

# AINA CASE STUDY

## PLACE MAKING AND SHAPING

### Birmingham's waterfront: making the most of the city's canals



#### **Major regeneration work has made the waterways a popular destination for locals and visitors**

Birmingham is England's second largest city and lies at the heart of the canal network. In the 1980s, Birmingham City Council saw the canals as an opportunity to extend the city's central core out across the constraining barrier of the inner ring road. Initial developments in the Gas Street area were followed by two flagship waterside projects - the International Conference Centre and National Indoor Arena.

Since the early 1990s, the area has become an exemplar of waterside regeneration, with private sector-led mixed use developments, such as Brindley Place, the Water's Edge and the Mailbox, building on the initial, often public-sector led, investment. It is estimated that over £1 billion has been invested in canalside developments – office, residential, retail and leisure - since the mid-1980s, with around 75% of that coming from the private sector. In addition some 2,500 residential units have been created in waterside developments.

The canals in central Birmingham receives around 3 million visits per year, while 2,200 – 2,600 net additional full-time equivalent jobs have been created in waterside developments. Associated public realm improvements have created an attractive canalside environment, which encourages and facilitates pedestrian flow into and around the city centre. New footbridges and public places have enabled better links with surrounding areas and a water bus service operates from the International Convention Centre. Lockside areas have been improved through the use of traditional hard wearing materials and signage guides visitors along the towpaths.

The city's redeveloped canals constitute the key marketing image of Birmingham, benefiting the tourism and leisure industry and the wider competitiveness of the city from a quality of life perspective.