



Countryside Service

The Basingstoke Canal

Long Term Future Management Options

Select Committee Briefing - 21 November 2016

Jo Heath - Head of Countryside

Historical context

- 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
- Derelict by 1960 – purchased as land for public recreation and restored as a navigation largely by volunteer labour reopening in 1991



Canal Management

- Since 1990 Canal managed by local authority partnership named Basingstoke Canal Authority (BCA).
- Partners include 6 local borough and district councils (Hart, Rushmoor, Surrey Heath, Woking and Runneymede), local Parishes and Fleet Town Council.
- Partnership overseen by JMC. The staff are employed by HCC.



Canal Characteristics

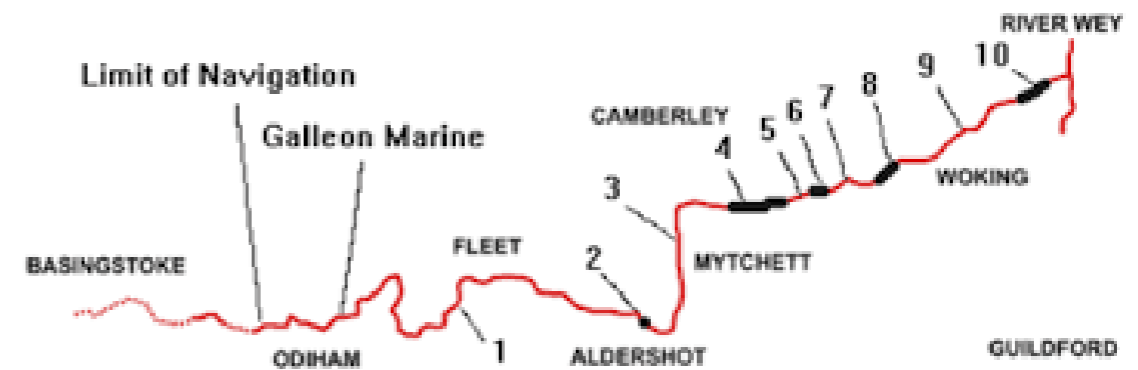
- SSSI – most biodiverse freshwater body in England & Wales for aquatic plants & dragonflies plus important bat habitat
- 60 resident boats (Surrey section) and 150 visiting boats p.a.
- Limit of 1,300 boat movements a year
- 1.5million visitors per year mostly on foot, bicycle or kayak
- Well supported locally – more than 3500 volunteer days per year
- Visitor centre & campsite at Mytchett (SCC ownership)



Canal Assets

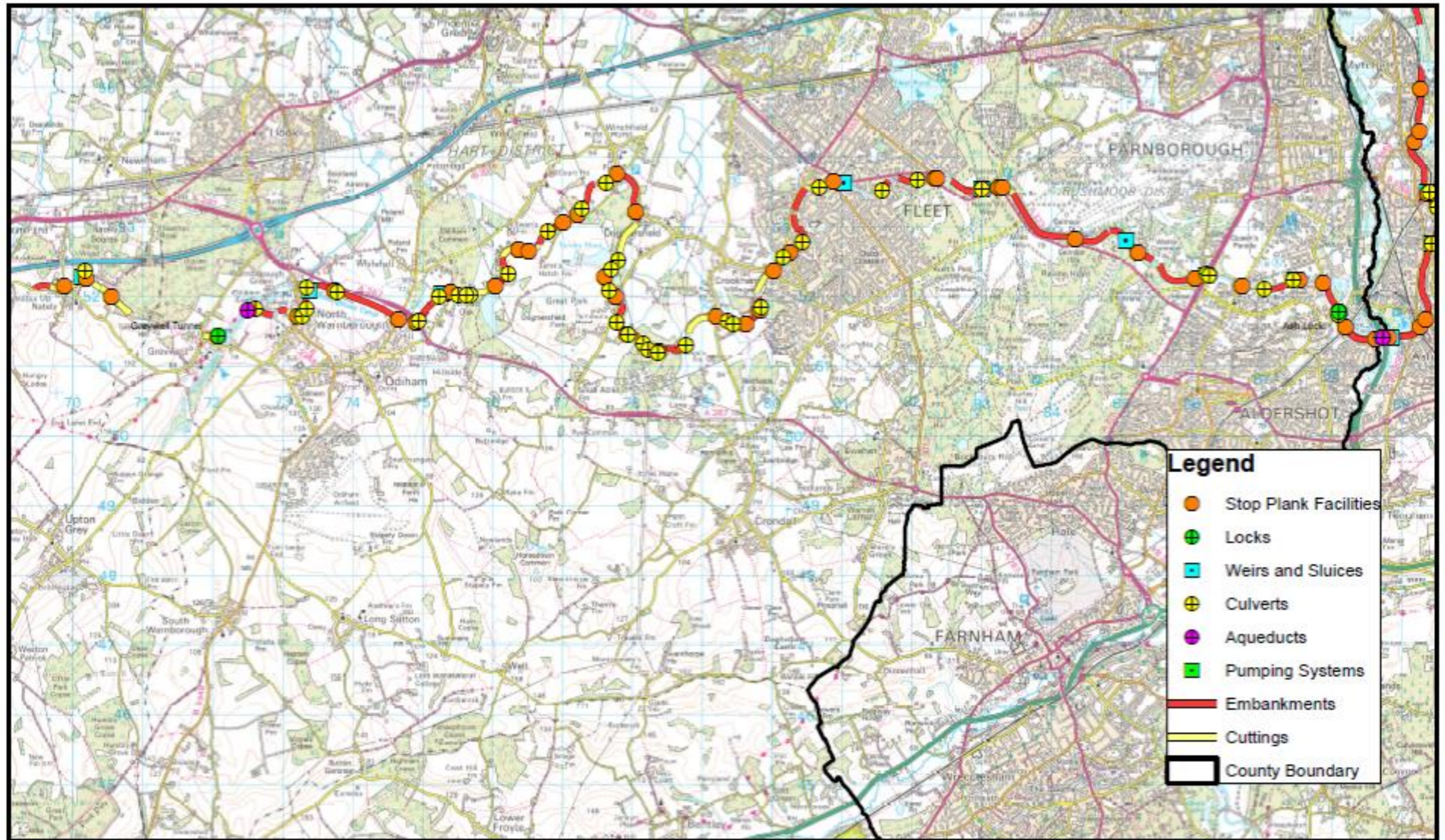
Major engineering assets to manage water levels and enable navigation include:

- 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



Basingstoke Canal - Asset Map (Hampshire)

Scale: 1:50,000



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0 1,250 2,500 5,000 Meters



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Basingstoke Canal
Date: 21/1/2016

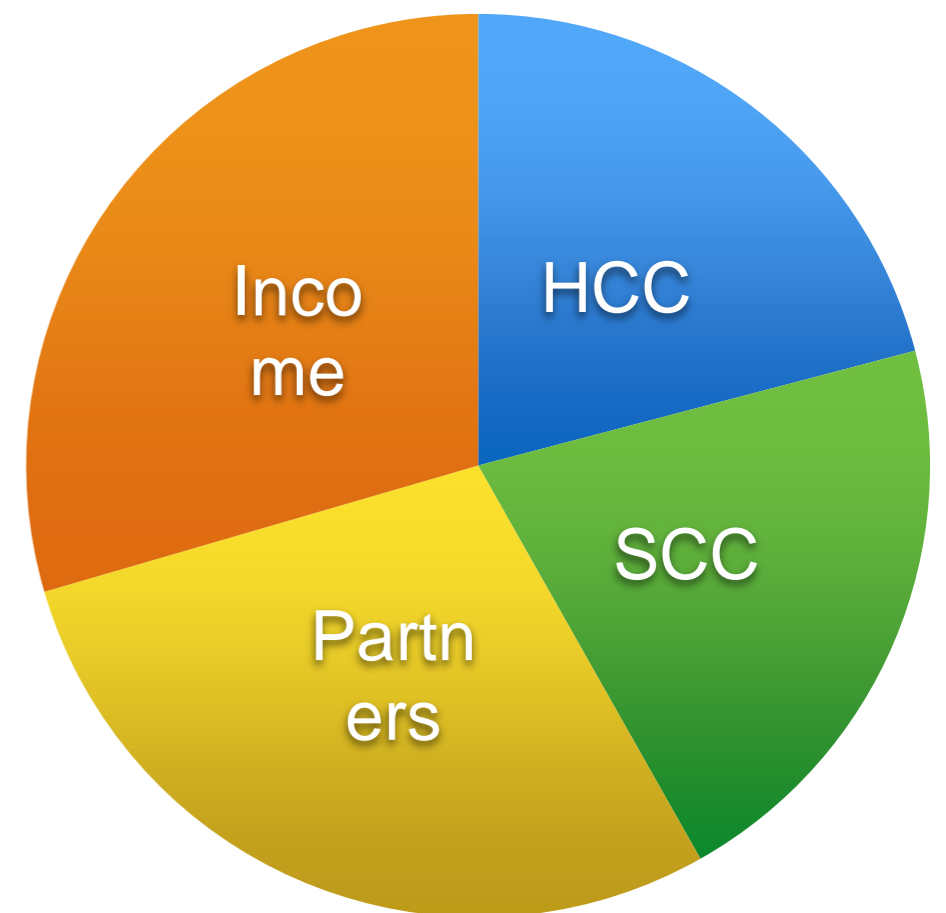
Canal risks

- The Canal is important part of land drainage system
- Failure of embankment is a serious risk - resulting in flooding. Previous incidents at Farnborough & Aldershot
- 24/7 duty ranger system 365 days a year
- Liability of all the assets and management of the Canal is with the two land owning authorities



Financial implications

- BCA Revenue is £795,000 p.a. HCC & SCC contribute £175k, other partners total £240,000, remaining from income (increased over the past few years)
- Partners under financial pressure
- Limited capital investment in the past however since 2012 both SCC & HCC allocated £2m to address backlog of repairs
- In Hampshire, Dogmersfield landslip requiring half the allocation
- Arrears of maintenance estimated at £6m - increase over time
- Reducing the revenue part of the T19 savings for the Countryside Service



Future Management Options

- Options considered that will:-
 - ★ Support the safe operation of the canal
 - ★ Provides a positive and critical drainage function
 - ★ Enables opportunities for income generation/investment
 - ★ Enables levels of community use and benefit
 - ★ Maintains the current conservation status
 - ★ Provides benefits to local economy



Future Management Options

Report commissioned by JBA Consulting assessed 11 options of which 4 remain for more detailed consideration:-

1. Minimum intervention - manage risks and minimum statutory

2. Status quo - maintain safety and navigability

3. Local authority investment - limited opportunity in Hants

4. Alternative ownership - transfer to a 3rd party



Future Management Options

- Provision will need to be made for the ongoing capital and revenue commitment required to manage risk and liability to appropriate level.
- Consulting with JMC members and keeping staff well briefed
- Aim for a business case(s) to be considered in Spring/early Summer 2017