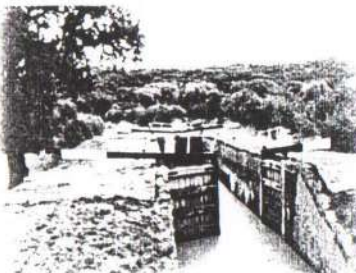
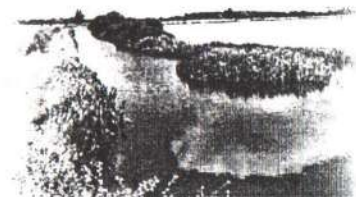


# The Grantham Canal Strategy

Draft for Consultation  
May 2000



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## The Grantham Canal Strategy Draft for Consultation

The Grantham Canal Strategy sets out a vision and strategic approach to regeneration and management of the canal corridor. It is supported by detailed research documents (including landscape, ecological, heritage, recreation and engineering assessments), the findings of which feed into the separate Grantham Canal Action Plan

We would like this Strategy to provide an agreed vision as a basis for a future partnership on the Grantham Canal and invite you to raise any issue, comment or suggestion that you feel may assist us in developing this vision.

In particular, we would like to hear your comments on the following:

- What is your own vision for the Grantham Canal and its wider corridor ?
- Have we identified realistic proposals for action ?
- Are there any other partnership initiatives you would like to see taken forward in the Strategy ?

Please send your comments, by **31 August 2000**, to:

Jane Rollins  
Environmental Planner  
Waterway Environment Services  
British Waterways  
The Locks  
Hillmorton  
Rugby  
Warwickshire CV21 4PP

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## The Vision

Our vision for the Grantham Canal is to safeguard the integrity of the waterway and enhance its value as a 33 mile long linear 'park', rich in landscape, wildlife and heritage interest. The park will be of regional significance and provide access for as wide a range of users as possible and diverse opportunities for green tourism and informal recreation, both land and water based. The park will form a focus for rural regeneration and a sustainable asset for local communities and visitors alike.

To achieve the vision, we will seek to:

- Conserve the fabric of the canal corridor for its heritage and amenity value with the long term aim of restoration to navigation;
- Conserve and enhance the landscape, heritage, wildlife habitats and natural resources of the canal corridor, by working in partnership to guide adjacent development, land management and promote environmental improvements;
- Provide opportunities for improved access, informal recreation and towing path user safety, and develop certain sites as key focal points, consistent with the conservation and enhancement of the natural and built resource;
- Create gateways onto the canal at Grantham and Nottingham and reinforce linkages with these urban areas to maximise the canal's role as a greenway linking town and country;
- Identify commercial, tourism and recreation development initiatives which will benefit both visitors and local communities and help enhance the enjoyment and characteristic environment of the canal;
- Develop and promote a distinctive identity and integrated approach to marketing the canal corridor and its associated attractions in order to bring new visitors to the waterway.

By developing partnerships and securing the involvement of local communities, local authorities, environmental groups, educational establishments and others with an interest in the canal corridor, we can achieve this vision. Through partnership, we will seek new investment opportunities to ensure the protection and management of the natural, built and recreational resources of the canal in a sustainable manner.



# Overview

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## Introduction

The Grantham Canal is a delightful 33 mile waterway linking Nottingham and Grantham. It follows a circuitous course through three counties, Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire and Lincolnshire, a number of small villages and takes in a variety of urban and rural landscapes, including large tracts of valued countryside such as the Vale of Belvoir and the South Wolds.

The canal was opened in 1797, to serve the agricultural communities of eastern Nottinghamshire, west Lincolnshire and north Leicestershire, and was well used primarily for transporting coal, but also for shipments of coke, lime, building materials and groceries. However, moderately high tolls encouraged competition from the railways and eventually the canal was sold to the Nottingham & Grantham Railway and Canal Company in 1861. The canal finally succumbed to pressure from the railways and closed to traffic in 1929.

Under the 1968 Transport Act, the canal was classified as a 'remainder' or non-navigational waterway which limited British Waterways' ability to invest in it and as a result, much of the canal fabric, its locks, bridges and wharves have been allowed to deteriorate. Parts of the canal have also been culverted and lost to development, particularly the construction of new roads such as the A52 and the A1, which has eroded the integrity of the waterway and disrupted the continuity of the towing path.

Following the formation of the Grantham Canal Restoration Society in the early 1970s, further 'erosion' of the canal through culverting and

development has been arrested. Apart from a stretch near Cropwell Bishop, the majority is still in water and works in recent years have kept certain stretches, for example at Woolsthorpe and Hickling Basin, capable of navigation.

Since the closure of the canal as a navigational waterway it has become increasingly valued in its current state as an amenity and environmental resource. The cessation of navigation and the loss of water in certain sections has resulted in the development of an extremely valuable and diverse natural asset, a linear wetland habitat of national importance. The waterway with its unique vegetation and canal architecture is an important landscape asset and its ecological and landscape value combine to make the canal an important recreational resource, of value for walking, cycling, picnicking, angling, canoeing, nature study, photography and a range of informal recreational pursuits.

## Partnerships on the Grantham Canal

The growing value of the Grantham Canal as an environmental and amenity resource has been recognised by the local authorities through which the canal passes. Partnerships between British Waterways, the local authorities (via the Grantham Canal Officer Working Party and the Tourism Group) and the Grantham Canal Partnership (the Restoration Societies) have enabled substantial works in recent years to improve the long term prospects for increased recreational use and protection of the waterspace. The schemes completed and currently in progress are valued at approximately £2.5 million over and above the British Waterways maintenance of the canal as a

remainder waterway. These additional works include towpath and access improvements, lock restorations, canal dredging, bridge renewals, raising of a culverted bridge and protection of the line of the canal.

