

MINUTES of the meeting of the **BASINGSTOKE CANAL JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE** held at Mytchett Canal Centre, Mytchett Place Road, Mytchett, Surrey, GU16 6DD on Thursday 30 June 2016 at 10.05 am

These minutes are subject to confirmation by the Committee at its meeting.

Hampshire County Council

* Councillor Keith Chapman
* Councillor John Bennison
A Councillor Brian Gurden
* Councillor John Wall

Hampshire Districts:

Hart District Council

A Councillor Simon Ambler
* Councillor Stephen Gorys

Rushmoor Borough Council

* Councillor Les Taylor
* Councillor JH Marsh

Fleet Town Council

A Richard Robinson

Special Interest Groups

Basingstoke Canal Society

A Martin Leech
* Mr Philip Riley

Parish Councils

* Alastair Clark

Basingstoke Canal Houseboat Owners

* Julia Jacs

Surrey County Council

* Councillor Mike Goodman
* Councillor Ben Carasco
* Councillor Chris Pitt
A Councillor Colin Kemp

Surrey Districts:

Guildford Borough Council

A Councillor Nigel Kearse

Runnymede Borough Council

* Councillor Barry Pitt

Surrey Heath Borough Council

* Councillor David Lewis

Woking Borough Council

* Councillor Kevin Davis
A Councillor Ann-Marie Barker

Natural England

A Adam Wallace

Inland Waterways Association

* Gareth Jones

Basingstoke Canal Boating Club

* Liz Murnaghan

Galleon Marine

* Arthur McCaffery

Key:

A = Apologies

* = Present, as expected

1/16 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE [Item 1]

Apologies were received from Cllr Simon Ambler, Cllr Ann-Marie Barker, Cllr Colin Kemp, Cllr Nigel Kearse, Cllr Richard Robinson, Martin Leech and Adam Wallace.

Cllr Jeffrey Robert Smith substituted for Cllr Richard Robinson.

2/16 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING: THURSDAY 29 OCTOBER 2015 [Item 2]

Key Points of Discussion:

1. The minutes of the previous meeting were noted by the Committee. Concerns was raised that the attendance list was inaccurate and that some actions noted were omitted. There were also concerns that

some of the discussions noted were not representative of events. It was resolved that the minutes in their current state could not be approved by the Committee and that the Committee Support officer would revise the minutes for approval at the next meeting of the Committee.

Ben Carasco entered the meeting at 10.06am

2. There was a question relating to the responses of the letters distributed by the Chairman of the Committee to the Leaders and Chief Executives of Runnymede and Surrey Heath Borough Council regarding payment of full contribution to the Basingstoke Canal Authority (BCA). The Chairman noted that there had been no response from either authority since the last meeting. The Chairman offered to circulate a copy of the letters to the Committee. The representative on the Committee from Runnymede also offered to investigate the issue with his authority.

Recommendations:

- a. That the Chairman expresses his concerns regarding committee support with the Head of Democratic Services of Surrey County Council and reports to the Committee the outcomes and future support for the Committee.
- b. That the Chairman chases responses from Runnymede and Surrey Heath regarding payment of their full contribution towards the Canal.

3/16 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST [Item 3]

There were no declarations of interest.

4/16 QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS [Item 4]

There were no questions or petitions submitted.

5/16 FINANCIAL REPORT 2015/16 [Item 8]

Officers:

Jane Lovett, Hampshire County Council Finance Business Partner

Key Points of Discussion:

1. The Officer outlined the financial situation of the Basingstoke Canal Authority (BCA). It was noted positively that the canal had contributed £65,554 to reserves in the financial year 2015/16, increasing the available reserves to £402,028. It was explained that this was as a

result of decreased spending and increased income against that predicted in January. Savings had been made by deploying rangers to assist contractors and additional income secured from mooring fees and licences.

