

Planning Guidance Note - development in the Basingstoke Canal corridor

Consultation Draft



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The Basingstoke Canal is an inland waterway, with the navigable section running from Greywell in Hampshire to the River Wey Navigation in Surrey. It follows a meandering 32 mile course west to east through picturesque countryside, parkland, woodland and historic towns and villages, as well as the built up area of Fleet, Aldershot and Woking. The Canal originally continued to Basingstoke (a total distance of 37 miles), but it has not been navigable beyond Up Nately since the early 1900's, and access to the original destination was conclusively severed by the partial collapse of the Greywell Tunnel in 1932.

The Canal was built in the late 18th century to provide easy transport of agricultural produce to Metropolitan markets and its construction opened up the area for farming. Although never commercially successful, the canal's picturesque surroundings made it a notable leisure resource in the mid-19th century, a role it continues to fulfil to the present day. The canal also forms an important feature in the landscape of many of the settlements along its length, some of which it was built to serve, whilst others developed as a result of its construction. During the 20th century, the declining use of the canal and a general lack of maintenance led to a gradual deterioration. During the Second World War, the canal formed part of the GHQ Line, a line of defences running from Somerset to Yorkshire via Aldershot and Essex. Many pill boxes, stockpiles of concrete tank obstacles and other defensive features remain along the line of the canal and in its immediate setting.



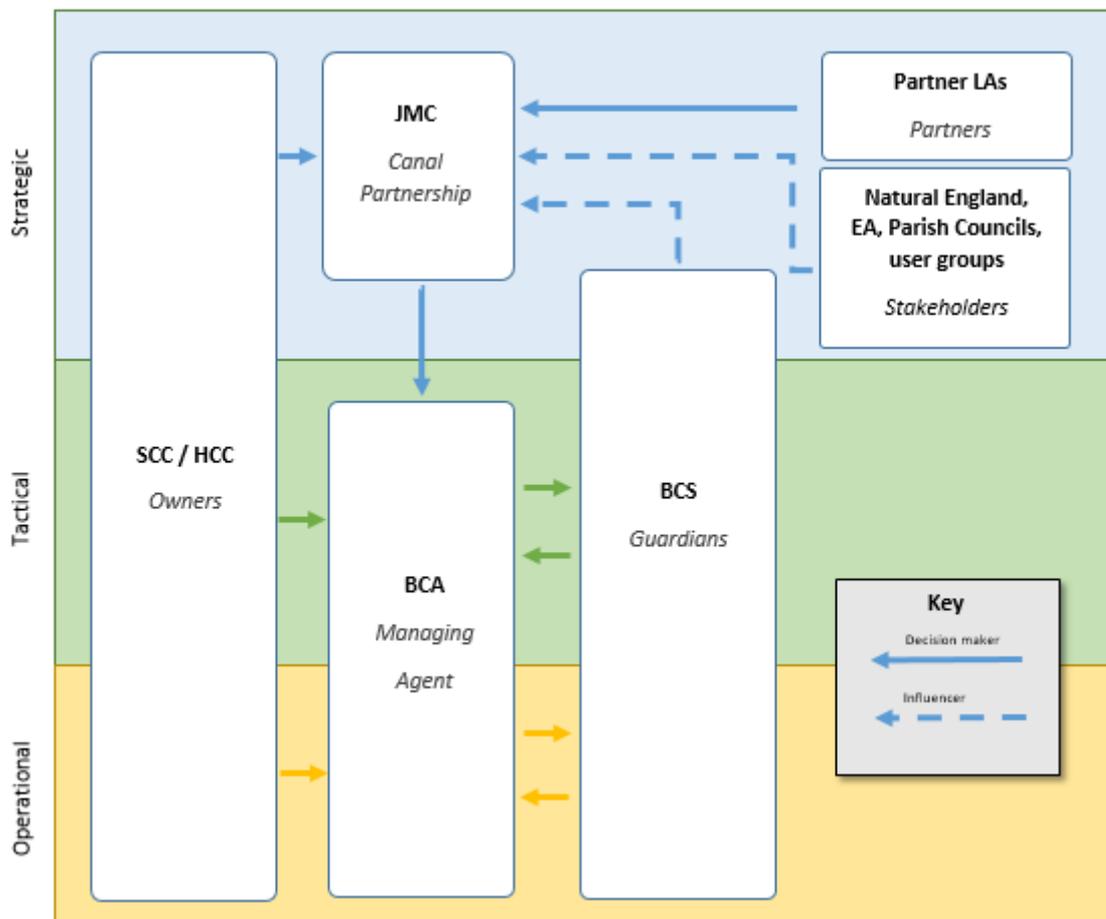
32 miles of the Basingstoke Canal is owned by Surrey and Hampshire County Councils each within their jurisdictions.

