

Basingstoke Canal - future direction

Culture and Communities Select Committee

25 FEBRUARY 2019

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 Runnymede), local Parishes and Fleet Town Council.
- Partnership overseen by JMC. The staff are employed by HCC.



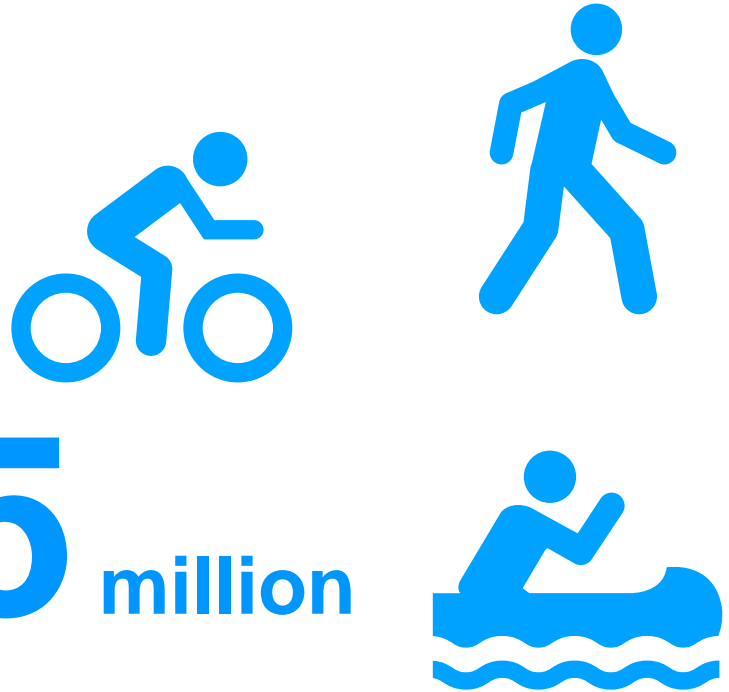
Canal Characteristics



Site of Special Scientific Interest
- most biodiverse freshwater body
in England & Wales



Important for bats,
aquatic plants &
dragonflies



1.5 million
visitors per year

The block contains three blue icons: a cyclist, a person walking, and a person kayaking. The text '1.5 million visitors per year' is positioned to the left of the kayaking icon.

Visitor Centre,
Campsite & boat
hire at Mytchett
(owned by SCC)



