampshire. This is mainly due to the unexpected landslip at Dogmersfield which has impacted the Hampshire budget significantly.

Officer's recommendation

That the Committee note the contents of the report.

1 Introduction & background

In 2010 Surrey and Hampshire County Councils allocated a capital budget of £700k each to address a serious backlog of heavy maintenance which had built up since the opening of the restored Canal in 1991, which resulted in the closure of the Deepcut flight of locks for safety reasons in 2009. The three year programme was completed under a joint term contract in 2013. This addressed completion of Principal Engineering Inspections for most assets, immediate safety issues in the Deepcut locks and carried out safety related works on embanked sections of Canal in Hampshire – but there was still a substantial list of outstanding works.

A further £2m was allocated by each of the owning authorities in 2013, with Hampshire initially allocating the funding over 3 years and Surrey 4 years. Hampshire have now agreed to spread their funding over a fourth year due to difficulties in delivering the repairs to the Dogmersfield landslip.

2 Discussion

With a little under 18 months of the second tranche of the project left to run this paper sets out the position of the capital works programme in the two Counties.

Surrey

In Surrey the works have been progressing well, with a scheme of “Works in the Interest of Public Safety” under the Reservoirs Act carried out on Mytchett Lake Embankment (2013), major repairs carried out to Frimley Lodge Embankment (2014/15), repairs to further lock infrastructure, and unplanned repairs to Stepbridge Embankment in Woking to finally resolve a re-occurring leakage on this urban embankment. Works to renew Hermitage Weir are on-going at the time of writing this report.

Emergency and replacement equipment has been purchased to enhance the BCA's ability to maintain the Canal, and respond in the case of emergency; most of these purchases have been jointly funded with HCC.

Schemes to repair seepage at Ash Embankment (a cross border site being led by SCC), further works to lock infrastructure and replacement of a culvert in poor condition at Sheerwater are in the advanced stage of planning for the winter programme of 2015/16.

SCC Countryside have employed a part time Engineer solely for the duration of the project who is leading the programme, together with a private CDM consultant to govern site Health & Safety – both these measures are proving cost effective.

All of the items which were prioritised a budget allocation are on track to be completed by March 2017; a number of lower priority items will remain unresolved at the end of the programme.

Hampshire

The Hampshire programme has become dominated by the repairs to the landslip which occurred at Tundry Hill, Dogmersfield in March 2013. As well as being an engineering challenge to repair, the site is complicated by fragmentation of ownership, with much of the cutting sides now being in private ownership. HCC Engineer Consultancy are leading the work to try and restore this area with a target date of Easter 2016.

HCC Engineering Consultancy are also now leading repairs to several culverts and the Whitewater Aqueduct which pass under the Canal, and therefore represent a high risk of a breach should they fail. Works to add a liner to Tundry Bank culvert have recently been completed, and a principal inspection of Whitewater Aqueduct is being prepared.

The Strategic Manager has arranged directly for local contractors to carryout permanent steel sheet bank repairs to a standard design at two sites where there had been sudden leakages, possibly caused by signal crayfish damage.

HCC have been the procuring authority for the jointly funded Telemetry project. This is several months behind schedule mainly due to the supplier updating their software at no cost to the Canal, but most of the sensors are now in place and working, with a test system up and running. This will enable the BCA to plan their winter response better, and over time will help plan water resources.

The Dogmersfield slip has unfortunately impacted the HCC programme of works with a number of schemes being shelved as the estimated costs for the Dogmersfield slip have risen, and the timing delayed by factors beyond HCC's control. The schemes chosen to be cut or reduced are seen as those with the least impact on continuing to manage the Canal safely.

One of the schemes which has been effected is at Swan Bridge, North Warnborough, where engineers and surveyors advise that no dredging should take place until a scheme of works to stabilise the adjoining slopes have been drawn up and agreed with the adjacent owners (who own the offside bank). Due to the costs at Dogmersfield there is no budget to cover developing or building such a scheme.

Dredging

The largest allocated sums remaining in both budgets relates to dredging; there is a sum allocated to the repair or the BCA's own clamshell dredger *Unity*, and also for a systematic programme of channel dredging. These both require preparatory work to be completed – in the first case this requires information from suitable suppliers to enable a detailed business case to be made for the repair of *Unity*; and in the case of a more systematic approach to dredging a whole channel depth survey. These are both a little behind schedule and will call for tough delivery timescales, but are currently considered achievable.

3 Financial and value for money implications

The costs of the unplanned works at Dogmersfield have made a significant impact on the HCC capital allocation with a number of planned projects having been postponed indefinitely. This shows the impact of a large unexpected failure on budgets.

Beyond 2017 there is no planned capital programme from either of the owning authorities. The programmes were designed to break a backlog of maintenance not to entirely solve them. This will leave a number of projects unfunded at the end of the project in 2017. Details of how the remaining items will be dealt with will be the subject of a report to a future meeting of this Committee.

4 Equalities & diversity implications

The works are targeted at making the Canal safer for all residents and visitors, there are considered to be no significant equalities and diversity impacts.

5 Crime & disorder implications

There are considered to be no major Crime and Disorder implications for the capital works programme. However, additional secure housing and additional security measures have had to be obtained for the BCA's new equipment as the result of thefts of their existing equipment. Designers have also had to ensure that there are measures in place to ensure that canal-side equipment is tamper proof. These factors have added to the cost of acquiring equipment.

6 Conclusion and recommendation

Under the capital programme since 2010 the Canal has been transformed; the Deepcut locks have reopened and stayed open, high risk embankments have been repaired and the BCA re-equipped with appropriate equipment. The remaining programme will address further repairs which are consider high risk, and will also provide further information on the matter of dredging; whether simply to re-equip the BCA with an in-house dredging capacity, and/or whether a wider dredging programme is required.

To ensure the Canal continues to be maintained at a good steady state the BCA must continue to be well funded at a revenue level to fulfil its maintenance and inspection role. This will include dealing with matters that they have not traditionally led on, such as repairs to masonry structures and carrying out more extensive bank maintenance schemes. This will mean that they must be prepared to work creatively using direct labour, contractors, specialist consultant and volunteer resources to their maximum potential.

Given that unplanned failures have the biggest impact on budget one of the keys must be to ensure that the unexpected failures are kept to a minimum. It is essential that the BCA's regular inspection programme detailed in the Asset Management Plan is rigorously followed going forward. Whilst inspection is now considered good, works have been somewhat reactive to date and need to be better prioritised and programmed. To improve this matters raised during inspection will need to be prioritised into a dynamic 5 year maintenance plan to be funded within existing budgets. The 5 year maintenance plan along with operational policies (which will inform the prioritisation process) will form the central part of the BCA's *Operational Plan*.

7 What happens next

- The JMC will be provided updates of officer's actions in completing the remaining capital programme through to March 2017, and implications beyond 2017
- Officers will develop the BCA *Operational Plan* which will be submitted to this Committee for approval

This page is intentionally left blank