The Basingstoke Canal Authority (BCA), was set up in 1990 to manage the operation of the Basingstoke Canal as a local authority partnership – the Canal Partnership - managing the Canal on behalf of the two County Councils.

The BCA has no legal or corporate identity itself and various functions are hosted by the two owning County Councils (staff and finances by HCC, legal and democratic processes by SCC).

The Canal Partnership is governed by the **Basingstoke Canal Joint Management Committee (JMC)**. This comprises the two County Councils and six local Borough and District Councils through which the operational canal passes (Hart, Rushmoor, Guildford, Surrey Heath, Woking and Runnymede) and Fleet Town Council. They provide revenue funding and strategic governance for the BCA.

As well as the BCA paid staff, the volunteer effort led by the BCS is very significant and amounts to more than £250,000 of “free” labour and expertise annually.



Basingstoke Canal Partnership Diagram

Access to the Countryside Act 1949. It is valued as a linear park providing opportunities for walking, running cycling, fishing, canoeing and boating with a wide range of indirect benefits including improved health and wellbeing. The towpath also provides important links between other footpaths and adjacent SANGS as well as providing commuters with an alternative “off road” link. There is estimated to be in excess of 1.75million visits to the towpath or water per annum.

The entire Canal and a corridor of land adjoining is also designated as a Conservation Area, many of the remaining historic structures – notably most of the bridges in the Hampshire portion of the Canal are Listed (grade II) and the Woodham locks locally listed by Runnymede Borough Council. Goldsworth Bridge near Woking, as the last surviving Canal bridge in original form in Surrey, is a Scheduled Monument.

The Purpose of this Document

This document has been produced jointly by the Basingstoke Canal Authority [BCA] and Basingstoke Canal Society [BCS], to be approved by the Basingstoke Canal Joint Management Committee and adopted as Canal Partnership policy.

Individual member authorities of the Canal Partnership who exercise the powers of Local Planning Authority are encouraged to adopt the policies contained in this Guidance Note in an appropriate manner – perhaps as part of their local plans or as supplementary planning guidance.

This document is intended to:

- provide local authorities with an understanding of the way in which the BCA and/or BCS are likely to respond to development proposals affecting the Canal
- assist developers and landowners who wish to promote development which may affect the Canal
- assist members of the general public to a greater understanding of the management policies for the Canal
- promote beneficial, collaborative and productive working partnerships with a variety of interest groups and organisations

Development that may adversely impact upon the canal but lying outside the extent of the Conservation Area is of interest to the BCA and where appropriate the BCA will expect to work with developers, local community groups, organisations and other landowners in implementing this Guidance.



Statement of Principles

Vision & mission statement

The vision for the Basingstoke canal is to create a thriving natural environment for wildlife and public enjoyment and vibrant recreation and heritage resource.

Central to the vision is to create a navigable waterway serving the public. The vision seeks to unlock the potential economic contribution of the canal and its corridor and also to become a focal point for increased community and volunteer involvement and use.

The ambition is to become a well-loved, distinctive and well-known destination for an extended market including day visitors and tourists attracted to discover and enjoy its peaceful setting and unique character.



Response to development proposals

The operational Canal – east of Penny Bridge, Up Nately

In responding to development plans and proposals which affect or could affect the Canal and the waterway corridor the BCA/BCS will have regard to this mission statement.

An effective planning system is essential to the role of protecting the best of the natural and historic environment. The BCA/BCS will seek to work closely with local authorities to explain its aims and obligations and to mitigate the adverse effects of inappropriate development and changes to the Canal

The BCA/BCS monitors planning application lists for each of the seven local authority areas and assesses whether and how proposals are likely to affect the Canal. The BCA/BCS will seek to ensure that it is advised by local authorities of all proposals which will or could affect the Canal, whether or not they have reached the stage of a formal planning application. These will usually be proposals on land adjacent or close to the Canal but they may include development some distance away. For example, if there are implications for traffic generation, recreational pressure, loss of habitat, views, pollution, noise or flooding, or damage to canal structures.