3,500 volunteer
days per year

Boat movements
are limited to
1,300 a year



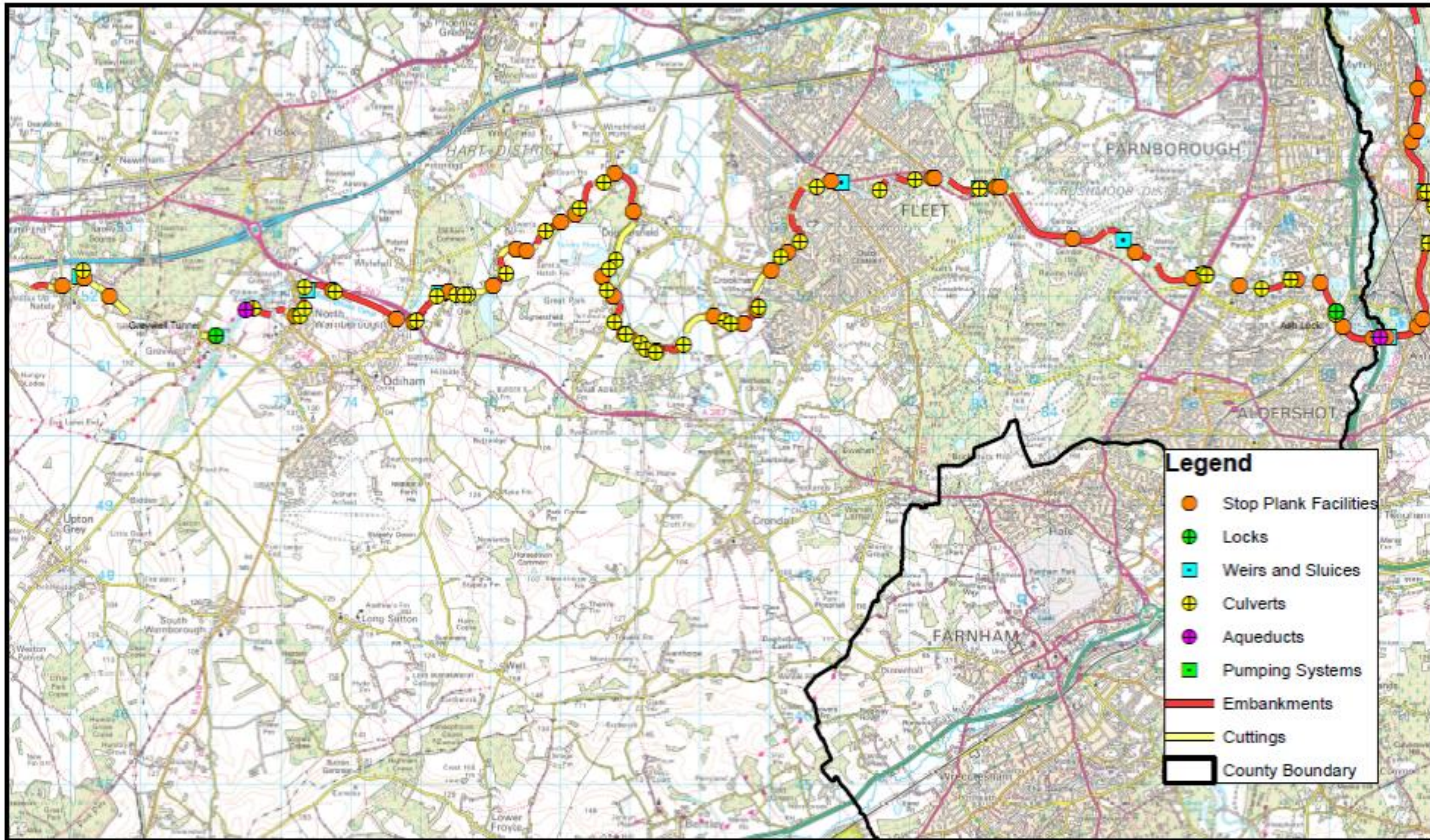
60 resident boats (Surrey section)
and 150 visiting boats per annum

Canal Assets

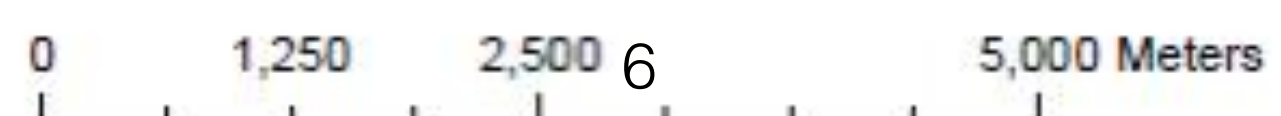
Major engineering assets to manage water levels and enable navigation include:

- 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
- 3 pumping systems
- 26 feeders, sluices or weirs
- 109 bridges – mostly part of road or rail networks
- Approx 40,000 trees





