

## AINA CASE STUDY

### HEALTH, WELL-BEING, RECREATION AND SPORT

#### **The Weaver Way: a linear route through Cheshire**



#### ***The River Weaver forms a focus for leisure and recreation in a new Regional Park***

The Weaver Way is a multi-user network running through the Weaver Valley Regional Park in Cheshire. Approximately 70% of the route follows canal or river towpaths: the River Weaver and Weaver Navigation and the Shropshire Union Canal. The work has been led by the Weaver Valley Partnership.

The trail is 65 kilometres long, running from Audlem in the south to Frodsham in the north and connecting six towns and 11 villages along the way. Overall aims are to create a wider network of walking, riding and cycling routes to connect to public transport and the major road network.

Access for all measures aim to reduce exclusion of access, and approximately one fifth of the route meets the BT Countryside for All Standards. In addition, a set of recommended design standards have been developed for the three different types of route which characterise the Weaver Way: urban and formal routes, urban fringe and managed routes, and rural and working routes. Potential conflicts were recognised at an early stage, and when considering heritage and ecology a 2008 report stated: "Where conflicts arise for which there are no mitigation measures, pedestrian only routes will have to be factored in where necessary". As work progressed it was realised that maintaining a recommended shared path width can be impractical on narrow canal towpath and riverside paths.

Connections to other regional walks are seen as important and there are links to, e.g., the Delamere Way and the Sandstone Trail. The Way also provides the focus for a variety of circular walks and connects to the National Cycle Network between Chester and Kidsgrove.

The Weaver Valley Regional Park secured the necessary funding, though it is anticipated work will take up to ten years to complete at an estimated cost of around £9 million. The route is now actively marketed by the Regional Park and tourism body Discover Cheshire. The Weaver Way Partnership comprises a range of organisations including Parish and Unitary Councils, British Waterways, Groundwork, the Mersey Forest and Sustrans. Branded signage has been developed to provide a common identify to all sections of the route, and wider opportunities are now being developed by the Weaver Valley team.