

Waterway corridor studies: a good practice guide for navigation authorities

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CASE STUDIES

The case studies which follow show a range of waterway corridor study work which has been carried out in recent years by AINA members and their partners and stakeholders. These include studies focused on popular cruising canals, river navigations, and a canal under restoration. Extracts show how their maps, plans and illustrations help to convey the ways in which a corridor study can identify and promote improvements as well as ideas for the future.

Driffield Navigation, Yorkshire

The Driffield Navigation Trust is an AINA member which has recently spent much time and effort establishing and building links with potential partners. Both the Trust and the Driffield Navigation Amenities Association (DNAA) have traditionally been dominated by boating interests, but in recent years efforts have been made to recruit members with a broader range of skills and interests.

A bridge engineer, publicity/public relations expert, conservation architect, solicitor, insurance expert and architect subsequently made their skills available. These enabled the Trust to consider the potential, with the Driffield Area Partnership (DAP), of the future of the navigation and a waterway corridor study was planned.



Driffield is a small town situated within a rural landscape in East Yorkshire. As a result of the outbreak of foot and mouth disease the local economy suffered and many jobs were lost. The long term objective of the study was to regenerate the whole of the canal corridor, including improvements to brownfield land, in order to attract locals and visitors. Tourism spend will help to replace the jobs lost through the decline in agriculture.

In 2003 East Riding of Yorkshire Council commissioned Atkins Consultants to prepare a study on behalf of the Driffield Navigation Trust and Driffield Area Partnership examining the feasibility of reopening the Driffield Navigation from Riverhead, Driffield to Struncheon Hill Lock, Hempholme, where the navigation meets the River Hull.





The scope of the study was to determine the feasibility of improving and renewing the navigation and to determine whether restoration was worth pursuing further.

The existing route and condition of each section of the navigation was examined in detail, followed by an outline of the historic and current legal framework within which the navigation operates. Navigation was possible (on a limited draft) from the Humber Estuary to Snakeholme Lock. However, while the navigation from this point is intact, locks are derelict and bridges fixed with low headroom.

Adams then appraised the engineering issues required to bring the Driffield Navigation to full cruising and recreational use in terms of its channel, locks, bridges and footpaths. These findings were then costed in detail.

The study cost £36,000. However, it successfully opened access to £265,000 of funding for the initial phase of the project which included SRB and LEADER+ (LEADER+ is a European Union and UK government funding initiative for rural areas). Funding for the next phase will be sourced from the East Riding of Yorkshire Council, the Heritage Lottery Fund and a further grant from LEADER+.

An intensive press campaign keeps the general public aware and involved in the study, including three story boards erected along the route highlighting the history and heritage of the area. Leaflets promoting newly created walking routes have been distributed and it is expected that further work will be undertaken by volunteers.

The study has successfully led to the renovation of two locks, new bridge works, new safety measures, and the temporary employment of a Canal Manager.

Work continues on a detailed wildlife assessment, together with a plan for dredging the canal. The canal has increasingly been seen as a catalyst for change in the Driffield area.

Vanessa Bollans, Programme Manager for LEADER+ said "the grant funding for Driffield will help to improve the quality of life of the local residents and make best use of the natural and cultural resources to generate economic prosperity".

Extract from Driffield
Study showing wildlife
and ecological issues.



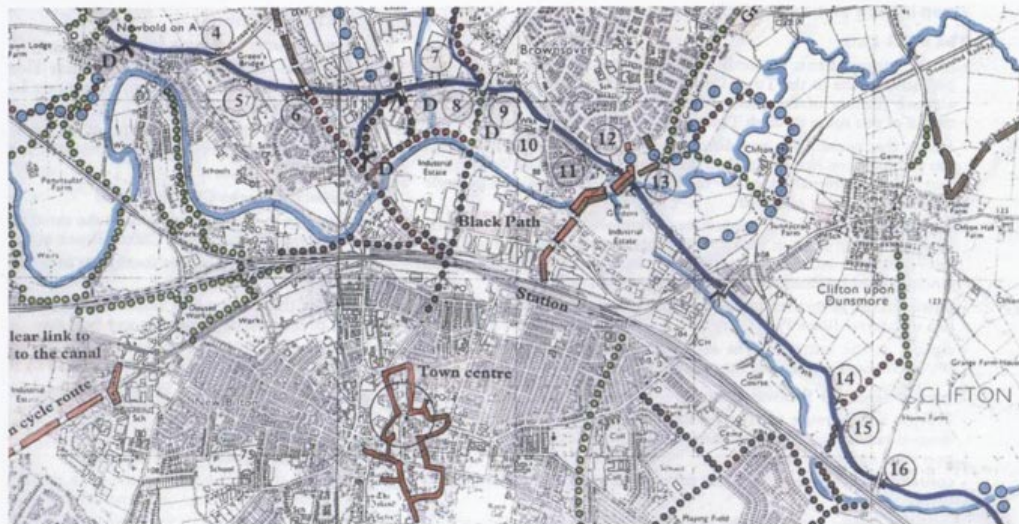
Oxford Canal, Rugby

This study was prepared jointly by British Waterways and Rugby Borough Council to examine opportunities to improve and regenerate the Oxford Canal in the Rugby Borough area. The study was driven by the need to increase tourism in Rugby, encouraging both day visits and overnight stays, whilst also seeking to diversify employment opportunities. This led to the successful use of EU funds specifically allocated for areas that had suffered from job losses in the defence-based industries, and this helped pay for both the study and some of the subsequent projects on the ground.

The Oxford Canal skirts around the north of Rugby town centre, and offers access to pleasant countryside, as well as a number of former canal 'loops' which were isolated when the canal was improved in the 19th century. In addition, a number of boat hire companies operate in or close to the area and this stretch of the Oxford Canal is a very popular cruising route. The study was, therefore, prepared with the purpose of promoting Rugby's canal, whilst, at the same time, identifying ways of encouraging better access for all users.



Map showing footpath links and access within the canal corridor around Rugby. Corridor studies can identify important linkages and new or improved routes which help to better connect waterways to their surroundings





The study included a full assessment of:

- the canal's landscape setting
- its history and heritage
- existing provision for leisure and recreation
- ways in which the canal and its corridor could be more closely linked to the town centre.

Strategy plans were prepared for several key themes from which ideas and possibilities for improvement were planned. With the support of EU funding and contributions from other partners, the study quickly moved into a three year implementation phase. Works completed between 1998 and 2001 included new towpath surfacing and access points, a new footbridge to help linkages to the town centre, a landmark sculpture developed with input from the local community and schools, and the creation of a dozen new craft units at the heart of the Hillmorton Locks Conservation Area.

The study helped to create a new focus for the canal in Rugby and won an award from the Royal Town Planning Association. The significant outputs and successes were the result of partnership work and a commitment to find funding to suit the needs of the project.

Michael Lenihan, Economic Development Manager at Rugby Borough Council, appreciates the value of the corridor study and of the benefits it has brought.

"The projects we have undertaken in partnership with British Waterways have gone well beyond the scope of the original canal corridor study and have achieved far more than we could have ever envisaged. However, without the study as a starting point we would have had no idea of the potential that this key asset to the borough held. Now, both visitors and residents have increased the use of the canal dramatically, making the study worth every penny."

Sketch prepared to show the planned vision for Hillmorton Locks on the Oxford Canal in Rugby. The proposals included the conversion of historic buildings, new craft workshops, a shop for visitors, enhanced access, and landscape and car parking improvements. The corridor study helped generate grants and funds to carry the ideas through to full implementation, in the heart of a conservation area.

