

AINA CASE STUDY

PLACE MAKING AND SHAPING

Kennet & Avon Canal: a sleeping beauty awakes



Economic and social benefits have been substantial since the canal was fully reopened

The Kennet & Avon Canal forms a 140 km long waterway link across the south of England between the River Thames at Reading and the city of Bristol. The canal opened in 1810, but was closed to through navigation in 1955. Over the next 30 years a partnership comprising British Waterways, the riparian local authorities, the Kennet & Avon Canal Trust and local businesses worked to gradually restore the canal. It finally re-opened in 1990. However it was realised that the re-opened waterway was not sustainable in the long-term. Subsequently a £27 million project was developed and approved in 1996 to secure the canal's future, supported mainly by the Heritage Lottery Fund, with supplementary funding from partnership members.

By 2005, the restored canal had generated an increase in visits of 22% compared with the 1995 baseline. Expenditure by these visitors grew by 59% to £31 million per annum over the same period, while the number of boats based on the canal grew by almost 40% to over 1,400.

The restoration delivered an additional 385 recreation and tourism-related jobs in local economies along the canal. This is in addition to the 700 or so jobs that were safeguarded by the scheme. Between 1995 and 2005 around £400 million investment in waterside developments took place, particularly in the Reading area, creating around 2,700 jobs in canalside offices and retail developments.

The restoration has also generated huge support from communities along the canal corridor. In interview surveys of local people, 91% said that they felt that the restored canal made their part of England special, with 55% visiting it more frequently since it was restored.

Further information about the Kennet & Avon Canal and its restoration can be found on the websites of British Waterways (www.britishwaterways.co.uk/south-west/) and Kennet & Avon Canal Trust (www.katrust.org/)