

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Decision Report

Decision Maker:	Executive Member for Policy and Resources
Date:	1 December 2010
Title:	Planning for the Future of the Basingstoke Canal – Update
Reference:	2281
Report From:	Director of Culture, Communities and Rural Affairs,

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1. Executive Summary

1.1. On 14 April 2010 the Executive Member for Policy and Resources considered a report regarding the future of the Basingstoke Canal. The report explained the conclusions and recommendations arising from the condition survey of the Canal's embankments and the costs associated with attending to those issues which presented the greatest risk. This Decision was followed by a visit to the Canal by the Executive Member and the Chief Executive to see some of the issues at first hand. This update report explains the action which has been taken following the April Decision Day meeting and describes the forthcoming work programme.

2. Contextual Information

- 2.1. The Basingstoke Canal is a 32 mile long engineered structure, running from Greywell, Hampshire to Woodham, Surrey, where it joins the River Wey Navigation close to the M25.
- 2.2. After a period of neglect, the Canal was restored from the early 1970's by the Surrey and Hampshire Canal Society. Following restoration, the Canal was purchased by Surrey County Council (SCC) and Hampshire County Council (HCC) in 1980, and these Councils now own the stretches of the Canal within their respective counties. The Canal was re-opened for navigation in 1991.
- 2.3. The Canal is managed on behalf of the two County Councils by the Basingstoke Canal Authority (BCA). This is run as a local authority partnership through a formal Joint Management Committee. The BCA's 16 staff, including a Canal Director, are employed by HCC as part of the Countryside Service.

- 2.4. As was reported at the April Decision Day meeting, whilst the Canal is valued as a navigable waterway, it also plays a crucial role in flood alleviation in the area by providing a safe, controlled waterflow and drainage facility through major built-up areas along its course. The length of the Canal is also designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest.

3. Condition Survey

- 3.1. In recent years, it had become increasingly evident that the condition of the Canal was in decline to the extent that its use and function as a waterway was being undermined.
- 3.2. In response to this deterioration, the two County Councils commissioned survey work to address the condition of the Canal - commencing with locks and embankments. The initial results were presented at the April Decision Day. The risks have been assessed based upon the findings of these surveys and a proposed programme of works has been produced to tackle the highest risks.
- 3.3. As was reported in April, the condition survey of the canal embankments highlighted the particularly "High" risk associated with the West Hart Embankment near Crookham. Specialist geotechnical surveys had previously been undertaken and a solution agreed, to commence with a short-term measure in March 2010. However, this work was superseded by the threat of the extreme weather which was forecast for the last weekend in February 2010. Whilst effective emergency measures were taken in response to this heightened risk, the event demonstrated all too clearly the need to implement as soon as possible the necessary repairs on all those sections of embankment identified as presenting a high risk.
- 3.4. The embankment survey identified ten particularly weak areas along the canal in Hampshire where an investment of capital was considered necessary to ensure the safe operation of the Canal. The County Council's Engineering Consultancy estimated the total cost for this, and other essential work, including the associated fees, at approximately £870,000 over three years – commencing with the long-term repair to the problem identified at West Hart. At the April Decision Day a programme of works, totalling £870,000, was agreed, with the source of the funding to be determined when the capital programme was next reviewed. The Executive Member for Policy and Resources also fully endorsed 'efforts to develop joint working and procurement with SCC on the basis of a formally agreed joint commitment to the funding and implementation of a three year programme of priority works.' SCC have allocated a similar sum to attend to the major risks identified on the section of the Canal in Surrey.

4. Embankments - Work Undertaken and Planned

- 4.1. The high risks identified in the condition survey are inspected weekly by Canal rangers as part of their routine work. Any visible changes will be referred to the HCC Environment Engineering Consultancy to undertake specialist analysis. The most pressing concerns at West Hart and

Dogmersfield (old Swing Bridge site) have, however, now been attended to. At both locations HCC Environment Engineering Consultancy employed Dean and Dyball to repair the Canal embankment using a geotextile membrane and clay lining bank protection. The total cost of these works was £77,000 plus the cost of the water management. This work appears to have successfully eliminated the risks that had been identified, although both locations continue to be monitored.

- 4.2. Through regular dialogue with Canal Users, including a regular User Forum meeting, it is clear that works undertaken during the summer months can cause major disruption to users, including the operation of the commercial enterprises which rely upon the Canal being fully accessible. Therefore, to keep the disruption to canal users to a minimum, and in order to have the time to develop more detailed specifications, no further works were undertaken this summer. During this time, in accordance with the Decision of the Executive Member, work was undertaken to develop a term contract, jointly procured by Surrey and Hampshire County Councils. Colleagues from PBRS IT helped establish the steps to be undertaken, with HCC Environment Engineering Consultancy leading on the necessary tender documents and specifications. Realistically, in order to establish a robust process and to work through the complexities of developing joint procurement protocols with SCC, a viable start date for the term contractor is April 2011. In the meantime, it is essential that work is undertaken over this winter to address several of the major outstanding risks. Therefore, a two phased approach has been developed, with Phase 1 as set out in the appendix to this report.
- 4.3. In order not to delay any of the works, the first phase will be procured by each County Council separately, in accordance with the priorities in their area. It is proposed that the works set out in the appendix to this report are procured via existing HCC and SCC contracts in order that they can be delivered over the winter of 2010/11. In Hampshire this work is being managed by the Environment Engineering Consultancy on behalf of the Countryside Service.

