

**Minutes of a Meeting of the External  
Partnerships Select Committee held at  
Surrey Heath House on 13 February 2018**

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+ Cllr Robin Perry (Chairman)  
+ Cllr Darryl Ratiram (Vice Chairman)

+ Cllr Dan Adams	- Cllr Katia Malcaus Cooper
+ Cllr Ian Cullen	+ Cllr Max Nelson
+ Cllr Paul Deach	+ Cllr Chris Pitt
+ Cllr Ruth Hutchinson	Cllr Joanne Potter
+ Cllr Rebecca Jennings-Evans	+ Cllr Nic Price
+ Cllr David Lewis	+ Cllr Ian Sams
+ Cllr Oliver Lewis	

+ Present  
- Apologies for absence presented

In Attendance: Steven Bailey, Blackwater Valley Countryside Trust  
Jayne Boitout, Community Development Officer  
Daniel Harrison, Executive Head: Business  
Cllr Edward Hawkins  
Cllr Josephine Hawkins  
Louise Livingston, Executive Head: Transformation  
Fiona Shipp, Basingstoke Canal Authority  
Ben Sword, Commercial and Community Development Manager

**20/EP Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the External Partnerships Select Committee held on 21 November 2017 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**21/EP Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Deach declared an interest in respect of the fact that he was a member of the Basingstoke Canal Joint Management Committee.  
Councillor David Lewis declared an interest in respect of the fact that he was a member of the Basingstoke Canal Joint Management Committee.  
Councillor Pitt declared an interest in respect of the fact that he was a Life Member of the Basingstoke Canal Society.

**22/EP Basingstoke Canal Authority**

Fiona Shipp, Canal Manager, gave a presentation in respect of the work of the Basingstoke Canal Authority.

The Basingstoke Canal Authority had responsibility for maintaining and enhancing the 37 miles of Canal which ran from the River Wey Navigation at New Haw down towards Basingstoke. 32 of the Canal's 37 miles were now navigable and the Canal had 29 locks, 1 dry-dock, 3 aqueducts and 2 tunnels.

It was outlined that the Canal Authority's revenue funding had originally been subject to a Memorandum of Agreement with 6 district and borough authorities and 7 of Hampshire's parish councils. 63% of the Authority's income was provided by grants provided by town, parish, borough and county council's bordering the canal. The remaining 37% was raised through income generation from a range of activities including campsite fees, angling licences and mooring fees. It was believed that the funding contributions from statutory partners were calculated according to a formula set out in the Memorandum of Agreement and based on the length of the canal running through the partner's area and the population living within a set distance of the canal.

The Authority was supported and enhanced by the Basingstoke Canal Society who took the lead on fundraising activities and proactively identified and approached grant funding schemes for support. The Society's volunteers played a key role in enhancing visitor experiences through a range of activities including conservation work, running the visitor centre and organising and running regular boat trips for the public along the Canal including its immensely popular Children's Father Christmas Cruises. The Society had also assumed responsibility for raising the canal's profile across a number of social media platforms. Volunteers played a key role in carrying out boat audits along the length of the canal work that was instrumental in identifying boat owners who had been avoiding paying mooring fees. Volunteers also regularly monitored specific parts of the canal reporting any problems or concerns directly to for resolution; an arrangement that meant the Canal Authority was able to utilise its limited resources as effectively and efficiently as possible.

It had been recognised that improvements to the campsite facilities would attract significant additional revenue and a planning application for a new ablutions block, electrical hook up facilities, camping pods and upgraded CCTV was being developed.

