



Basingstoke Canal Authority Annual Report 2025



Introduction

The second annual report for the Basingstoke Canal Authority (BCA) aims to provide Board members and other partners with an overview of the BCA activities from January 2025 to December 2025.

This is an ongoing requirement of the revised partnership agreement and is achieved by reporting actions undertaken to deliver the BCA's three key objectives for joint management of the canal: Public safety, Conservation value and Health & wellbeing.

1. Public safety

Including safety of staff and volunteers, residents and visitors, and the prevention of flooding through management of assets and water levels.

1.1 Water levels

The Canal is a manmade waterway and was designed to hold water at a particular level. Water levels therefore require regular monitoring and management to not only maintain it for conservation and navigation purposes, but importantly to prevent the unplanned loss of water through overtopping of an embankment. This could result in a compromise of the structure, resulting to an increased risk of failure.

In 2025, the BCA:

- a) Provided 365 days with a Ranger on duty 24 hours a day, despite a significant reduction in team members throughout the summer months.
- b) Took water level readings on 270 days. This is done via a mobile app which links to a desktop dashboard for visibility to inform water management decisions.
- c) Through effective water management during periods of high-water levels and severance of normal water flows due to works, allowed only one instance of overtopping to occur at Ash Embankment on 9th April 2025.
- d) During periods of low levels, maintained sufficient water levels to allow navigation from January to 15th July, and from early October throughout the rest of the calendar year.

1.2 Asset Management

During May 2025, Countryside Access Management System (CAMS) asset management programme was introduced. Already used successfully by both Surrey and Hampshire County Council's Public Rights of Way teams for a number of years, this map-based asset tool allows asset inspections, defects, maintenance and replacement tasks to be recorded.

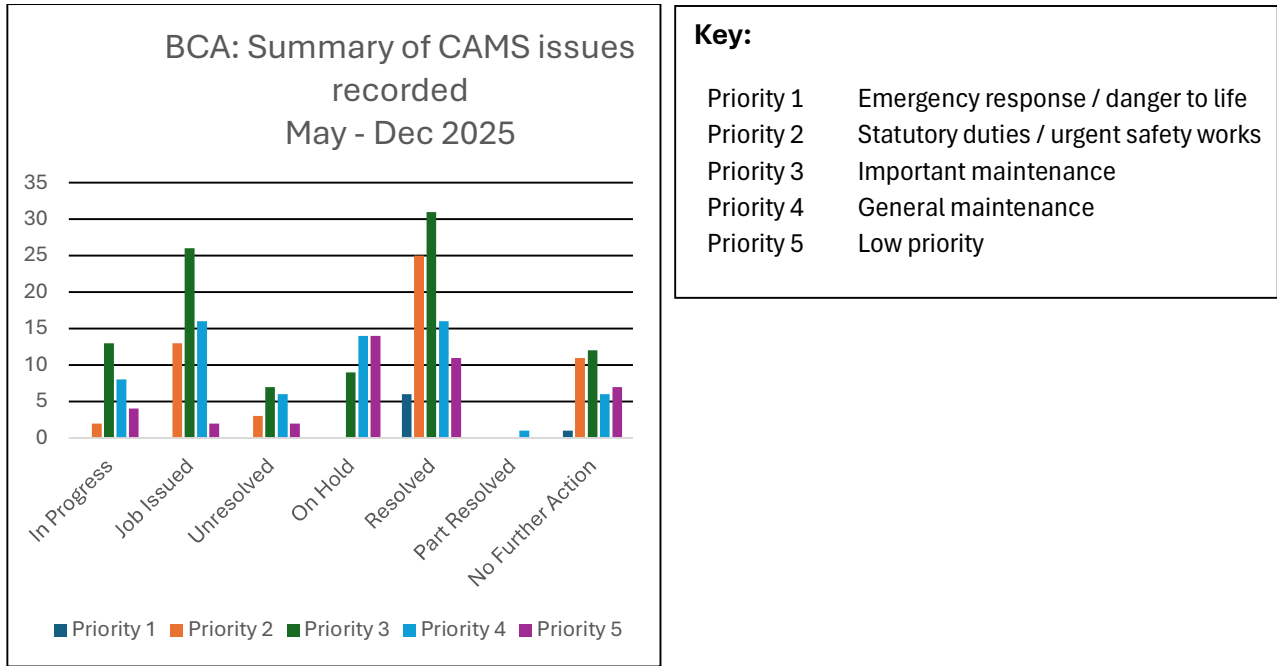
Whilst the desktop version has proved successful, with ongoing support from the programme developers Idox, the mobile version purchased with two rugged tablets has unfortunately been slower to develop.

