



BCS report to JMC July 2022

Executive Summary

Like most charities and businesses, The Basingstoke Canal Society (BCS) is emerging from the Covid year 2021/22, which saw a 300% increased usage of the Basingstoke Canal, but which impacted the ability for volunteers to provide their labour to working parties to aid the Basingstoke Canal Authority (BCA). This challenged operating environment also severely reduced BCS revenues from trip boat operations (usually representing approximately 2/3rds of the Society's annual income).

Notwithstanding this, in 2021 the BCS contributed over 28,000 man hours of volunteer labour (costed at £10 per hour therefore total value £280,000) to aid clearing the navigation channel of weeds, towpath and car park vegetation management, litter collection and lock furniture painting, car park surface repairs, etc., as well as helping to maintain and move the BCA boats around, when required, to support the BCA.

The 80 plus volunteer lengthsman, provide regular patrols of the entire Canal, some of whom are supporting Surrey Police in Woking through the Canal Watch scheme. All these efforts help the BCA and the local community.

The BCS also raised £25,000 of funding towards 15 new information boards (and installed them) along the Canal towpath, BCA training contributions, plus considerable administrative assistance to the BCA (2 dedicated BCS volunteers are ex planners) towards monitoring planning applications and preparing submissions to try and secure developer CIL/S106 funding for the Canal.

Notable achievements during the year have been celebrating the 30th anniversary of the re-opening of the Basingstoke Canal on 5 May 2022 (postponed from 2021 due to Covid) to coincide with Surrey Heath Borough Council's Platinum Jubilee celebrations and the Canal Society's AGM, which had a record attendance. The event was attended by boats from all over the country.

The BCS has also spearheaded the move towards electrification of the Canal through its major £200k fundraising campaign to replace Woking trip boat Kitty with an all-electric trip boat. This will have a considerable reduction on our carbon emissions and enhance passenger and towpath user experience. The Society is working in collaboration with the BCA, WBC, SCC, the local MP and Premier Inns to install electric charging points initially along the Woking section. The BCS appreciates all the support from the many individuals involved in the project.

The BCS continues to work closely with the BCA through monthly operations meetings, quarterly strategy meetings and general ad hoc meetings on projects, planning and other issues of mutual relevance. A draft MoU between the two parties has been prepared that will formalise the relationship, roles and responsibilities of each organisation to the betterment of the Basingstoke Canal.

It is recognised that there are a number of major challenges that need to be resolved in order to maintain the safe passage of the Basingstoke Canal corridor for all users. These include an ongoing programme of dredging, improved *hydrocotyle* and *cabomba* weed management and removal. The lowered water levels in the Hampshire pound (Crookham Deeps leak) and Swan Cutting (slope stability issues) do have a major detrimental impact on the trip boat operation of the JP II, which is a significant source of revenue for the BCS.

In these financially challenging times, the Society is happy to offer to deploy resources to support the BCA in cost justified projects, such as buying and operating another weed cutter (for example) to supplement the BCA's own weed cutting assets. As an example, the BCS bought and transferred to the BCA two electric hedgecutters to help reduce overall carbon emissions. The MoU process will assist allow the BCS to supplement the BCA's own efforts in pursuit of a thriving and viable Basingstoke Canal for future generations to come, which currently costs the contributing Riparian Council's the equivalent of 50p per resident each year and is an extremely value for money asset to the communities health and wellbeing.

The Year in Summary

Promoting the new positioning – Keeping the Canal Alive and Vibrant. New strapline included on all BCS material. Ongoing communications and events programme. Championing activities and projects that support the vibrancy of the Canal i.e. Odiham Raft Race, social media posts, trip boat operations in Surrey and Hampshire.