In responding to development proposals, the BCA/BCS will consider each proposal to ensure that:

- both the special historic and landscape character of the Canal and its setting is protected and enhanced
- the historic built assets of the Canal are protected or enhanced in an appropriate manner
- nature conservation and biodiversity interest in the Canal is protected, and where appropriate enhanced, in accordance with national planning policy
- leisure and recreational activity on the Canal is maintained or enhanced in a sustainable manner
- the quality and character of views to and from the Canal are enhanced
- development proposals respect and respond positively to the individually distinctive characteristics of different parts of the Canal
- where appropriate historic development patterns are emulated within new developments
- that water flows into and out of the Canal are maintained and where appropriate enhanced

The BCA/BCS will also have regard to national and local planning policies

The “last 5 miles” – the line of Canal west of Penny Bridge, Up Nately

The final 5 miles of Canal were abandoned by the then owner in 1932, drained and sold off into private ownership. This western end of the Canal is no longer in the same single public ownership as the rest of the Canal, but fragmented amongst many different owners (mostly private individuals and farms), it is also severed by the M3 Motorway and lost under urban development in Basingstoke itself.

Never-the-less the line of the Canal is a significant landscape and heritage feature across Basingstoke & Deane Borough.

The BCS particularly will work closely with Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council to explain its aims, and to mitigate the adverse effects of inappropriate development and changes to the Canal.

Responses to applications which impact on this western section will:

- Support the view that the line should be preserved as a heritage and landscape feature.

- Support the view that surviving heritage assets, such as “Little Tunnel” bridge near Up Nately, should be appropriately preserved and/or enhanced.
- Oppose any developments which remove, or damage the historic earthworks or surviving assets or are unsympathetic to the historic line of the Canal and its setting.
- Support the provision of appropriate interpretation and public access along the line of the Canal.



Slades Bridge, Up Nately

[Pre-application advice](#)

Developers are encouraged to hold early pre-application discussions, with the BCA or relevant County Council Canal owner to ensure that their development proposals will not draw objections. This will include both strategic and practical considerations such as retaining the structural integrity of the canal during and after development, drainage, public access/navigation, nature conservation mitigation and enhancement. Relevant contact details are provided in Appendix B.

At the local plan review stage, the BCA/BCS would seek the inclusion of the following, or similar worded policies to protect and enhance the Basingstoke Canal and its environs;

Council Wide policies

Development will not normally be permitted which would have a detrimental impact upon the landscape quality, ecological value or water quality along the Canal corridor.

All watercourses including the Canal will be protected by ensuring undeveloped buffer zones of 5m – 8m width are maintained alongside watercourses - these will serve as green infrastructure as well as habitats of biodiversity value.

Development Management Policies

Green Space Policies: Development in the Vicinity of Basingstoke Canal

Proposals map:

The NPPF requires Local Plans to indicate broad locations for strategic development on a key diagram and land use designations on a Proposals Map. The Proposals Map should reflect the spatial extent of a Green Space Policy and in particular within the vicinity of Basingstoke Canal.

Green Space Policies - Green infrastructure opportunities:

Green Infrastructure (GI) is a network of multi-functional green space, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities. Waterways such as the Basingstoke Canal are GI assets but are also known as “blue infrastructure”. These existing GI assets, and new assets that come forward through development, can be harnessed in an integrated manner to maximise the economic, social and environmental benefits, including biodiversity and habitat enhancement, healthier lifestyles through improved access to green space, reduction of flood risk and mitigation and adaptation to climate change.

Development in the vicinity of Basingstoke Canal

Development proposals which would conserve and enhance the landscape, heritage, architectural or ecological character, setting or enjoyment of the Basingstoke Canal and would not result in the loss of important views in the vicinity of the Canal will be permitted, if all other relevant Development Plan policies are met.

Recreational, navigational and ancillary facilities will be permitted along the Canal where the LPA is satisfied that the proposal would conserve the historic and ecological character of the waterway and its setting.

Development on land adjoining the Canal should not be permitted where it would result in un-attenuated surface water or highway drainage into the Canal.

Developments which can offer attenuated dry-season flows or wet-season water storage will be supported.

