

AINA CASE STUDY

THE WAY FORWARD

Maidenhead Waterways Restoration Group



Old waterway channels in Maidenhead are currently silted and overgrown but could be restored for navigation

Waterway enthusiasts develop ambitious plan to reopen town centre navigations

Maidenhead Waterways Restoration Group (MWRG) is a volunteer led group that seeks to restore and enhance the former waterways in the town centre. Their plans have now become a key element of the Area Action Plan developed by the Partnership for the Rejuvenation of Maidenhead.

Today, the waterways are a mix of minor streams and dry or neglected overgrown channels with rough and unmanaged vegetation and their role has diminished since the Jubilee River flood relief channel was built. MWRG focuses its efforts on the waterway that once ran from Cookham, through central Maidenhead, to Bray, where it is known that a flash lock system was once used for commercial navigation and in Regency times this stretch was known as The Canal.

MWRG plans phased works, including the most urban sections where both York Stream and the Moor Cut pass through the town centre. These channels split by Town Moor, but join up again later, where a lock, boat rollers, fish pass and weir are planned, though the lock will only be constructed when reasonably sized boats can reach the area.

The design and environmental impacts were informed by a variety of professional studies, including a river corridor survey, tree and bat surveys, and a flood risk assessment developed using a refinement of the Environment Agency's computer models of the local river area. The first planning application was submitted in August 2011 and, following consent, detailed design work has commenced. A phased approach means the waterway will initially support only small craft such as canoes and punts, but all new structures will be designed to meet the needs of narrow boats. The Waterway Framework Policy adopted by the Borough in 2009 already requires that any new or rebuilt crossings over the channels must allow for sufficient navigational headroom.

The Group has appointed consultants to manage the detailed feasibility work, which is being funded with help from the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead using Section 106 monies obtained from local planning agreements. In addition, the Borough offered a grant after the scheme gained support in a public vote on the Participatory Budget for Maidenhead – 32% voted the waterways project as high priority, proving once again that waterways can be a winner.