

AINA CASE STUDY

SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT

Limehouse Cut, London: floating towpath



An innovative solution enabled a continuous walkway to be created below a major road crossing

The Limehouse Cut is a 2½ kilometre long canal which connects the Thames at Limehouse Basin with the River Lee Navigation at Bow Locks. Its towpath allows access to the Isle of Dogs, the Thames Path and historic Three Mills as well as linking to the rest of London's 100 mile canal and river network.

However, prior to innovative work in 2002, there was no link beneath the busy A12 where it crosses the Limehouse Cut. This meant walkers and cyclists had to leave the towpath and negotiate the road via an unpleasant subway. This also created a significant divide between communities on the west of the road and their local amenities and recreational opportunities to the east.

In order to create a continuous linear path, British Waterways London installed a new floating towpath, believed to be the first in the UK. This comprised 21 two metre wide pre-cast concrete floatation units which together measure 242 metres in length and create a stable surface for walkers and cyclists. Colourful lighting in the pontoons and under the bridge help to provide a safe and attractive environment and at either end of the walkway platforms have been built over the water's edge to connect the new structure to the existing walkway.

The new facility was well received by regular users of the Limehouse Cut since it provides a more pleasant and direct alternative to the previous route. The floating towpath has also given local residents easier access to the nearest supermarket at nearby Three Mills.

The new path was officially unveiled in 2003, following funding from Leaside Regeneration Ltd through its Communities in Business programme. It was also supported by the London Development Agency and the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. The total cost of the scheme was approximately £312,000, and the work has since won an award from the London Cycling Campaign as the best new cycle facility in London.