Development proposals for sympathetically constructed boat mooring facilities for leisure purposes on land directly adjoining the Canal will be considered favourably provided they:

- (i) respect the historic character of the Canal;
- (ii) will not create a hazard or obstruction along the canal or interfere with the pedestrian usage of the towpath;
- (iii) will not have a detrimental impact on surrounding uses;
- (iv) preserve the predominantly dark setting of the Canal Corridor by avoiding light spillage;
- (v) provide for adequate facilities for refuse storage and collections;
- (vi) provide for satisfactory sanitary facilities;
- (vii) adequate provision of car parking and suitable vehicular access, including access for emergency vehicles and should ensure that all other relevant development plan policies are met.

Permanent residential moorings and proposals for new cuts, lagoons, marinas or basins to provide off-line moorings on land adjoining the Canal will only be permitted in very special circumstances.

Where development proposals directly adjoin the Canal, or could potentially affect it visually, the LPA will seek to ensure that they are designed so that they take advantage of the opportunity to capitalise upon the setting and to relate to the canal rather than turn their back on it. This will include careful design which makes a positive contribution to enhancing the Canal and including, in appropriate cases, the provision of canal-side enhancements such as mooring facilities or landscaping.

The LPA will work in partnership with the Basingstoke Canal Authority, the County Councils and other interested parties to encourage and deliver the aims of the policy. This will include partnership working in identifying suitable silt disposal sites after dredging. The appropriateness of any site for this purpose will be considered on a case by case basis when a need to do so is justified.

Green Space Policies: Reasoned justification:

The Canal is a green oasis through much of its route which underlies its mainly agrarian existence as a working waterway. Buildings should generally be set back from the water with undeveloped buffer zone alongside the watercourse, be constructed using a choice of sympathetic materials, and avoid spilling light into the Canal corridor.

Heritage

Developments should not adversely impact the character of any of the heritage features of the Canal, such as the numerous WW2 defences, or the wharfs, locks, bridges and tunnels.



WW2 Pill Box

Nature conservation

The Canal is designated as SSSI for much of its length with only short sections within Woking and Runnymede Boroughs being designated Site of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI), and the section within Basingstoke & Deane a Local Nature Reserve (LNR). It is considered to be the most biodiverse freshwater body for aquatic plants within England and Wales.

In order to establish a coherent ecological management policy for the Canal concentrating on the management, restoration and enhancement of the SSSI, the BCA has produced a [Conservation Management Plan](#). This plan is agreed with the statutory regulator, Natural England, as an agreed scheme of management for the SSSI. Responses in relation to nature conservation and water quality will be based on the Conservation Objectives and Conservation Managements contained in this document.

Developments which introduce significant shading of the water, which is generally considered harmful to the health of the aquatic botany - whether by built structures or inappropriate landscaping, will generally not be considered acceptable.

Council wide or Conservation Area specific policies relating to the replacement of trees following felling or woodland management are not appropriate within the Canal corridor; the Canal already has many more trees than it had historically, with leaf litter and shade both significant factors in the decline in condition of the SSSI.

The planting of any non-native species, within the undeveloped buffer zones will not be supported - examples would include any bamboos (*Bambusoideae* spp), rhododendron, or laurel.

Non-native invasive species, even if not strictly controlled (as in the case of Japanese Knotweed *Fallopia Japonica*), must not be introduced to the buffer zone area at all – examples of such species would include Floating Pennywort

(*Hydrocotyle ranunculoides*), or American Skunk Cabbage (*Lysichiton americanus*).

National Planning Policy now requires developers to have an overall net gain in terms of biodiversity. Developments which include biodiversity enhancements such as connected off-line boat free nature reserves will be looked at sympathetically. Any such provision must be appropriately funded and managed in agreement with the BCA and Natural England.

Drainage & Flood risk

Surface Water Drainage - There will be a presumption against the acceptance of un-attenuated surface water or highway drainage into the Canal from development proposals on adjoining land. Highway run-off in particular may contain high levels of salt which can adversely affect the alkalinity gradient and contain sediment which contributes to turbidity levels of the water.

Nutrients and Septic Tank run-off - The Canal ecosystem thrives on being relatively low in nutrients. Developments which are not connected to the mains sewerage network will not be considered appropriate if run-off from septic tanks are routed directly or indirectly into the Canal as this will cause harm to the ecosystem through the presence of raised levels of nitrates and phosphates.

