

# AINA CASE STUDY

## SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT

### Chesterfield Canal: part of an important greenways network



***The canal towpath now forms part of wider recreational routes and encourages communities to use their local waterway***

Restoration of the 74 kilometre Chesterfield Canal is part of Derbyshire County Council's successful Greenways strategy, which also forms part of their Local Transport Strategy. More than half of Derbyshire's proposed Greenways network has been completed and the canal towpath provides an important safe traffic free route which links towns and villages with their local countryside.

Monitoring shows that the towpath is heavily used, with around 8 per cent of journeys for commuting, shopping or visiting. Some parts of the towpath are promoted more heavily than others as part of a deliberate strategy to steer people away from Sites of Special Scientific Interest, where access needs to be managed carefully. Anna Chapman, Derbyshire's Countryside Officer for Greenways, describes waterside paths as "pieces of the puzzle" that can complete a route, and stresses the importance of having an overall vision to identify gaps and work with partners to complete the network.

Geraint Coles, the Chesterfield Canal Partnership Development Manager, has developed an Access Strategy for the Chesterfield Canal towpath, which builds on the wider success across the county. Employed by Derbyshire County Council, his brief is to regard the canal as a linear park that should also be well connected to the local transport network, and often the canal provides the only practicable east-west walking and cycling route between neighbouring communities, e.g., passing underneath the busy A1(M). He works closely with parish councils along the waterway to ensure their priorities are fed into the county strategy. For example, in Rotherham work is carried out with local Footpaths Officer to develop the canal as a useful walking link. The Access Strategy schedules a detailed programme designed to widen access, participation and increased use of the canal by all members of the community.

A wide range of partners actively develop and improve foot, cycle and bridleway networks around the canal. All have undertaken works to increase the numbers of towpath users – even along those sections of the canal not yet restored to water. Links include connections to nearby Sherwood Forest, RSPB reserves and a medieval priory managed by English Heritage.