

AINA CASE STUDY

HEALTH, WELL-BEING, RECREATION AND SPORT

Neath Canal Navigation: cycleway and environmental project



A local artist was employed to create attractive gates and barriers at entry points along the improved towpath

Towpath improvements support the National Cycle Network

This project restored approximately 4.5 kilometres of canal towpath between Briton Ferry and Tonna, forming direct pedestrian and cycle access between Neath town centre and surrounding rural areas. The improvements enabled the route to form part of the Sustrans National Cycle Network.

The initial proposals and feasibility study were prepared by Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council and Neath Canal staff. Funding partners included NPT Environment Aid, Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council, Neath Canal Navigation and Sustrans. A total of £350,000 was donated towards the cost of the project.

The Borough Council engineers acted as main consultants and worked closely with the canal employees to develop a design brief and contract documents. A specialist company undertook an independent environmental impact survey and a local artist produced decorative fencing panels and focal points.

Building on the success of this project, an additional 7 kilometres of polluted canal above Tonna have been dredged and restored at a cost of £2.7million. Again, the towpath was laid to Sustrans standards and, following a tendering process, the Borough Council awarded the contract to the National Cycle Network. In addition to the construction and relaying of the towpaths, work included the installation of a lift bridge, a feature viewing platform and walkway plus extensive canal wall and bridge repairs. Tree planting and natural stone seating areas provided the finishing touches. The route has been marked with Sustrans mileposts and barriers were erected to prevent motorcycle access.

The works have opened up an under-utilised and man-made nature reserve for public and leisure use and the improved access has been very popular with local people. It now features as part of the annual Swansea Bay charitable cycle ride when, over an eight hour period, up to 500 cyclists travel along the towpath.