

AINA CASE STUDY

HEALTH, WELL-BEING, RECREATION AND SPORT

Active Canals



Local people now enjoy a range of outdoor activities on and along the restored Droitwich Canals

Encouraging outdoor activity was a key aspect of the Droitwich Canals restoration

The re-opening of the Droitwich Canals in 2011 provided new boating opportunities but also created locally based recreational facilities, in line with the aims of the restoration work which sought “to create a linear park centred on the restored waterways which will seek to conserve and enhance the natural and built environment and provide a range of informal recreational opportunities for local people and visitors, thereby generating economic benefit and contributing to the well being of the people of Worcestershire.”

Outdoor recreation was a key aspect of the work and a £250,000 grant from Sport England and the Big Lottery Fund helped fund the creation of a new canal-side park.

The funds helped provide a multi-user path through the Salwarpe Valley, a trim trail, wheel chair accessible fishing pegs and a canoe launch facility by the Droitwich Spa Leisure Centre. The work also created a number of way-marked circular walks designed to give local residents the chance to both enjoy the outdoors and keep fit.

Improved footpaths give better access to schools and the leisure centre and help to reduce the number of car journeys in the town. Droitwich residents of all ages have also had the chance to enjoy canoeing on the canal at a number of specially arranged taster sessions. A sports college was so impressed with the work that it donated a canoe which has enabled 800 people to gain paddling experience, and packaging canoeing with other sports such as archery and climbing has proved a popular attraction.

Projects were developed with local schools and volunteers too. Successful litter picks were arranged and teachers were encouraged to build the canal into their curriculum work. Volunteers have worked alongside professionals, and the construction of angling pegs, specially designed to offer tuition, enabled some of the local volunteers to become fully qualified angling instructors. Such work undoubtedly helps ensure the overall long term sustainability of the canal restoration work.

This was one of only 24 projects in the West Midlands funded through the lottery-funded Active England programme. Wychavon District Council explained that the award helped support the engineering work: “Once the works have been done residents and visitors will be able to enjoy much improved access along the canal and better leisure facilities in the Salwarpe Valley. The canal is a much underused leisure resource and we aim to help residents and visitors make the most of it. Cyclists, walkers, anglers and canoeists will all benefit from the Lottery funds.”

The Droitwich Canal Partnership which guided the restoration work consists of British Waterways, the Droitwich Canals Trust, Worcestershire County Council and Wychavon District Council.