Additional flows creating flood risk - The Canal is a man-made waterway which, in many places is on raised embankments. Water levels are managed by the BCA to ensure that they do not reach unsafe levels. The Canal already acts in a significant surface water drainage capacity receiving un-attenuated water from many historic surface water in-flows. Additional un-attenuated flows might place the Canal into a dangerously surcharged condition, creating increased risk of breach and flooding.

Conversely, the Canal is generally short of water for nature conservation and navigation purposes in dry weather. Developments which can offer attenuated dry season flows or wet season water storage will be supported.

Most of the original earthworks of the Canal are now more than 225 years old. The Canal in common with most canals of this age is not lined throughout most of its length and relies on the natural impermeability of the ground to hold water. Many of the original embankments have no toe drain and rely on the open land below the embankment to drain adequately in order to maintain their structural integrity. Developments proposed downstream of any such embankments must be carefully designed so as not to affect the stability of the historic earthworks, by destabilising ground or significantly altering groundwater flows. Where embankment toe drains exist they are to be preserved and incorporated into the drainage scheme of any development, in other cases new open toe drains may be required as mitigation.

Recreation - towpath

New residential development within easy walking distance of the Canal are likely to increase the recreational use of the Canal towpath. In urban areas the narrow towpath originally designed for a person leading a barge horse is at or over comfortable use levels already. Mitigations such as localised widening may be

required where large residential developments are within easy walking distance (say 1500m) of the Canal. This is to ensure public safety.

Developments which propose new connecting paths to the towpath will be required to provide mitigation in the form of bank protection to protect the banks from erosion. Pet dogs using such paths cause significant erosion at path junctions in a short period of time as they leap in and scramble out of the Canal. This is in order to ensure the built assets and nature conservation interests are not harmed.

Recreation – navigation

The BCA/BCS is supportive of sympathetically constructed private boat mooring facilities for leisure purposes on land directly adjoining the Canal. In each case a mooring will require:

- a licence from the BCA / Canal owner to enable a person to construct and utilise a mooring facility on the Canal. A pre-requisite for the issue of a licence is an engineer's report on the structural integrity of the works, evidence that the construction will not adversely affect the nature conservation interest of the Canal, and that any structures or boats moored at the proposed mooring will not interfere with navigation
- a formal planning consent. A Notice under Article 11 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2010 must be served on either Surrey County Council or Hampshire County Council as the relevant owners of the Canal
- consultation and agreement from Natural England will be required where the moorings are within the SSSI or in close proximity. Proposals should not introduce chemical or biological contaminants into the channel and should prevent further occurrence of pollution or turbidity in the channel. Applicants should refer to the Basingstoke Canal Conservation Management Plan for further guidance.



The connection of new navigable cuts, lagoons, marinas or basins to provide off-line moorings on land adjoining the Canal will only be permitted in very special circumstances – for example where such installations are part of a scheme to enhance public enjoyment or economic viability of the canal and its environment. Such instances may include the enhancement or provision of a public park, leisure

complex or public basin or provide a navigable basin at the heart of a new mixed use development.

The construction of moorings for commercial use of the Canal may be acceptable in some instances where it can be demonstrated that such use will not harm the character or nature conservation interest, or result in heavy water consumption through excessive use of the locks.

Permanently moored residential boats tend to harm the nature conservation interest through shading, discharging greywater, and the associated parking and domestic paraphernalia is often detrimental to the conservation area character. Additional residential moorings should only be considered in very special circumstances with the agreement of the LPA, BCA / relevant County Council and Natural England and where there are appropriate mitigations are provided to protect both nature conservation and the conservation area interest.

Transportation - towpath

The general public are entitled to wander over Canal land on foot at any reasonable time for recreational purposes. However, with two short exceptions the Canal towpath is not a public right of way. Cycling is a permitted use on signed sections of the towpath, but prohibited elsewhere, horse-riding is prohibited under bylaw. The current enabling legislation is clear that the Canal corridor should remain a recreational rather than transportation resource.

Since the early 2000s sections of the Canal towpath have been paved and signed as cycle routes which has increased both cycle use and speed. The towpath is much narrower than the DfT design guide width for shared use cycle paths, and contains areas of limited forward visibility; this has led to conflict between cyclists using the towpath for commuting, and pedestrians, and other recreational users (boaters, anglers, etc).