## The role of the Strategy

This Strategy aims to:

- ensure a balanced and strategic approach to regeneration and management of the Grantham Canal in the short, medium and long term;
- provide an agreed vision as a basis for a Grantham Canal Partnership;
- facilitate the engagement and support of local authorities, other agencies, local communities, organisations and individuals with an interest in the Canal;
- provide a framework for investment in the canal corridor.

The specific actions on the ground that need to be done to meet the objectives of this Strategy are set out in the accompanying Grantham Canal Action Plan.

Importantly, the Strategy also seeks to ensure that the long-term potential for full restoration of the canal for boating is not compromised and in partnership with the Grantham Canal Partnership, we will continue to seek funding for restoration where possible. It is estimated that full restoration for navigation would cost in the region of £30 million.



### Planning Context

The Grantham Canal lies within the East Midlands Region and passes through the local authority areas of Nottinghamshire, Lincolnshire and Leicestershire County Councils and Rushcliffe, Melton and South Kesteven District Councils. There are a range of national, regional and local planning policies and proposals which, together, provide the planning framework for the Strategy.

#### National

New Government thinking on rural issues will be contained in the forthcoming Rural White Paper anticipated in the summer. This will trigger revisions to national, regional and local planning policy guidance, in particular PPG2: Green Belts and PPG7: The Countryside.

The DETR have produced a report 'Rural Economies' which sets out ideas and suggestions which could constitute the most substantial and positive set of reforms to rural policy in the last 50 years. The report recommends that the Government should encourage the creation of productive, sustainable and inclusive rural economies under its five key principles: a belief in a living countryside; a belief in a working countryside; a recognition of the interdependence of town and country; a commitment to protect the rural environment and enhance its qualities; and a belief that the countryside should be accessible to all.

The Countryside Agency, established in April 1999, has a key role to play in delivering the

objectives for rural economies. The Agency seeks a countryside of:

- diverse character and outstanding beauty;
- prosperous and inclusive communities;
- economic opportunity and enterprise;
- sustainable agriculture;
- transport that serves people without destroying the environment; and
- recreational access for local people and visitors.

MAFF will also be a key player in the effective delivery of rural policy, including: a greater emphasis on the links between agriculture and the environment; the economic diversification for agriculture; and the implementation of the new Rural Development Regulation.

#### Regional

At a regional level, the East Midlands Regional Development Agency came into being in 1999, with the role of promoting sustainable economic development and social and physical regeneration. The RDA has a specific remit to consider the rural dimension and has recently prepared a Rural Action Plan. A key area within this Plan is the promotion of sustainable tourism as an important source of diversification and employment growth in rural areas.

#### Local

At a county and local level, there is support for safeguarding the Grantham Canal from development which would prejudice its recreational, tourism and commercial potential and its eventual restoration as a navigable waterway (Leicestershire, Rushcliffe, Melton,

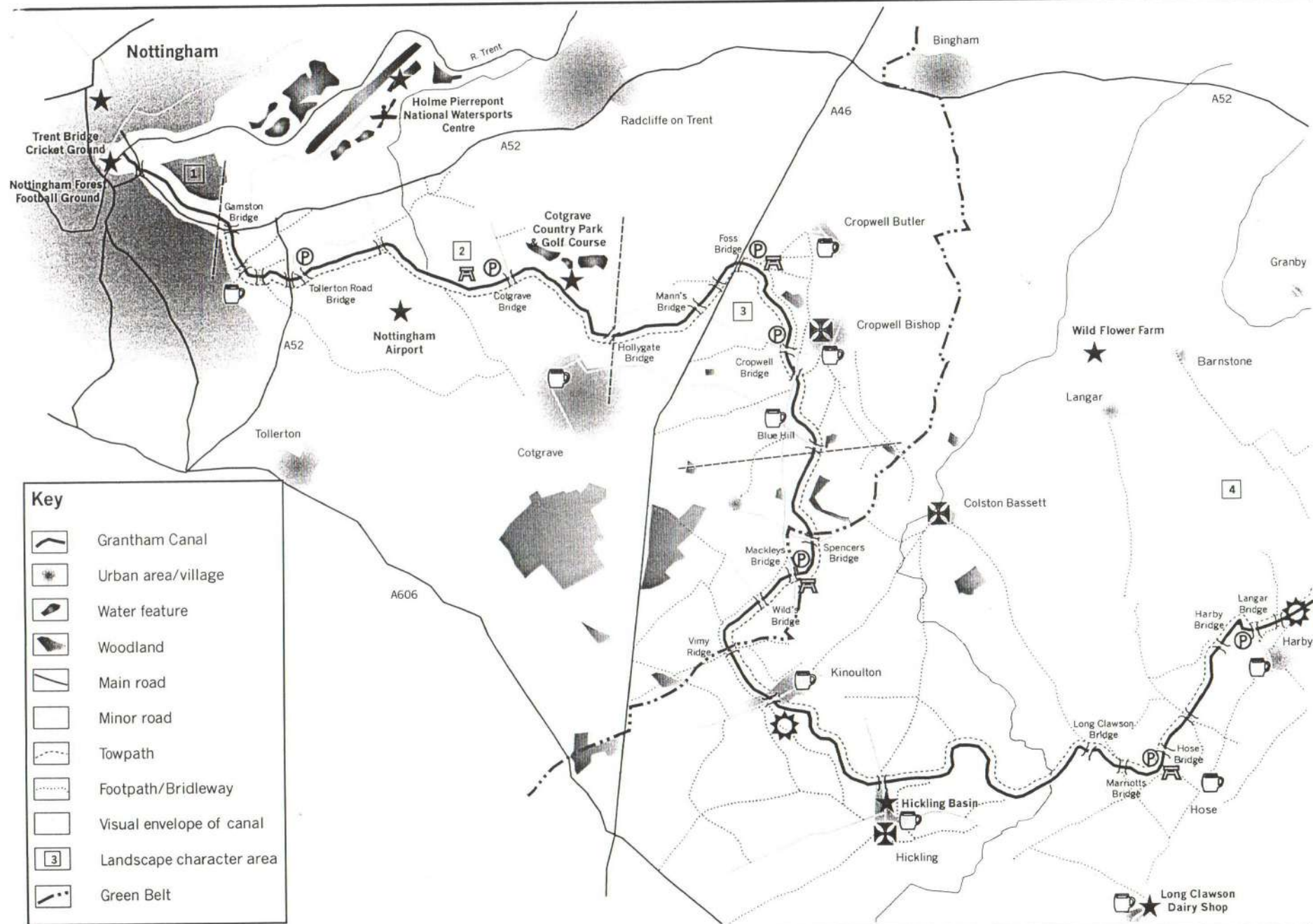
South Kesteven). The importance of the canal as a 'greenway', linking built-up areas with the countryside and as an important linear feature for recreational and wildlife purposes is also recognised (Nottinghamshire, South Kesteven). All of the local plans recognise the high quality and distinctive environment of the wider canal corridor and contain policies that seek to protect the natural and built heritage through designations such as Areas of Great Landscape Value (AGLV), Mature Landscape Areas, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, County Wildlife Sites, Conservation Areas, and Historic Parks and Gardens. Local authority tourism and recreation strategies also contain policies and proposals of relevance to the canal corridor.