Society Name Change – from Surrey and Hampshire Canal Society Ltd (historical reasons due to original Basingstoke Canal Company objections) to The Basingstoke Canal Society (a registered charity)

Implementation of Five Year Plan – the four key planks of cultural, social, environmental and economic are being actioned as follows:

Cultural	Social	Environmental	Economic
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> development of on-line archive ongoing local events programme support and promotion of projects designed to bring more activity to and on the Canal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> promotion of health & wellbeing aspects of the Canal through dedicated team regular communications through newsletters and social media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> development of an electric boat to replace Kitty and installation of electric charging points 15 new information signs funded and installed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> planning admin support to BCA to seek to secure CIL contributions from developments along the Canal continue trip boat ops in Surrey and Hants

Financial Structure of the Society – the Year in figures

Fee paying Members – **1044**

Total Funds Raised - **£55,000**

Regular volunteers - **250**

Active Lengthsmen - **82**

Events attended - **9** including Odiham Raft Race and 30th Anniversary of Canal re-opening / Queens Jubilee Celebrations

Monies transferred to BCA - **£25,000**

Volunteer hours - **28,000** (£280,000 equivalent using HLF guidelines)

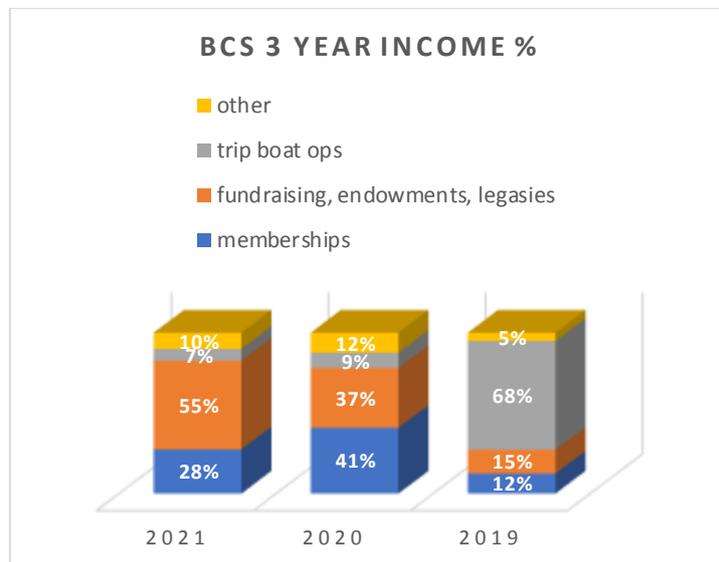
Planning Applications assisted with - **11**

Newsletters mailed - **16** issues

Trip Boat operations undertaken - **240**

Social Media posts - **150** per annum Followers - **10,000** per month

Documents archived - **15,000**



Note: decline in revenues from trip boat operations 2020 - 2021.

Future Projects

Following the last JMC in November 2021 there has been ongoing dialogue between the BCS and BCA to prioritise projects / funding which will benefit in a navigable and sustainable canal and operating income generation.

- Kitty II electric trip boat construction
- Electric charging infrastructure in Woking section
- Potential Colt Hill Moorings (subject to securing long term access)
- On line historical Archive
- Wellesley boat basin concept development (subject to developer Grainger feasibility)

Urgent Support needed

There are a number of major operational challenges that the owning County Councils/BCA need to resolve. These include:

- an ongoing programme of dredging (especially spot dredging),
- improved *hydrocotyle* and *cabomba* weed removal,
- the plan and timeframe to safely restore the water levels in the Hampshire pound through the resolution of Crookham Deeps and,
- the plan and timeframe to resolve the Swan Cutting slope stability issue

The last two in particular are having a major detrimental impact on the BCS's trip boat operation of the JP II, with trips currently suspended to King John's Castle while trips east to the Barley Mow are taking up to an hour longer.

Lastly, as pressure mounts to cut funding for the Canal, the Riparian Councils need to maintain or increase their current level of funding support for the Basingstoke Canal, which equates to **just 50p per local resident** in each Council area. Surrey Heath and Runnymede BC's also should step up to the full funding contribution proposed under the Canal Partnership Funding Agreement, as these two are currently some £28,000 per annum under funding and have done so for over a decade.

The Basingstoke Canal has been ranked in the top 100 waterways in the world as 13th, it is a world class asset and needs all the support from the community and their representatives in order to pass it onto future generations to enjoy.