It is hoped that a new version provided by the developers in early January 2026 will allow the software to be utilised to its full capacity, which will be particularly beneficial to the asset inspection regime.

In 2025, the BCA:

- a) Logged 297 issues
- b) Recorded 594 tasks

- c) Completed 500 tasks, 269 of which were inspections.
- d) There were 6 Priority 1 issues, all of which were dealt with immediately – 4 were tree incidents and 2 were pollution incidents.



2. Conservation

To achieve or exceed the statutory obligations of the owners in relation to nature conservation and biodiversity value.

2.1 Water quality

The water quality monitoring regime is now completed quarterly by the BCA as the EA have withdrawn from nearly all testing on the canal.

In 2025, the BCA carried out tests on 10th March, 30th May, 10th - 11th June and 8th December across the 10 set locations.

2.2 Pollution response

In 2025, the BCA:

- a) Responded to 7 separate pollution incidents, clearing all but one within two weeks.
- b) The exception to this is an ongoing incident at Lock 7, where Thames Water have now accepted responsibility and will be actioning accordingly. The BCA Waterways Rangers are continuing to monitor progress and are keeping the EA informed.

2.3 Invasive species control

In 2025, the BCA:

- a) Continued to trap the invasive North American Mink as part of a partnership initiative with the River Wey Trust and National Trust to support the native water vole population.

- b) Trained all Waterways Rangers on the use of the Conver weed cutter boat, and worked with volunteers from the Basingstoke Canal Society to remove Floating pennywort.
- c) Carried out planned Japanese Knotweed control programme.

2.4 Shade reduction

The BCA continued to work on sensitive and selective shade reduction on the canal. focusing on the Greywell Tunnel to Church Crookham section with both volunteer and Waterways Rangers, removing overhanging vegetation and saplings from the banksides.

3. Health and wellbeing

To achieve or exceed the statutory obligations of the owners to provide public access to the countryside and to maintain a public navigation.

3.1 Public use

The Greenspace Informatics AI system used by Hampshire County Council estimates site use based on anonymised mobile phone data. In 2025 the year-to-date footfall for the Hampshire section of the Canal is 1.57 million individual visits and an astonishing 4.9 million individual visits for the Surrey section. Over 75% of visit originate from postcodes within 10 miles of the centre points for each section showing how valued the canal is as a local greenspace.

3.2 Volunteering

25,976 hours logged this calendar year over 356 days, from the BCA’s own 204 active volunteers, plus hours recorded by the Basingstoke Canal Society as a partner organisation. This is 1,150 more hours than 2024’s annual total of 24,826 hours

There is excellent ongoing engagement, with an average of 30 attendees to Tuesday volunteering days, plus an average of 1.5 days per week of office-based volunteer contribution.

3.3 Navigation – Powered boats from April 2025 – December 2025

Type	Annual licence and mooring	Visiting boat licences	Trail boat registrations	Dry dock bookings
Number	45	15	23	3

3.4 Navigation – Unpowered boats from April 2025 – December 2025

Type	Number	Cost	Total income
Small day	1689	£6.00	£10,134.00
Small week	42	£18.00	£756.00
Small annual	126	£50.00	£6,300.00
Large day	3	£9.00	£27.00
Large week		£28.00	£0.00
Large annual	1	£74.50	£74.50

Unpowered vessels (canoes, kayaks) are permitted on the canal with either a BCA licence or Paddle UK membership, with small craft day tickets remaining the most purchased option. Paddle UK pay the BCA £8,000 per annum as an access fee for their members.

3.5 Fishing Licences – From April 2025 – December 2025

Day	638
Annual	1,388

3.6 Licence checks – From April 2025 – December 2025

The BCA carried out a total of 293 checks on canal users during this 9-month period. Compliance for trail boats and unpowered boats was 100%, but angling remains the least compliant user group at 67% of those asked holding the correct licence, although this is an improvement on 24-2025 compliance levels of 55%

3.7 Events – From April 2025 – December 2025

6 events: 3 charity runs, 1 fishing event, 1 ghost walk and one volunteer event.

4. Capital Projects

Surrey and Hampshire County Councils each have their own capital scheme budgets, which cover major maintenance, renewal or improvement of assets within each County. These funds are not pooled, reflecting instead the Canal assets ownership by each County Council. These projects are overseen by the Strategic Manager with support from the BCA and SCC Canal Engineer. Each capital project aligns with one, or multiple, of the Canal’s Key Management Objectives.