In addition to the policies of the local authorities, there are other public bodies and agencies that have relevant policies covering the canal corridor. These agencies include the Countryside Agency (see above), English Nature and the Environment Agency. The Environment Agency, in their Lower Trent and Erewash LEAP Action Plan, support British Waterways in maximising recreational opportunities on the canal.

#### British Waterways' Rural Regeneration Strategy

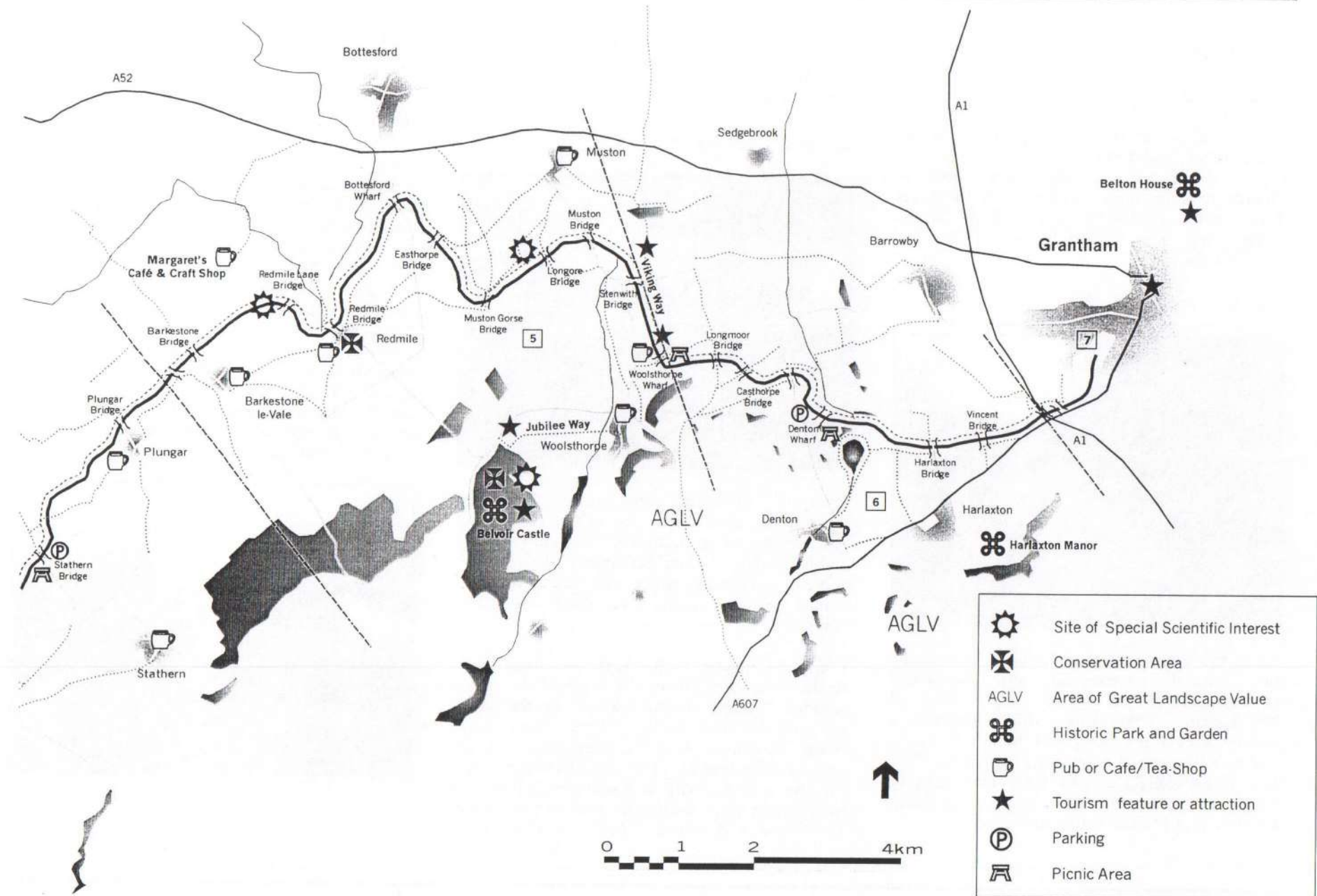
British Waterways is addressing rural regeneration through a Rural Regeneration Strategy, which is currently being prepared for consultation. The Strategy provides a co-ordinated framework for action, partnership and investment for waterways in rural and urban fringe areas and meets a pledge in British Waterways' 'Plan for the Future 2000 - 2004'.