Developments which rely on the towpath as part of their transportation strategy or which demonstrably add additional cycle transport pressure to towpath use, especially in the urban sections of the Canal, should be required to mitigate against the effects of their development. Suitable mitigations might include widening of suitable areas of towpath, and measures to slow cycle speed, but proposals should be discussed with the BCA or relevant County Council owner at the earliest opportunity.

Policies for a healthy built environment: Lighting and Illumination:

Proposals for external lighting as part of a new or existing development which require planning permission will be permitted where the applicant can demonstrate that the lighting scheme is the minimum necessary for security, safety, working or recreational purposes and that it minimises the pollution from glare or spillage.

Particular attention will be paid to schemes close to or within the Canal corridor which is an intrinsically dark landscape important for nature conservation (especially for bats and other nocturnal species).



Policies for a healthy built environment: Contamination

Residual contamination of land from previous uses is an issue throughout the country. By their nature, navigable waterways such as the Basingstoke Canal attracted timber yards, brickworks, tanneries, breweries and print works as well as agricultural related industries along its banks.

Councils have a duty to determine where land is contaminated and hold a database of contaminated and potentially contaminated sites. Development adjacent to the canal which create potential pathways for historical contamination to come into human contact or leach into the navigation will need careful early consideration, appropriate site investigation remediation and applicable conditions on any planning consent granted.



Councils are urged to consult with Natural England on any sites that have been identified within 500m of a SSSI or may be upstream of a wetland or an aquatic SSSI. Natural England should also be consulted on sites adjacent to the undesignated section of the Basingstoke Canal in recognition of the important link between the two sections of the Basingstoke Canal SSSI and its importance as a wildlife corridor.

Councils now have a requirement to consider residential boating in their SHLAA. The Basingstoke Canal is unusual in that there is no public right of navigation, and as a result residing on a boat which does not have a residential berth is prohibited under the current licensing regime; there are currently 22 static “houseboat” berths spread over Runnymede and Woking.

Additional residential moorings should only be considered in very special circumstances with the agreement of the LPA, BCA / relevant County Council and Natural England and where there are appropriate mitigations are provided to protect both nature conservation and the conservation area interests of the Canal corridor.

S106 Contributions and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

The Canal is 225 years old and its infrastructure is in constant need of repair, and in some cases wholesale asset renewal. It is not the job of CIL to largely replace cyclical maintenance funds, principally provided by the County Council owners.

“[CIL] is intended to focus on the provision of new infrastructure and should not be used to remedy pre-existing deficiencies in infrastructure provision unless those deficiencies will be made more severe by new development. The levy can be used to increase the capacity of existing infrastructure or to repair failing existing infrastructure, if that is necessary to support development.”
(Community Infrastructure Levy – An Overview: DCLG 2010)

However, in certain areas of the Canal, Local Plans show that there will be very significant increases in residential development, and therefore demand on the existing green infrastructure. In these areas it will be appropriate to bid for CIL funding to off-set increased pressures especially on the towpath and Canal banks, but also for new green/blue infrastructure provision and significant upgrading / renewal of key water retaining assets to ensure that new developments remain safe.

The Canal has very significant community engagement with over 23,000 volunteer hours worked in 2018/19. CIL contributions may be appropriate to support the work of voluntary organisations, or

Councils which have adopted CIL are requested to consider favourably requests from the BCA for inclusion of Canal projects on their Regulation 123 lists.

Developments which show significant reliance on the Canal as part of their transport or drainage strategies should be required to provide suitable mitigation through the existing s.106 “Planning Gain” system as these contributions will be

site specific and can be linked directly to the development – a key requirement of the s.106 system.

Developers are now required to show a biodiversity net gain, and s.106 obligations may be appropriate to support biodiversity enhancements or provide additional habitats. Equally CIL may also be appropriate for biodiversity enhancements.



Contractors carrying out repairing on the Deepcut locks



Volunteers working at Greywell Tunnel Portal

Appendix A – Useful documents and links

[The Basingstoke Canal Authority Website](#)

[The Basingstoke Canal Society Website](#)

[BCA Conservation Management Plan](#)

[Joint Management Committee](#)

Appendix B – Contact details

Basingtoke Canal Authority:

Name:

Phone:

e-mail

Basingtoke Canal Society:

Name:

Phone:

e-mail

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