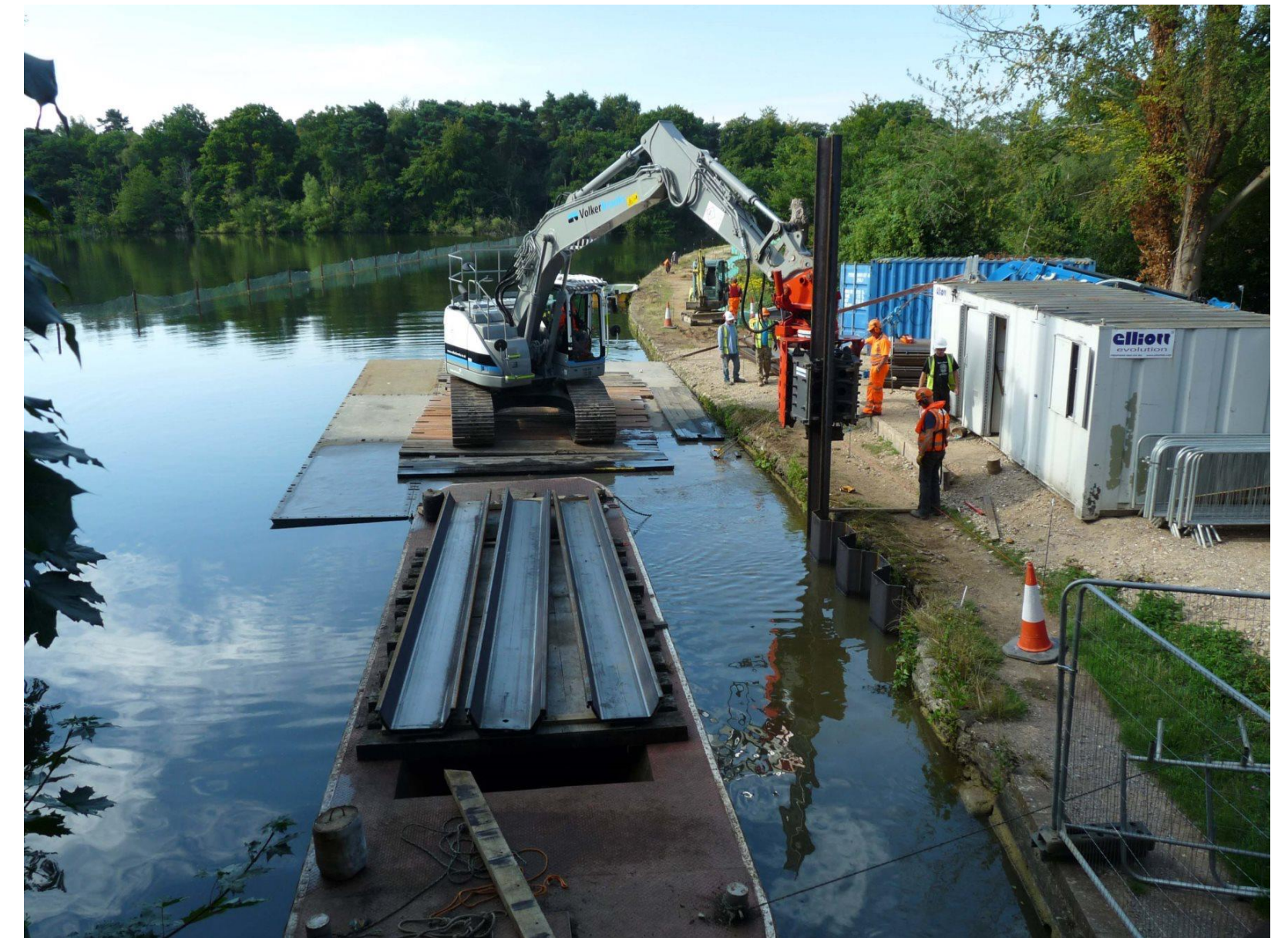
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Prepared by: J Taylor
Basingstoke Canal
Date: 21/1/2016