# Overview





# Overview





# Overview

## Landscape

From the urban area of Nottingham, the canal runs alongside the Nottinghamshire Wolds through the River Trent valley, and into the wider flatter landscape of the Vale of Belvoir, before terminating in the urban area of Grantham. The canal corridor from the River Trent to its conclusion in Grantham can be divided into seven broad landscape character areas as follows:

### *Character area no.1 - Nottingham*



From the west, the canal passes through the busy, noisy commercial and residential environment of the south eastern edge of Nottingham. The canal corridor occupies a narrow space to the side of the main A6011 road and is well screened by existing vegetation. The land is generally flat and there are restricted linear views along the canal and no significant views in or out to the wider landscape.

Later, the canal towing path widens out and affords some views into adjacent housing areas and allotments. Sections of the canal have been culverted under roads.

### *Character area no. 2 - Gamston to Cotgrave*



From the A52, the canal passes through a 'transitional zone' from the urban suburbs of Nottingham to a landscape of gently rolling arable fields. Urban influences such as the colliery, golf course, airport and nearby roads all contribute to a busy, well used and noisy landscape.

From the towing path, there are some good distance views uphill to the edge of the partly wooded Nottinghamshire Wolds in the south and downhill into the River Trent valley in the north. A number of tall buildings stand out and act as key landmarks. The canal has open water for this stretch, with a hawthorn hedge and intermittent trees lining the towing path edge. Reeds are a dominant landscape element of

much of the canal corridor and an important attribute of local landscape character.

### *Character area 3 - Cotgrave to Colston Bassett*

From Cotgrave, the canal runs through gently rolling arable land, characterised by low trimmed hawthorn hedges. Here, the canal is in transition from wet to semi-wet and semi-dry to dry. Where it travels through a bed of permeable gypsum, which has a history of leakage, the sections are dry, which gives an attractive but completely different perspective to the local landscape character. There is a well established, tall and thick hawthorn hedge for long stretches of the canal which tends to restrict views into the wider landscape. There are certain offside sections where there is no hedge or fence and views can be obtained across the adjacent arable countryside.





### *Character area 4 - Colston Bassett to Barkestone le Vale*



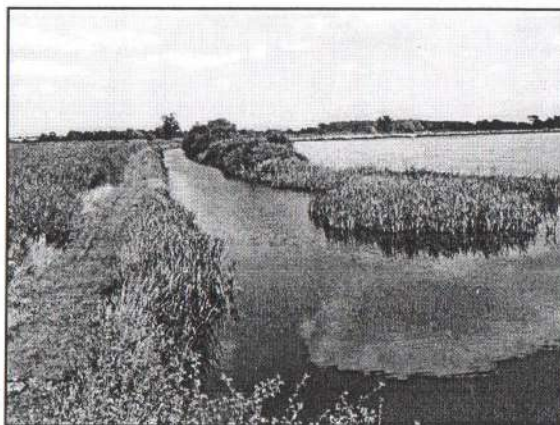
To the west of this section, the landform is gently rolling, creating a sense of partial enclosure with close views to the surrounding landscape. To the east, the corridor opens up with longer views across the Vale of Belvoir. The adjacent land use is still mainly arable with medium to large fields delineated by low, trimmed hawthorn hedges. There is a lack of woodland close to the canal but the wooded scarp of the Wolds is an important feature to the south. The general character is rural with the tranquillity interrupted only by farm machinery and intermittent traffic on local minor roads.

Within this section, there is a gradual transition from semi-dry to wet habitat creating a good diversity of ecological and visual character with a range of aquatic and canalside vegetation. A well established hawthorn hedge on the nearside partially restricts views to the wider landscape whereas the offside boundary is more open,

broken by lengths of mixed hedgerow and trees, particularly pollarded willows.

### *Character area 5 - Barkestone le Vale to Woolsthorpe*

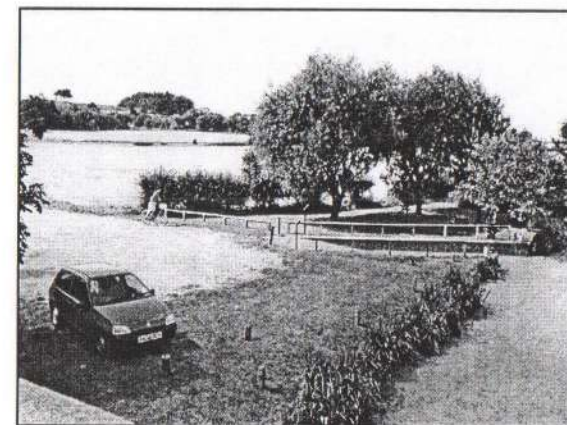
From Barkestone le Vale, the canal winds its way through the peaceful rural countryside of the Vale of Belvoir. The land is generally flat with long open views to the north, but rises slowly up the well wooded slopes of the Wolds in the south. Dramatic views of Belvoir Castle open up at certain points along the canal.



The adjacent land use is mostly arable with medium to large fields delineated by low, trimmed hawthorn hedges and a few scattered woodland blocks close to the canal. Within this section, the canal water level is generally well maintained creating good continuity of ecological and visual character. The canal is slightly wider with more open water and less dense stands of reeds and rushes. A well established hawthorn hedge alongside the towing path partially restricts views to the wider

landscape, whereas on the offside, the boundary is more broken by lengths of mixed hedgerow and trees, particularly pollarded willows, ash and field maple.

### *Character area 6 - Woolsthorpe to Grantham*



The wider landscape is a transition from the level and open Vale of Belvoir to the gradually increasing enclosure of the rolling Wolds around Grantham. The surrounding countryside is rural and peaceful, characterised by fields of arable and pasture, delineated by low, trimmed hawthorn hedges and sizeable blocks of woodland close to the canal. Tree species are more diverse with a good native mix including oak, ash, field maple, hazel, hawthorn and elder.

