

AINA CASE STUDY

HEALTH, WELL-BEING, RECREATION AND SPORT

Trans Pennine Trail: a traffic-free recreational amenity



The Trans Pennine Trail follows an improved canal towpath into Selby, from where there are links to the town centre

Waterway towpaths help provide a popular route for a range of activities

The Trans Pennine Trail is a walking, cycling and horseriding route which links Liverpool with Hull (and Leeds and York) and passes through the Peak District and two regional forests. The trail was created by a partnership of 26 local authorities across the north of England and forms the first purpose-built long distance multi-user trail in the country. The route follows a number of canals and rivers, including the Leeds and Liverpool Canal, Aire and Calder Navigation, Chesterfield Canal and the River Don. British Waterways worked with partners to deliver work on the ground. In total, 555 kilometres of pathways are available for safe accessible use, with long stretches suitable for people with disabilities.

In Selby, British Waterways worked on behalf of the local authority to help fund, design and implement a section of towpath improvement. This now links the Selby Canal, close to the town centre, with the surrounding countryside, and residents use it to walk and cycle to school and work, as well as appreciating its value as a recreational amenity.

The success of the project can be closely linked to the strong partnerships between local authorities and agencies, which ensured smooth implementation. The Trans Pennine Trail Officer says: “The partnership arrangement was the key.” Good maintenance has encouraged increased use, and monitoring work reveals that most users are local. 87 per cent surveyed claimed they were regular users, and 71 per cent had not used a car or any other form of transport to access the trail. An encouraging 8.1 per cent use the route for daily routine journeys.

Lessons have been learnt, and narrow towpaths have occasionally created local problems.

A particular problem – which has wider relevance – is abuse of certain sections of the route by motor bikers and action has been taken by local authorities to install access barriers and work in partnership with the police to target offenders. In addition, discontinuity for horse riders remains an issue, since they are not allowed on the towpath sections managed by British Waterways.

The project cost £30 million, with £5.8 million provided by the Millennium Commission. The remainder was provided by the local authority partners, including funds allocated from their Local Transport Plans. The Trail is now part of the National Cycle Network, and a volunteer group helps to lobby for ongoing improvement.