Canal risks

- The Canal is a vital 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

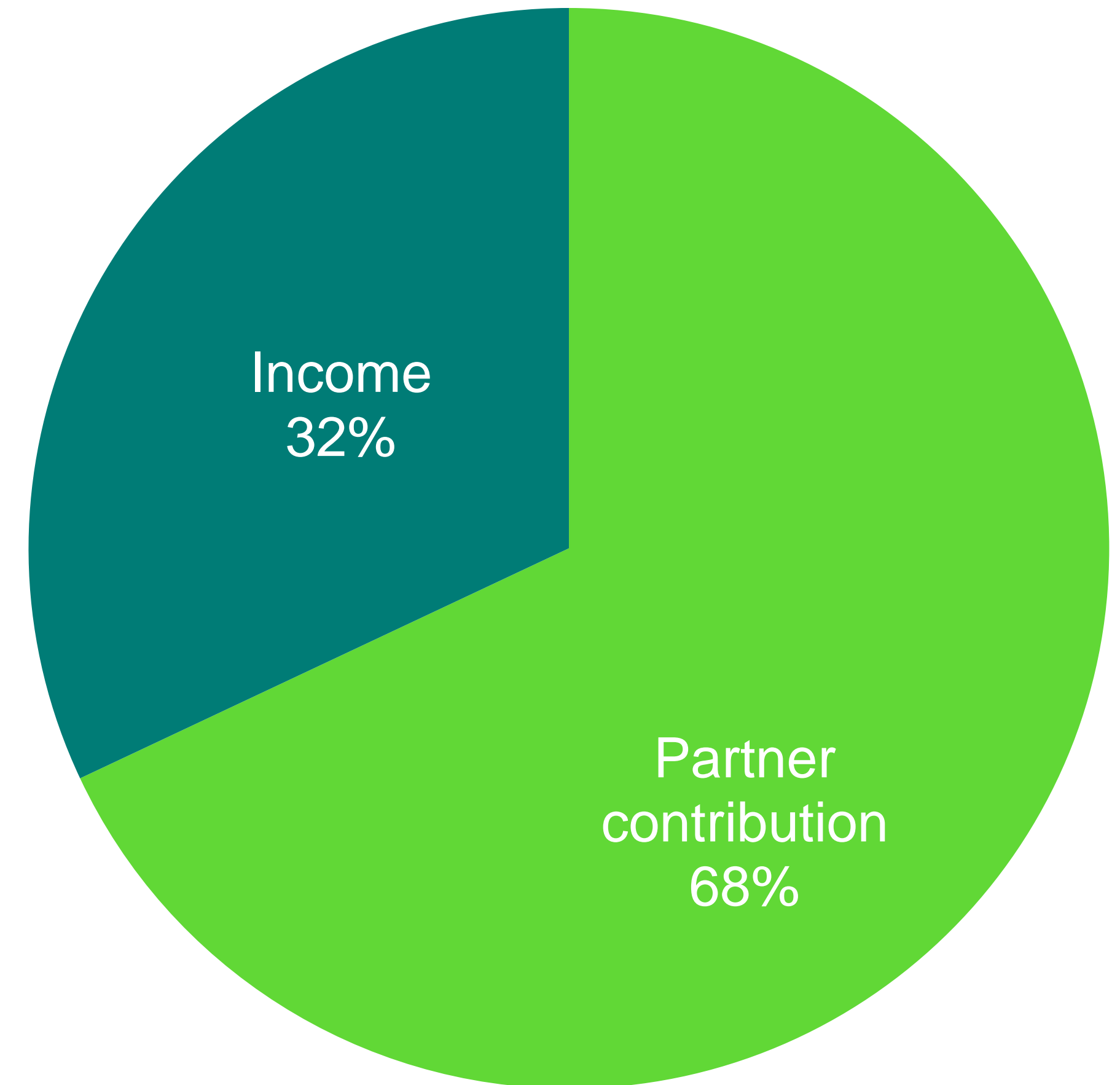


Finance - Capital

- Between 1991 and 2009 no capital allocated for the Canal
- Initial £768,000 followed by £2m in 2012 (both authorities)
- Approx £1m spent on landslip at Dogmersfield
- Arrears in maintenance of £6.8m along the Canal (£3m in Hampshire)
- £1.5m allocated over three years from 2018/19 – 2020/21 (HCC)
- SCC allocated £150,000 for same period

Finance - Revenue

- Turnover £800,000 per annum
- Partner contribution - £547,680
- Income - £253,000
- SCC & HCC contribute £178,000 + jointly funded post



Future management requirements

Aim: Secure a sustainable long term management model for the Basingstoke Canal.