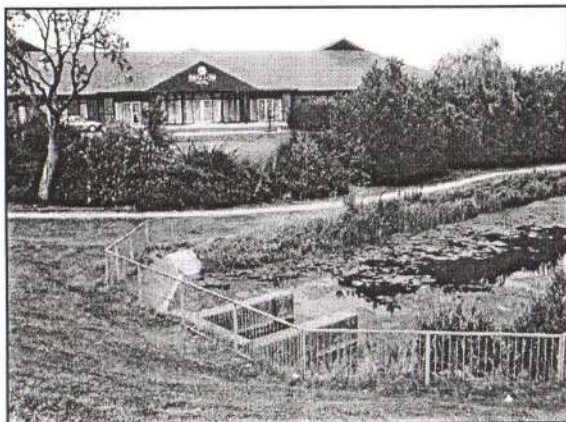
The canal corridor is generally more enclosed in this section, firstly by woodland at Woolsthorpe and further on, in a cutting on the approach to Grantham. Trees overhang the canal for long stretches, particularly on the offside, creating a more sheltered character and habitat with a diverse wetland and woodland ecology. Where



# Overview

the corridor is narrow and confined, there are no views out, creating a sense of isolation and sanctuary.

## *Character area 7 - Grantham*



The western approach of the canal to Grantham is bounded by the A1 which forms a distinct edge between the rural and urban character areas. This part of the canal, which is divided into a wet and a dry section continues through residential and industrial areas on the outskirts of the town after a short culverted stretch under the A1. The canal is relatively open and well vegetated, forming an important 'green wedge' within its wider urban context. The wider landform is gently rolling, with close filtered views of industrial buildings.

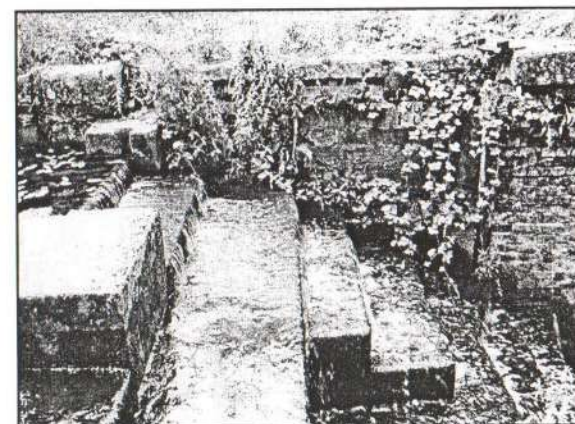
## Heritage

The built heritage of the Grantham Canal is of a simple vernacular nature with minimal decorative features, reflecting the rural agricultural characteristics of the area. The ubiquitous use of local materials reinforces the close relationship between buildings, structures and their surroundings, and creates a strong sense of place.

As much of the length of the Grantham Canal is set in open countryside, there are few outstanding structures of national or regional heritage value built alongside the water. However, there are a number of features of interest within the canal corridor, and in total, 21 listed features of 'special architectural and historical heritage' have been identified. These include locks, bridges and aqueducts, canalside buildings and mileposts.



When the canal was first built, there were 18 broad locks. Three of these have recently been restored, but only one, the Trent Lock retains old gates, although they are not the original. The remaining locks have lost their gates and gear and have been weired, with many lock chambers being in a poor state of repair having lost copings and bricks from their walls.



Along the length of the Grantham Canal there are a number of bridges and aqueducts including swing bridges. Three of the earliest bridges dating from the 1790s and a small brick aqueduct, Smithe Aqueduct, are listed. The styles and age of the bridges vary from the earliest red brick examples, such as Denton Bridge, to 20<sup>th</sup> century road bridges in blue engineering brick. Red brick bridges are a characteristic feature of the canal, with humpback bridges being the most prolific type.



There are few domestic, agricultural or industrial buildings found along the canal in comparison to the numerous bridges. The two most significant buildings, in terms of their size and visual impact are the original brick warehouses at Harby Mill and Hickling Wharf, both being simple rectangular structures running parallel with the canal.

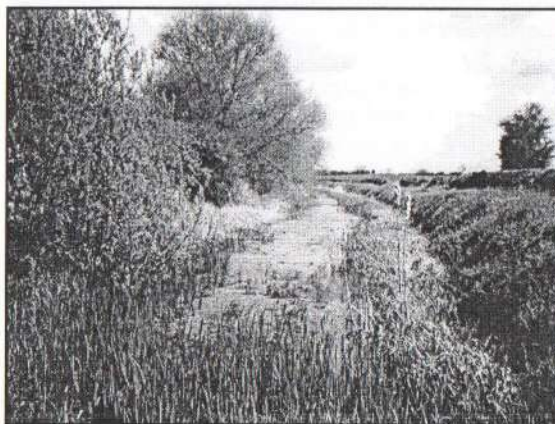
There are a number of small cottages that contribute to the rustic character of the waterway, the finest examples being Woolsthorpe Cottage and Bridge View House at Hickling. Outbuildings, agricultural buildings and two lengthsmen's huts with timber planked roofs coated in tar also survive.

Along the canal there are 35 'lollipop' style mileposts situated beside the towing path. Thirty of these are cast iron and date from the late 19<sup>th</sup>/early 20<sup>th</sup> century whilst the remaining five posts are modern reproductions. The mileposts are one of the most striking features of the Grantham Canal, largely due to the absence of other structures of historic interest.

There are two reservoirs serving the canal at Denton and Knipton. Denton is partially accessible while Knipton is more secluded and private. Knipton has a bridge and spillway but neither reservoir has any features of architectural significance.

