

Culture and Communities Select Committee

Work on the Basingstoke Canal – Update Presentation

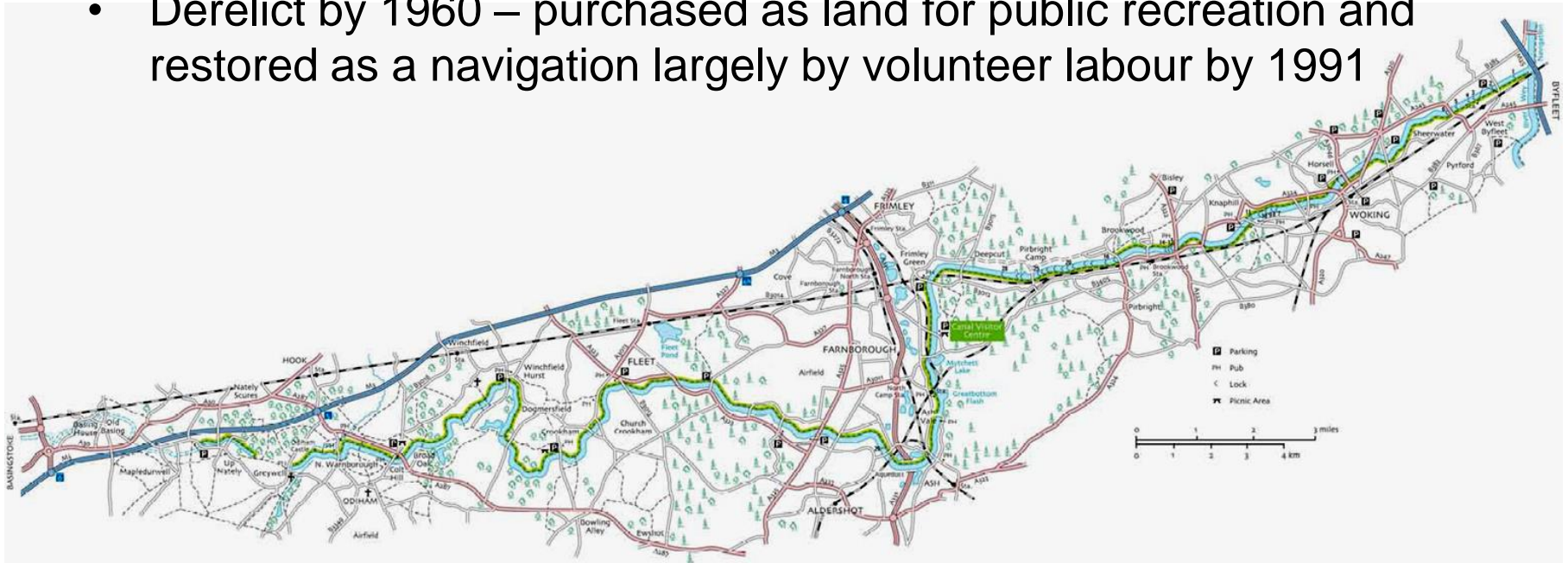
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The Basingstoke Canal

- Built 1794 – 1798 37 miles across Surrey & Hampshire - from Woodham Junction (R. Wey) to Basingstoke
- 32 miles now owned by Surrey and Hampshire County Councils – almost exactly half each
- Derelict by 1960 – purchased as land for public recreation and restored as a navigation largely by volunteer labour by 1991



Key Assets

- 32 miles of channel and towpath
- 29 operational locks (plus one abandoned chamber), 1 dry-dock
- 3 aqueducts
- 1 tunnel (non-operational)
- 142 sections raised on embankment
- 48 cuttings
- 62 culverts - watercourses and services passing beneath the Canal
- 3 pumping systems
- 26 feeders, sluices or weirs
- 109 bridges – mostly maintained as part of road or rail networks
- Approx 40,000 trees
- Canal Visitor Centre & office, 2 workshop/yards
- 3 Surrey Canal Cottages



Characteristics

- Well used public resource - 1.5million visitors per year mostly on foot, bicycle or kayak
- SSSI – most bio-diverse freshwater body in England & Wales for aquatic plants and dragonflies plus important bat habitat
- Flood risk - if locks, culverts and embankments are not well maintained and regularly inspected
- Well supported locally – more than 3500 volunteer days per year
- Navigational challenges – lack of adequate water supply (ever since construction) cost of retaining navigation



The Partnership

- Funding Partnership: 2 counties and 6 riparian districts via a Joint Management Committee (JMC) called the Basingstoke Canal Authority
- Revenue budget is approximately £715k p.a.
- Generates approximately 25% of its revenue from on site activities
- HCC and SCC contributing £154k each (approx. 50%) with 6 riparian districts (2 in Hampshire and 4 in Surrey) meeting the rest
- Major capital investment from two counties with initial £768k allocated by each owner spent on repairs and a further £2m each in 2012 to address asset management improvements
- Current funding and operating model may not be sustainable

Future Options

- SCC and HCC looking jointly at how the Canal could be managed in the future
- External waterways consultancy used to examine the value of the canal together with a wide range of options for its management
- Work to date has included key members, stakeholders and partners who have been directly involved in the process
- Following JBA's work officers now in discussion with potential partner organisations including the Canal and River Trust (custodians of the national inland waterways network)
- Currently examining potential business case linked to alternative options prior to coming back to members with request to go to detailed feasibility.

Next Steps

- Currently assessing potential costs and benefits associated with practical options (HCC and SCC jointly assessing baseline figures)
- Report back to members scheduled for summer 2016
- Report will highlight overview of options and seek approval to move to detailed feasibility on one or two preferred options.
- JMC will be informed and all stakeholders as part of the ongoing discussion informing that report
- Staff briefings and consultation will take place to ensure they are aware of emerging proposals