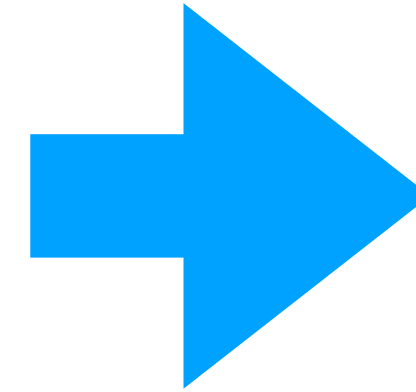
- Canal is a high risk liability for HCC & SCC
- Risk that partner authorities potentially reduce their contribution. No legal basis for contribution
- There is a significant backlog of funding to ensure that the assets are well maintained and reduce likelihood of failure.
- Canal management is specialist work that requires support e.g. engineering, legal advice



Future Management Options

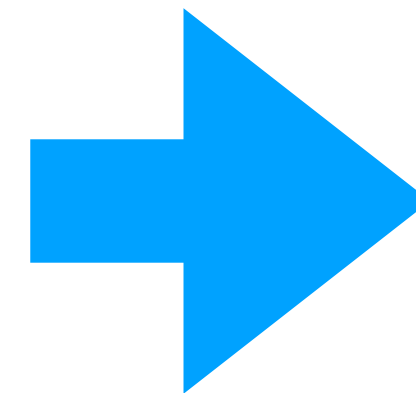
Options considered:

Option A - both landowning authorities divest entirely of the Canal to an appropriate body who can safeguard the future of the Canal with no further involvement.



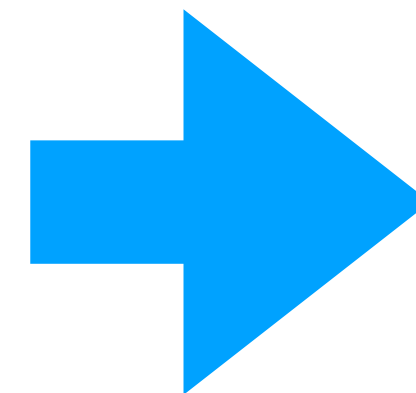
Preferred option. The Canals & Rivers Trust only organisation with required competency and capacity to manage the Basingstoke Canal.

Option B - Targeted investment and the landowning authorities continue to operate the Canal continuing with the current partnership or similar delivery model.



Only viable current solution is to develop a number of business cases to increase income, whilst protecting current funding streams and investing in the assets.

Option C - The landowners enter into a contract with a private sector partner to wholly or partly develop and run the Canal.



Discounted after further investigation into commercial potential

Option A - Preferred long term solution

- The Canal & River Trust was established in 2012 and are responsible for the management of 2,000 miles of canals and rivers in England and Wales.
- Surrey County Council and all the partnership authorities including the Canal Society agree that a transfer to the CRT is the best long term solution for the Basingstoke Canal.
- CRT satisfied with our asset assessment and priorities for capital programme.
- CRT different funding model and requirement for full asset transfer not affordable to either landowning authority



Option B

- Campsite redevelopment. A Surrey County Council asset with potential to generate more income for the BCA. Funding bid to the Enterprise M3 LEP for 80%.
- New moorings - increasing the number of moorings to generate income including Farnborough Rd. Currently in discussion with Natural England.
- Potential for visitor centre redevelopment. A SCC asset requiring significant investment.



Future Direction

- Re-examine the options
- Investment strategy for the Canal – visitor facilities
- Utilise learning from the Country Park Transformation Programme
- Land/assets differ in the two authorities
- JMC working group to support



Proposed Way Forward

- Not to pursue an asset transfer to the Canal and Rivers Trust at this time.
- Intention to produce a strategy for investment, in partnership with Surrey County Council and to consider investment beyond the Hampshire county boundary where there is demonstrable benefit for the Canal.
- Maintain the same level of revenue funding for the next three years.