## Ecology

The canal has a unique and diverse assemblage of habitats along its length, with each section having some nature conservation interest. This interest is amplified when the canal is put into context with the largely intensive arable agriculture of the surrounding area.



The important habitats along the canal, include areas of high terrestrial and aquatic diversity. The most important of these sites is the SSSI between Harby and Redmile, which is home to a diverse aquatic plant community including areas of reedbeds and flora rarely found in Leicestershire. Elsewhere, along the length of the canal is a substantial range of flora and fauna including yellow waterlily, amphibians, coot, moorhen, mute swans and reed warblers.

Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) species identified along the canal include water plants such as grass-wrack pond weed (*Potamogeton compressus*) and key mammal (eg. water voles),

fish (eg. spined loach), bird (eg. kingfisher), reptile (eg. great crested newt) and invertebrate (reed beetle) species.

Along the whole of the wet canal, significant stands of emergent reed vegetation occur, including stands of the key BAP habitat of common reed (*Phragmites australis*). The reed is important to a number of species that use it as a place to nest, hibernate, feed or live and is a good example of one key species benefiting others.

For almost the complete length of the canal, there is a good, well maintained, dense hawthorn hedge alongside the towing path. On the offside, however, there are some significant lengths where there is no definition of actual land ownership such as a fence or hedgerow. Where the adjacent land use is grazing, the sheep or cattle wander freely along the edge of the canal or graze the dry canal bed.

Where the canal is dry, tree species such as willow, alder and ash are beginning to colonise the bed. This occurs mainly in the section through Foss Bridge to Cropwell Bridge where the underlying geology contains gypsum which tends to allow a lot of leakage.

Important ecological features in the surrounding area include hedgerows, ponds, woodlands, plantations, scrub, grasslands and rivers. These are extremely valuable in terms of the local ecology as they act as reservoirs of species, connect the canal to other ecologically significant areas such as local woodlands, connect the wider environment of the canal and break up the intensive agricultural systems of the surrounding countryside.



## Overview

### Recreation, Access & Tourism

The Grantham Canal provides an important recreational resource for a whole range of users, from Nottingham, Grantham and the surrounding area. British Waterways' National Count figures have estimated that there are over 1.3 million informal recreation visits per year to the canal corridor of which 29% (380,000) would not have made the trip but for the canal. The canal is also used by 110,000 anglers and some unpowered boat (eg. canoe) users per year.



The towing path is the key recreational link along the canal with certain sections, particularly those close to the urban areas of Nottingham and Grantham being well used by local people, primarily for walking, cycling and angling, but also for canoeing, bird watching and photography. Although there are sections of towing path missing at either end of the canal, the surface is generally good and can be divided into hard (surfaced) sections and soft (un-surfaced) sections. The towing path is surfaced

from Nottingham to Cropwell Bishop, Hickling to Harby and from Woolsthorpe to Grantham. It currently remains unsurfaced from Cropwell Bishop to Hickling and from Harby to Woolsthorpe, although there are plans in place to surface these remaining stretches, to form a continuous link for walking and cycling between Nottingham and Grantham. The grassy nature of the towing path in these places is however, an important part of the rural character of the canal corridor.

Between Nottingham and Cotgrave, the towing path is well used by local angling clubs and by walkers and cyclists as a link between adjacent housing and facilities such as local superstores and shops. The towing path is gravel which facilitates these uses and most is accessible to wheelchair users. A number of circular walks which include the towing path are promoted by the local authorities.

The major recreational attributes within the wider canal corridor include, the National Watersports Centre at Holme Pierrepont, Nottingham Forest Football Club (which overlooks the canal), Trent Bridge Cricket Club, the Race Course, Cotgrave Place Golf Club and the new Country Park at Cotgrave (where the canal forms a key amenity focal point).

From Cotgrave to Cropwell Bishop, the unique blend of dry and wet sections to the canal and the semi-industrial heritage of the old colliery and gypsum workings has great value in terms of education and interest to all types of user. The canal reaches a high point at Foss Bridge, the crossing point of the busy A46 where there is a

picnic site and new car park. A number of circular walks are promoted in the area.

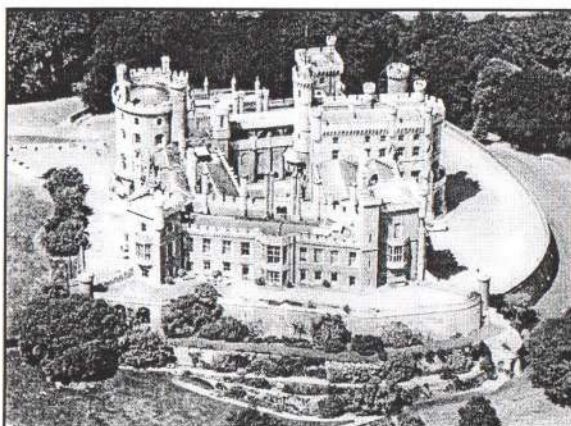


The stretch of canal between Cropwell Bishop and Woolsthorpe is quite isolated and is generally used less for walking than sections to the east and west, although nearer the villages of Hose, Harby, Kinoulton and Plungar, it is well used for dog walking. The area downstream of Woolsthorpe is a high quality fishery and is well used by anglers. Low key 'honeypot' sites already exist at Mackleys Bridge, Hickling Basin, Stathern Bridge and the Rutland Arms pub at Woolsthorpe.

There are a number of public footpaths and bridleways in this area, including the Jubilee Way and the Viking Way which runs alongside the canal north of Woolsthorpe. Cycling is being promoted in the area and Sustrans are planning to promote the canal towing path as part of the National Cycle Network route between Boston and Nottingham.