2. It was noted that there was only one finance report in the papers. In previous years a Small Bodies Annual Return had to be considered alongside the final accounts report before it could be submitted for audit. This is no longer required and the audit is covered by the audit of Hampshire County Council. This results in a financial saving for the Canal. It was noted that Hampshire County Council's capital expenditure had been less than was forecast during the year due to the slippage of repairs to the Dogmersfield landslip into 2016/17, while Surrey County Council's capital expenditure had been on target, with works to the banks being the main area of expenditure.
3. The Committee questioned the idea of the suspension of Capital allocations after the financial year 2016/17. There was a general worry expressed by the Committee that this would lead to the deterioration of the Canal and the high long term cost of repairing a deteriorated canal in comparison to the lower short term cost of maintenance. It was explained to the Committee that this did not necessarily represent a permanent halt of capital funding, but that there were no further advances planned in either of the County Councils capital programmes in the short term future.
4. A suggestion was put forward by the Committee to ascertain other means of funding capital projects, citing the particular example of the Heritage Lottery Fund, and advised that the Committee and officers work to explore these options as part of any canal governance changes.
5. A question was put to officers regarding the disposal of assets to private trusts and if the canal would be immediately suitable to a prospective buyer. Officers responded that there was still work to be done with this and that projects were still underway to ensure that this is viable.

The Committee Agreed:

1. That the Committee noted the finance update for the financial outturn of the financial year 2015/16 and noted the positive performance of the BCA.

Officers:

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

Key Points of Discussion:

1. Officers informed the Committee of the proposed policy for the setting of prices, charges and fees for users of BCA facilities. It was proposed to the Committee that a fair and robust framework for any changes should be implemented in line with the model used by Hampshire County Council – the BCA's host authority. It was the aim of the BCA to ensure that, with these changes the canal should work towards being self-sustaining and all future projects would be assessed on a full cost recovery basis.
2. It was noted that the individual changes to prices, charges and fees would be reviewed annually as part of the Canal forward budget. Officers explained that the aim was to present this to the Committee as part of the finance reviews in October.
3. Officers stressed that all of the proposed changes in the plan were mindful of equalities and diversities, with considerations made for concessions for vulnerable members of society to maintain reasonable use of the canal facilities.
4. It was proposed that a 5% default increase should be implemented as part of the proposed changes to prices, charges and fees annually, with the capability of the BCA to modify this default if there was a clear market reason that this should be significantly raised or lowered. This policy was proposed in order to increase transparency and to combat increasing costs for the BCA. The Committee expressed concerns regarding this, suggesting that this could create a static mindset within the BCA regarding charges. The Committee recommended to officers that this stipulation be removed and replaced with a review of prices based on the prevailing market forces.
5. Members questioned the impact of the proposed raising of fees for essential carers and whether it may serve to onerously impact upon them, stating that in most instances essential carers would be admitted freely. It was queried if this idea could be analysed and what the loss of income resulting in this policy change would be per annum.

Recommendations:

- a. That the Policy be adopted, but that the 5% default raise of charges be removed and replaced with a policy of raising or lowering prices/fees

based on market rates.

- b. That as part of the forward budget exercise; officers identify the cost to the Canal of the impact of reducing the current 10% minimum concession for Essential Carers to free of charge...

7/16 BASINGSTOKE CANAL JOINT MANAGEMENT REPORT [Item 5]

Officers:

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

Key Points of Discussion:

1. Officers outlined the work undertaken by the BCA in the year 2015/16. It was noted that some issues had occurred throughout the year regarding lock maintenance. The specific issue of Storm Katie was raised as having caused damage to some trees under BCA management.
2. Officers noted that a tree survey had been undertaken two years ago and that the initial backlog of tree works had been rectified. This was a result of the rapid improvement of project and capital funding, however it was noted that this would be funded by BCA revenue funding in future. This was expected to be within the budgeted amount as the number of trees requiring attention is expected to fall with each 3 year inspection cycle.
3. It was questioned by the Committee as to what was done with dead wood as a result of storms or other natural events and whether the selling of wood could be an income generator for the BCA. Officers responded that it was difficult and costly to move to sell wood on a large scale, due to logistical difficulties with the Canal's geography. It was, however, noted that the best examples of felled timber were used by BCA to make items for the canal. It was also noted that the BCA shared any timber that can be cost effectively obtained in partnership with Blackwater Valley and some of this was sold as fuel.
4. It was noted that most dead wood was left in its environment to maintain for ecological reasons.
5. It was queried by the Committee as to the risks involved to the canal as a result of falling trees. It was confirmed by officers that the highest risk trees had been removed following the tree survey first, to minimise risk. It was noted that there was also an emergency plan in place to combat any issues arising from this, which had recently been reissued. It was added that the BCA works closely with partners to go through

any concerns regarding these high risk issues.

6. It was noted by officers that water management was being continually observed to reduce any risk. This was undertaken by the BCA's Rangers. It was also noted that a new telemetry measuring system was being currently installed on the canal to monitor water height, ensuring ease of monitoring and proactive management of water levels to minimise any risk of flooding.
7. It was noted by officers that the BCA had experienced some burglary and misuse of canal property issues, but that policies were in place currently to resolve these. The use of the new patrol boat was particularly noted as successful in reducing incidents of misuse.
8. Officers praised the work of volunteers as a positive contribution to the canal. Members asked that their thanks be passed onto the volunteer teams. It was noted that there has been an increase in the number of volunteers in the last two years. It was also noted that the contribution of volunteers to the canal had served to provide a significant positive cost benefit for the BCA.
9. It was noted that there was a project underway between the BCA and the Basingstoke Canal Society to produce a new volunteer leaflet to encourage new volunteers. It was suggested that work on this project would be completed before the next meeting of the Committee.
10. A question was put forward by the Committee regarding the viability and progress of revising Gate and Garden Licences for adjoining properties on the canal. It was suggested for gate licences that the returns on the implementation of such a policy would not be significant enough to successfully implement the policy. Officers noted however that garden licences were a different matter, and that these were required where a householder was occupying part of the Canal's land as part of their garden.
11. It was noted by officers that the BCA was preparing an operational plan to present to the Committee at its next meeting.
12. Officers explained that, following discussion with the organisers of the Farnborough Air Show (FAS), that temporary suspensions would be placed this year on the canal as a result of low-flying aircraft displays. It was noted that the FAS will provide staff to police the temporary suspension of use.
13. Officers elucidated that a channel depth survey was being procured with an expected start date of July 2016; this would lead to future dredging programme to an agreed canal profile.

14. Regarding Dogmersfield landslip, it was expected that Hampshire County Council engineers would begin work in October 2016. It was asked by the Committee whether there would be disruption to canal traffic. Officers responded that the navigation and towpath would be closed during works, but that the canal would remain watered during this time. It was noted that during replacement of the Barley Mow Culvert the Canal would be locally dammed and drained, but that this would be undertaken either at the beginning or end of the works timetable to reduce disruption.
15. The Committee requested any fences at Dogmersfield would be substantial enough to minimise risk of members of the public entering the worksite. Officers confirmed that work would be done by the contractors to ensure that this was addressed correctly.
16. The Committee notes and approves the hard work undertaken by volunteers on the canal.

Recommendations:

- a. That officers present the Operational Plan of the BCA to the next meeting of the Committee.
- b. That the Committee noted and approved the support given by the Basingstoke Canal Authority to volunteers.

