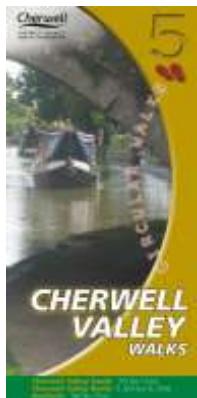


AINA CASE STUDY

HEALTH, WELL-BEING, RECREATION AND SPORT

Oxford Canal Walks



The Oxford Canal in the Cherwell Valley around Banbury offers attractive walks and a series of leaflets have been prepared to promote the routes

A strong local partnership has developed attractive recreational walks which make full use of rail and canal

A series of routes offer recreational walks based around access to the Oxford Canal from railway stations between Oxford and Banbury. These include both circular walks and inter-station routes, with distances from three kilometres upwards. All make substantial use of the towpath, take in villages in the Cherwell Valley and link to the 124 kilometre Oxford Canal Walk between Coventry and Oxford.

The walks, together with Sunday trains in the summer months, have been established through the North Oxford Canal Partnership, which includes Oxfordshire County Council, Cherwell District Council, West Oxfordshire District Council, British Waterways, First Great Western Trains and Oxfordshire Narrowboats. Other local groups have contributed, e.g., Lower Heyford Parish Council devised their local walk; Cropredy Parish Council and Cropredy Historical Society made contributions to a leaflet for the Cropredy Battlefield Walk; and information at Heyford Station has been provided by the Friends of Heyford Station.

Routes include a 22.5 kilometre figure of eight walk from Heyford station, and a 3.5 kilometre wheelchair accessible option linking Lower and Upper Heyford via the canal towpath and village streets. The Heyford to Tackley walk runs for 8 kilometres, of which the majority follows the towpath. Cyclists can use the towpath and the Partnership promotes bicycle carriage on the trains, with hire facilities available at Heyford.

The railway is promoted as the 'Oxford Canal Line' and an award winning guide has been produced. Guides to the individual walks are produced by Cherwell District Council, with support from partners, and these are made available on their website and at local tourist offices. British Waterways also produces guides to the Oxford Canal which promote both the rail links and the walks, again accessible on the internet.

Management of the project is divided, with various partners fulfilling their own responsibilities such as stations and rights of way. The work to establish the walks demonstrates how partnerships with groups such as Parish Councils can successfully build on the lead taken by larger organisations.