Of key regional significance in the wider landscape is Belvoir Castle, which has been the seat of the Duke of Rutland since the reign of Henry VII. At one time, a tramway used to run between the canal and the castle, carrying coal up to the castle on horse drawn wagons. Today, the castle attracts some 70,000 visitors per year and provides splendid views from the canal towing path.



Between Woolsthorpe and Grantham, existing facilities such as the picnic area and slipway at Denton Bridge remain low key, but a well used local destination for Grantham residents. A trip boat has operated in the past along a two mile stretch from Woolsthorpe to Denton Wharf.

Other specific features include Denton Reservoir and a number of public footpaths lead from the canal to the Casthorpe Hills in the north and the Wolds above Harlaxton in the south. A section of the canal is abruptly severed by the A1 on the western outskirts of Grantham and this culverting also severs the towing path, sending users on a circuitous detour. In Grantham, the

canal is well used by local anglers and walkers and is set back from adjacent housing, with a wide grass margin used for cycling and football.

At present, there are a few small formal car parks located at key focal points along the canal, namely at Cotgrave Bridge, Cropwell Bridge, Mackley's Bridge, Hose Bridge, Stathern Bridge, Denton Wharf. There are also several informal areas for car parking such as along the grassy verges at some of the bridges. There are picnic areas at the disused lock by Cotgrave Place Golf Course, Foss Bridge, Stathern Bridge, Woolsthorpe Bridge and Denton Bridge.

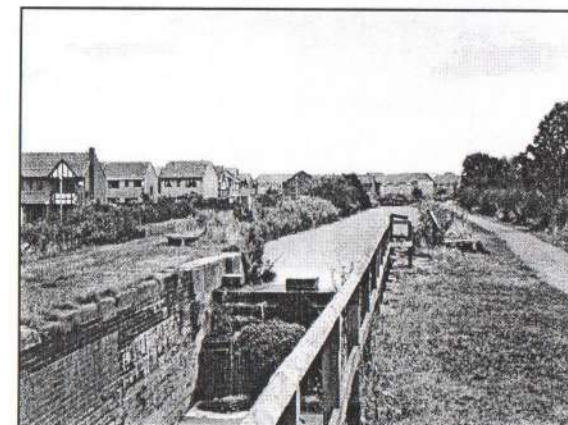
The mileposts and information boards of the Grantham Canal Society are useful and frequent reminders of distances to and from the River Trent and the last or next village on the length. Nottinghamshire County Council provides interpretative signboards at certain key locations between Trent lock in Nottingham and Hickling Basin. These give a potted history of the relevant area together with details of circular walks or points of interest outside.

### Community

Between Nottingham and Grantham, the two largest centres of population, the canal winds its way past Cotgrave and a number of smaller attractive villages such as Cropwell Bishop, Kinoulton, Hickling, Hose, Harby, Plungar, Barkestone le Vale, Redmile, Woolsthorpe and Harlaxton. Originally, employment within the villages was based on local agriculture or mining, but with agricultural intensification and the closure of Cotgrave Colliery, resulting in the loss of some 200 jobs, many now serve as commuter

villages for Nottingham, Grantham and Leicester.

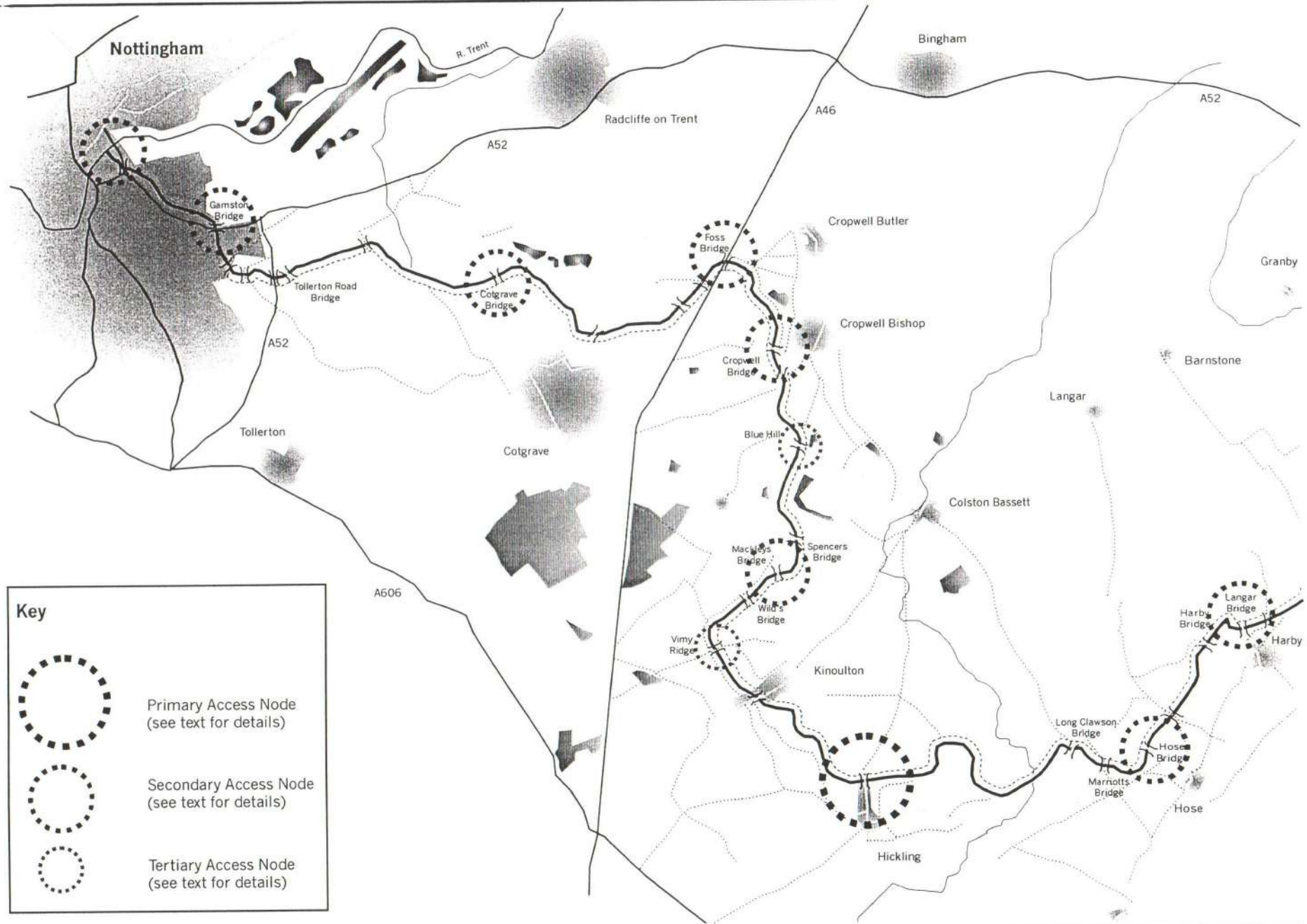
Some small local businesses remain, including Stilton cheese creameries, traditional inns and village shops. The Cotgrave Enterprise Centre, which opened in 1995, provides accommodation for small businesses, hosts training and educational activities and community facilities.