8/16 VISITOR CENTRE AND CANAL FUTURE VERBAL UPDATE [Item 6]

Officers:

Lisa Creaye-Griffin, Surrey County Council Countryside Group Manager
Jo Heath, Hampshire County Council Head of Countryside

Key Points of Discussion:

1. Surrey County Council's Countryside Group Manager informed the Committee that Hampshire County Council and Surrey County Council were in discussion regarding the future of the Basingstoke Canal. It was explained to the Committee that these discussions were wide-ranging, and included setting up an independent trust or Community Interest Company, an enhanced version of the existing arrangements, or a transfer to Canal & River Trust A detailed report on the future management of the Canal will be presented to the Cabinet or Executive Member for both of the owning County Councils in the Autumn, The Chairman suggested that this report should be presented to the Committee in advance of its wider publication, so the Committee is kept fully informed.

2. Members queried with officers whether the land adjacent to the canal could be utilised for income generating opportunities. It was explained that the BCA, Surrey County Council and Hampshire County Council were looking at opportunities for this. It was queried by the Committee if property development could be an option for alternate revenue opportunities. Officers confirmed that, if an analysis of the business case was positive, that all options would be looked into.
3. It was queried by members of the Committee whether a task group could be organised to lobby for alternative funding methods for the BCA.. This will be set up once there is clarity over the future of the Canal, as outlined above.
4. It was queried by members of the Committee whether a task group could be organised to lobby for alternative funding methods for the BCA. It was suggested to officers to ascertain if this could be a viable option.
5. The state of Mychett Canal Centre site redevelopments was queried by the Committee, specifically the upgrade of the campsite and canoe club, and why the multi-phased approach for their redevelopment had not been implemented. Officers responded that delays caused were due to the necessity for a full site assessment to be conducted. However, it was added that these delays had been overcome and a phased approach to the Canal Centre redevelopment could go ahead. It was added that the Chairman of the Committee would have a discussion with the Chairman of the Basingstoke Canal Society regarding the development of these sites.
6. A point was raised by the Committee regarding improving the financial viability of the canal in order to ensure that the canal is an attractive proposition for trusts in future. The specific example of new developments was made as a key example of this.

Recommendations:

- a. That an extraordinary meeting of the Committee be convened before both Surrey County Council and Hampshire County Council make a decision regarding the future of the canal.

Jane Lovett left the meeting at 11.45am.

9/16 BASINGSTOKE CANAL SOCIETY REPORT [Item 7]

Witnesses:

Philip Riley, Chairman of the Basingstoke Canal Society

Key Points of Discussion:

1. The Chairman of the Canal Society outlined the issue regarding Swan “Cutting”. It was stressed that there was an issue relating to the navigability of larger vessels in that section of the canal and that a plan would need to be devised to avoid potential risk of the navigation closing. The Basingstoke Canal Society offered support to the BCA and Hampshire County Council with funding on any work undertaken regarding Swan Cutting. It was noted that an engineering study had been commissioned by the Canal Society and Inland Waterways Association which had underlined risks and potential solutions. The Chairman of the Canal Society recommended to the Committee that they consider this report and sought their support in ensuring that this study be taken forward by Hampshire County Council and the BCA.
2. It was suggested that the Dredging Task Group be reconvened to look at the proposals of the Basingstoke Canal Society in detail.
3. The Chairman of the Canal Society highlighted the Woking Canal Festival as a positive community event to celebrate and raise the profile of the Canal. The event was marking the 25th anniversary of the reopening of the Canal, and the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Canal Society and the Historic Narrow Boat Club. The Committee noted that these were positive events and encouraged all members of the committee to promote the canal events amongst their ward members and at their local authorities.
4. A query was raised by the Committee relating to the advertising and distribution of information regarding these events. It was suggested that work could be done to improve the coverage of such events.
5. The Chairman of the Canal Society emphasised the positive reception of the new society trip boat, *Kitty*.

Recommendations:

1. That the Committee reconvenes the Dredging Task Group to ascertain the viability of the proposals put forward by the Canal Society for Swan “Cutting”.

10/16 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING [Item 10]

The next meeting of the Committee will be held on Thursday October 13 2016, 10.05 at the Mytchett Canal Centre.

Meeting ended at: 12.00 pm

Chairman