5. Phase 2 – Term Contract 2011/12 to 2013/14

- 5.1. Phase 2 looks to provide a longer term strategy for delivery of the forward works programme beyond the end of the current financial year. It will include the outstanding maintenance that has been identified, quantified and prioritised from the completed inventory and condition data for the principal assets.
- 5.2. It is intended to deliver this phase through a term contract, initially for three years, with a planned start date of 1 April 2011. The contract will be procured jointly by HCC and SCC via a competitive tender process, in compliance with both authorities' Standing Orders and Financial Regulations. As such, it is essential that the procurement process is robust and offers appropriate opportunities for local contractors to express an interest in the work. Once a shortlist has been selected against pre-determined criteria relevant to the works, each contractor will be invited to

tender prices for a range of work activities, including details of how they intend to actually support and complete the works. A successful contractor will then be selected who offers the most competitive price/quality package.

- 5.3. Once operational, the term contract will enable works on the Canal within both Hampshire & Surrey to be ordered using Task Orders, based on a price list of rates submitted as part of the above tender process. This price list will encompass the majority of the regularly occurring activities required by BCA, ensuring that all works can be swiftly instructed in the future to a pre-determined contractor with proven abilities to work on the canal in a safe and considerate way. Using a tendered Term Contract will give :
- more competitive rates
 - economies of scale
 - better planning of repairs
 - better programming of works
 - an emergency response capability
 - better co-operation between client and contractor
- 5.4. This two phase approach has therefore been adopted to enable some urgent works to be delivered over the coming winter months, whilst securing a longer-term approach for works in the future. It is felt that the proposed term contract is the most sensible approach for delivery of works as it will enable the development of a three year relationship between the new supplier and the County Councils. It will also enable investigations and surveys currently underway to be completed and formulated into a more robust asset management plan, ensuring that limited funding is targeted at those issues carrying the highest level of risk.

6. Completion of the Asset Management Plan

- 6.1. Although the Asset Management Plan is now a 'live' document, endorsed by the Canal's Joint Management Committee, there are elements of the Plan which are yet to be added. To ensure the two County Councils have the full picture of all of the Canal, the full set of surveys needs to be completed. HCC Engineering Consultancy have commissioned specialists to undertake a survey of all of the Canal's cuttings and culverts. These surveys are now underway, with surveys of bridges, weirs, sluices and trees to follow. It is possible that the findings of these surveys may lead to some reassessment of the proposed works programme in order to ensure that the highest identified risks are addressed first. It therefore remains a strong possibility that, as the condition surveys are completed, the need to undertake works over and above the schemes currently listed in the Plan will be identified and further means of funding these works may need to be considered.
- 6.2. This process of Asset Management for the Canal has been commended by the Head of Asset Management for British Waterways who recently wrote to say that he has been impressed with 'the standard and quality of this [process], which has clearly been the result of some dedicated work by officers of both councils and of the supporting volunteer groups'.

7. Reducing Risk

- 7.1. In addition to the major repairs identified above, measures have been taken towards minimising the flood risks posed by the Canal, and, in particular, to ensure coordinated action should there need to be an urgent response to a potential emergency situation.
- 7.2. Colleagues in Hampshire Highways have been provided with all the relevant information about the high risk locations and how these can most easily be accessed by the necessary vehicles. There has been a formalising of the existing arrangement for the Highways term contractor to transport sand bags, stop planks and, if necessary, inflatable dams from their current storage location to site in the event of a potential emergency. For this coming winter and beyond, the Engineering Consultancy are investigating the best way of including this emergency response as part of the Internal Works Framework.
- 7.3. The Emergency Plan for the Canal has been updated and takes account of the lessons learnt from the emergency measures taken at West Hart. This is currently with the Emergency Planning Unit for final amendment before wider distribution.
- 7.4. Other changes have been implemented within the BCA to ensure a better planned and more efficient response should there be a major deterioration in the condition of the Canal in Hampshire which might pose a significant risk. The inspection regime for the Canal Rangers has been amended to reflect the results of the condition survey and to ensure frequent checks of the higher risk locations. Procedures for drawing down water at high risk locations have been amended and changes have been made to distribution lists to ensure all the relevant people are kept informed in an emergency situation.

