

AINA CASE STUDY

THE WAY FORWARD

A linear water park with a focus on wildlife



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Restoration proposals for the Cromford Canal looked at realistic strategic options

Consultants were employed by Derbyshire County Council, on behalf of the Cromford Canal Consortium, to undertake a study to establish the heritage, ecological and environmental resources of the disused waterway and undertake a preliminary assessment of costs, benefits and risks associated with a series of development options.

Following detailed surveys, a workshop for a range of stakeholders was held to help develop ideas for future options. Several key threads emerged including the need for an incremental approach to canal restoration, the ways in which wildlife and navigation can co-exist and an agreement that funding, engineering and conservation would make full restoration a difficult scenario to achieve. Four options were subsequently considered: do minimum, a linear water park, partial restoration and full restoration, but the consultants could not identify one single way forward and suggested a four stage approach. A 'do minimum plus' option also emerged linked to the implementation of existing plans at a couple of key locations by the canal.

Stage one would, for example, maintain and improve a section of canal for the benefit of wildlife habitats and for limited navigation (e.g. unpowered boats including a trip boat) and would undertake basic clearance and enhancement works to a standard that would allow subsequent restoration. It would also seek to identify routes and secure landowner agreements for links to shared use paths. Stages three and four related to longer term ambitions but included three interim terminii along the canal corridor and complete restoration as a working waterway.

Given funding constraints, stage two offered a potentially realistic option to develop a trail along the whole canal, promote plans for a linear water park and bring together statutory and local wildlife sites to form a destination with a clear wildlife focus. The water park was described as a mosaic of individual sites brought together through a consistent approach to management. It was also recognised that the park concept had the potential to create an unbroken largely off-road route from the west of Nottingham into the heart of the Peak District National Park. Such an approach to long term planning would be likely to result in both higher levels of use and greater benefits to surrounding communities.