

# AINA CASE STUDY

## PLACE MAKING AND SHAPING

### The Meccano bridge: Manchester, Bolton and Bury Canal



The unusual Meccano bridge was built with enthusiastic help from waterway volunteers

#### ***A new footbridge creates a distinctive and colourful waterway landmark***

An unusual footbridge has been constructed across the disused Manchester, Bolton and Bury Canal at Nob End in Bolton. The £90,000 steelwork bridge, designed by artist Liam Curtin, has a span of 6.4m and a height of 1.3m and was built on the site of a disused horse bridge. The colourful landmark – red, green and yellow - was funded through an agreement with a developer as part of a local planning application and built by the artist, members of the Manchester, Bolton and Bury Canal Society and willing local volunteers.

The artist designed a metalwork bridge comprising giant pieces of Meccano and used pieces which were ten times bigger than those normally found in the traditional toy sets. These were manufactured and cut by a local fabricator and the bridge includes 400 individual pieces, some weighing up to 80kg, and more than 700 oversized nuts and bolts. The bridge now forms part of the plans for long term renovation of the canal and the artist worked with local people to develop his initial ideas.

Planning permission for the new bridge was granted by Bolton Council in September 2012, and the new structure replaced a wooden bridge which had collapsed around 50 years ago. This had been used by horses crossing between the Bury and Bolton arms of the canal, but was never replaced after the canal bed became dry following a breach in 1936.

The bridge aims to improve links between Little Lever and the nearby Moses Gate Country Park, whilst encouraging community links too. Steps have been constructed at either end of the bridge to deter motorcyclists and it will lead to a canalside picnic area where Meccano-style tables will continue the theme. Construction of the bridge was undertaken by the artist with significant volunteer help from the Canal Society, and professional advice was received from Bolton Council and the civil engineering department at the University of Bolton.

Liam Curtin says the bridge is the fulfilment of a childhood dream, since he had spent his youth playing with Meccano and was excited to have the "largest set in the world". "It wasn't until I actually saw the finished pieces arriving from the factory that I realised we had created something quite wonderful," he said. "As members of the canal society unpacked the lorry, they appeared like Lilliputian figures in a magical toy world." The project has shown how a combination of contemporary ideas and volunteer input can successfully create new landmarks on the waterway network.