Arising from Members' questions and comments the following points were noted:

- A copy of the Memorandum of Agreement and funding formula would be circulated to members and officer.
- Low level vandalism had been reported following the installation of the new moorings at the Centre and the Authority's Equipment Barn had been broken into. However these had been isolated incidents and additional security measures had been put in place.
- Individuals made more use of the kayak hire facility than groups who tended to use the facilities of the Basingstoke Canal Canoe Club, which operated from the same site, to achieve accredited qualifications.
- Section 106 money received from the Deepcut development had been allocated to pay for the resurfacing of the towpath through Deepcut. If sufficient funding was available additional resurfacing works would be carried out between Deepcut and Frimley.
- The Committee was informed that the grant received from Surrey Heath Borough Council was £16282 less than that indicated on the Memorandum agreed by all participating Authorities, and it was requested that the Council contribute as much as possible until the Canal Authority were able to become more self sufficient
- The Canal Authority shared the Ash Lock Depot with the Blackwater Valley Countryside Park. There were also shared training opportunities and opportunities to work on linked projects.
- The Basingstoke Angling Association paid £10,000 a year for the fishing rights on the Canal and day permits were available from the Canal Centre.

The Committee thanked Fiona Shipp for her informative update.

## **23/EP Blackwater Valley Countryside Partnership**

Steve Bailey, Manager, Blackwater Valley Countryside Partnership, gave a presentation in respect of the work of the Blackwater Valley Countryside Partnership. The Partnership had been set up in 1990 to co-ordinate the work required to maintain and enhance the environment in the Blackwater Valley. The principle aims of Partnership were to:

- maintain the Valley as an open gap with enhanced landscape
- conserve wildlife
- improve the quality of the River Blackwater
- co-ordinate recreation and conservation initiatives across the area
- ensure access to and use of the Valley for sustainable transport

The work undertaken by the Partnership since its inception had had a significant impact on the flora and fauna of the area with increased fish stocks, the restoration of wetland areas and reed beds and the establishment of seven nature reserves along the length of the Blackwater Valley area.

The Partnership was supported by the twelve county, borough and town and parish councils whose boundaries encompassed the Blackwater River area with further funding for specific projects being received from other organisations including the Environment Agency. The core partners funding contributions had originally been calculated using a formula that was based on the distance of bank that ran through each partner's area. The Memorandum of Agreement governing the Partnership, originally set up to run for ten years, had now lapsed.

The Partnership's work was directed by a five year strategy and whilst work primarily focused on the land running alongside the Blackwater River the Partnership was increasingly being approached to help partners protect and enhance areas that were further away from the river. 670 hectares of land had been restored since the Partnership's inception and a further 150 hectares had been restored in 2017/18. Key projects during 2017/18 had included: the Wellesley Green Corridor SANG project in Rushmoor, tree protection work, restoration of Darby Green Pond, restoration of ponds at Mytchett, improvement works to protect the flood plain, resurfacing of paths, installation of benches and steps along the length of the Blackwater Valley, improvements to woodland and grasslands to improve the habitats available and the development of the Stumperies Project to provide new habitats for stag beetles.

The Partnership was well supported by the Blackwater Valley Countryside Trust who had assumed responsibility for identifying alternative sources of grant funding and co-ordinating voluntary activities along the length of the partnership area. The Trust's role was a growing one and over time they had become the public face of the Blackwater Valley Countryside Partnership organising walks, conservation activities and public talks as well as publicising the Partnership's work on social media. The Partnership worked closely with the Trust to ensure that work was carried out at the appropriate level.

Arising from the Committee's questions and comments the following points were noted:

- In addition to the nine regular volunteer groups who were attached to specific sites and the Tuesday and Thursday Groups there were opportunities for corporate groups to help with conservation work.
- The Partnership as working with Surrey Heath Borough Council's Recreation and Business Services Manager to identify how the partnership might develop in Surrey Heath for example the local authority providing funding for a specific project.

- Where assets were present on a site, for example a car park, then the authority who owned the asset tended to retain ownership of the asset as well as any income that the asset might generate.
- Visits to schools to raise awareness of the Blackwater Valley Partnership's work were supported by the Trust's volunteers and the Wellesley SANG Project included funding for a project worker who would work with local schools.

The Committee thanked Steve Bailey for his informative update.

**24/EP External Partnerships Select Committee Work Programme**

The Committee received and noted a report setting out its proposed work programme for 2018/19 municipal year.

**25/EP Date of Next Meeting**

It was noted the next meeting of the External Partnerships Select Committee was scheduled to take place on Tuesday 12 June 2018 at 7pm.

Chairman