2025-2026 Capital project summary				
Key Objective	Project	County	Budget	Progress
Public safety	Mytchett Lake Leak	Surrey	£134k	Start date due Feb 2026
Public Safety	Cyclical bank protection	Surrey	£21k	Completed April 2025
Public Safety	Works to Woodham Junction culverts following Inspection	Surrey	£24k	Completed Sept 2025
Public safety Health and wellbeing	Lock tail bridge replacement - Lock 12	Surrey	£23k	Completed Dec 2025
Public safety Health and wellbeing	Lock gate renewals - 2 sets of uppers and 2 balance beams	Surrey	£56k	Supplier manufacturing gates – due for installation Feb 2026
Public safety Health and wellbeing	Renewal of paved towpath surfaces	Surrey	£50k	Completed Sept 2025
Public safety	Works following Principal Inspection of Locks	Surrey	£ 40k	Scheduled for completion this F/Y: starting Jan 2026
Public safety Health and wellbeing	Lock tail bridge replacement - Lock 2	Surrey	Procuring	75% of the projected cost to be supplied by Surrey Highways. Scheduled for delivery spring 2026

Public safety Health and wellbeing	S106 Deepcut – Pirbright towpath improvement works	Surrey	£535k	Completed early Dec 2025
Public safety	General culvert repairs after Principal Inspection	Hampshire	£10k	Works awarded – awaiting contractor schedule
Public safety	Chequers Bridge towpath wall and stop plank installation	Hampshire	Procuring	Scheduled for delivery spring 2026
Public safety Health and wellbeing	Pondtail Bridge connecting ramp and edging repairs	Hampshire	Procuring	Scheduled for completion this F/Y
Public safety Conservation value Health and wellbeing	Cyclical bank protection	Hampshire	Procuring	Scheduled for completion this F/Y

4.1 Example schemes:

S106 Deepcut – Pirbright towpath improvement works

The BCA project managed the delivery of a 3.2km towpath improvement project between Pirbright and Deepcut in Surrey. The works, carried out by a Surrey County Council contractor, were funded from a Section 106 contribution arising from the nearby Mindenhurst housing development, and created a wide shared-use towpath to promote sustainable transport and provide a direct connection to local railway stations.

The works totalling approximately £488,000 were completed within budget and ahead of schedule, earning widespread praise for both quality and impact. By addressing issues of towpath erosion and standing water, this section of the canal can now be enjoyed year-round by walkers and cyclists.

Lock 28 Deepcut before (left) and during (right) towpath widening work



Lock 12 replacement footbridge

Lock tail footbridges enable boaters to cross the canal safely when operating a lock. Most of these 1970's structures are of lightweight design and never intended for general public use.

The Lock 12 footbridge serves as a key thoroughfare where the towpath changes sides, enabling users to avoid crossing the busy Bagshot Road (A322), Surrey. Due to its high level of pedestrian use, the likelihood of multiple people traversing the bridge simultaneously was significant. With the load-bearing capacity of the original structure unknown, this posed a potential safety risk. To mitigate this, the bridge was replaced in autumn 2025 with a design meeting contemporary structural standards, at a cost of £23,668.

Lock 12 Footbridge before (left) and nearing completion (right)



4.2 Capital Projects programme 2026/27

- **Hampshire County Council** has allocated **£247,000** to capital works. **£120,000**, has been budgeted to address leaks along Ash Embankment via the installation of a clay lining in the canal channel. Any remaining funds will be assigned to the repair of eroded stop plank structures located beneath historic bridge(s) thus ensuring the integrity and resilience of these key water management assets.
- **Surrey County Council** has committed **£350,000** to capital projects. Of this, **£142,500** will be used to repair locks defects identified during the decennial Principal Inspections. An additional **£50,000** will be allocated to prevent towpath erosion through targeted bank protection measures. The balance will support other priority works to maintain the canal's operational safety and heritage value.

4.3 Capital grants

The Basingstoke Canal Society also offer capital grants for Canal based projects, as well as working with local businesses to secure additional funding. In 2025 the BCS offered a grant of £35k to refurbish the BCA's dredger and £60k to fund a further weed cutter boat. They have also secured a grant of £5k from local business Johnson & Johnson which will go towards towpath improvements in the Frimley area in 2026.

Jo East – *Canal Operations Manager*

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January 2026