8. Future Funding

- 8.1. The remaining parts of the condition survey are now underway and will, on completion, give a complete picture of the condition of the Canal and identify if there is a need for investment in addition to the three year capital programme or a need to reassess priorities. This is a planned part of the on-going Asset Management process for the Canal.
- 8.2. Apart from the capital investment, as reported in April, to continue to be operationally viable, the Canal relies upon the revenue contributions made by the partner organisations. However, the Canal cannot be immune to budget reductions now facing the two County Councils as landowners. This serves to emphasise how critically important it is that all the funding partners make their agreed full contribution. In recent years, not all the partners have contributed the previously agreed amounts. Not only does this frustrate those partners that do pay in full, it has led to a call on the Canal's reserves which are now spent. Income generation, for example, from developers' contributions and the Canal's assets including the Canal Centre and campsite, as well as a review of the staffing structure of the BCA, will all help to ease these pressures. However, it remains important

for all District Councils to recognise the great value the Basingstoke Canal represents to their area, and to make their full agreed contributions.

- 8.3. In the longer-term, steps will continue to be taken to assess the viability of alternative management options, including charitable trust status. It is widely recognised that the Canal will need to be in generally sound order before these options can be realistically progressed and, even then, the ultimate liability for the Canal's structure is likely to remain with the two County Councils.

9. Conclusion

- 9.1. The Asset Management Plan for the Basingstoke Canal is now operational. It is now being used to record the results of the full condition survey of the Canal, to establish priorities and to plan a programme of capital works. The most urgent emergency repairs have been completed earlier this year with a further programme developed for this coming winter. From April 2011 it is anticipated that a specialist term contractor will have been jointly procured and appointed by both County Councils to undertake the remaining programme of capital works arising from the condition survey results. To complete the Asset Management Plan for the Canal the remaining parts of the full condition survey are now underway, and, depending upon the results, this may necessitate further investment in the Canal's infrastructure.
- 9.2. All of these works, together with the refinement of the emergency response procedures, are reducing the risks associated with the management of the Canal, helping to make it more sustainable in the longer term and a more attractive proposition for alternative models of management.

10. Recommendations

- (a) That the work that has been undertaken to improve the condition of the Basingstoke Canal following the Decision Day report of 14 April and supporting the 'Two Phase' approach to complete these works, as described in this report, be noted.
- (b) That the on-going efforts to develop joint working and procurement with SCC on the basis of a formally agreed joint commitment to the funding and implementation of a three year programme of priority works, be fully endorsed.
- (c) That further analysis be undertaken and a report be brought back to the Executive Member once the full set of condition surveys for the Canal are completed.

Integral Appendix A

CORPORATE OR LEGAL INFORMATION:

Links to the Corporate Strategy

Hampshire safer and more secure for all:	yes
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
Maximising well-being:	yes
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
Enhancing our quality of place:	yes
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents

The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)

Document

Location

None

IMPACT ASSESSMENTS:

1. Equalities Impact Assessment:

No impact

2. Impact on Crime and Disorder:

No impact.

3. Climate Change:

- a) How does what is being proposed impact on our carbon footprint / energy consumption?

No impact

- b) How does what is being proposed consider the need to adapt to climate change, and be resilient to its longer term impacts?

These works contribute to a maintenance and management regime compiled in response to the need to alleviate flood risk and manage local drainage effectively.

Appendix 1

Phase 1 - Immediate / short term work in 2010/11

Location	Work	Date	Estimate	Notes
West Hart embkt ID 36	Geotextile/clay bank repair	May / June 2010	£77k + cost of water mgt	Both complete Both by Dean & Dyball
Dogmersfield embkt ID 31	Geotextile/clay bank repair			
Ash embkt ID 65	<u>1st step</u> - drawdown water level to find source of leaks <u>2nd step</u> - if leaks are at high level, rather than through bed, install geotextile clay bank solution + other minor repairs	Nov 2010 / Feb 2011	£58k	Drawdown of water level procured via existing contracts. Decision on type and timing of repairs depends on results of water drawdown. Estimates of spend in 2010/11, taken from bid, are therefore very preliminary CCRA to approve single supplier, if required.
Ash embkt (Ash Lock) ID 62		Nov 2010 / Feb 2011	£25k	
Chalturns embkt – ID 22	If leaks are through bed, complete draining of canal will be needed, delaying work until 2011/12	Nov 2010 / Feb 2011	£20k	
Chatter Alley embkt ID 25	Clearing toe ditch + piping + backfill	Nov 2010 / Feb 2011	£ 5k	CCRA to approve single supplier
Swan cutting	Minor towpath repairs + technical investigation of bank instability	Ongoing	£20k for towpath repair + investigation	HCC Legal and Estates also involved
Culverts, weirs and sluices	Inventory and condition survey	Nov 2010 / Mar 2011	£10k for 26 HCC culverts using existing THC	Remainder need jetting and cleaning to complete surveys. C/fd to 2011/12.
Stop planks	Testing of installation and then procurement	Asap in 2011	tbc	British Waterways currently trialling aluminium stop planks
Locks (SURREY)	Repairs to 6 locks + safety barriers at 9 locks	2010/11	£309k	SCC to confirm Work, Date and Estimate
Emergency response	Plant, labour and material on standby for mobilisation at short notice	Nov 2010 / Mar 2011	tbc	Interim measure using existing contracts until Phase 2 Term Contract starts in April 2011
Total			£524k +	Very preliminary estimate