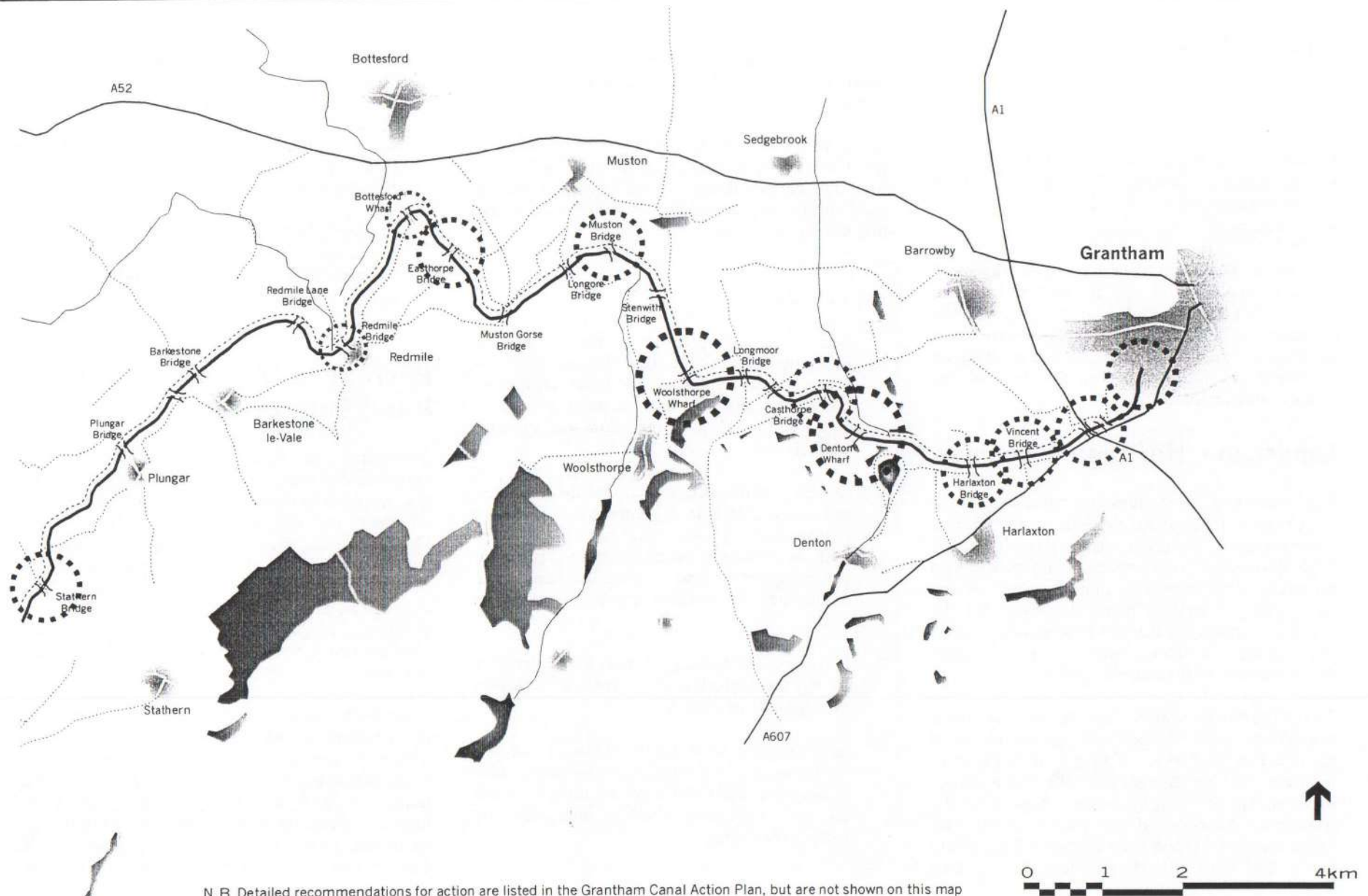


The canal generates minor economic benefits for the area through which it passes, although there are no figures for current expenditure in the locality by visitors on goods and services. The canal attracts visitors to the area for recreation and leisure and provides recreation opportunities locally for people who live in its vicinity. The towing path is used as an off-road commuting route for cyclists, particularly on the outskirts of Nottingham and is accessible in many places by disadvantaged groups such as disabled people. The canal is also used as a basis for local education initiatives.



# Strategy







## The Strategy

The strategy has been set out under three main themes:

- Landscape, Ecology and Heritage;
- Recreation, Access, Tourism & Rural Enterprise; and
- Community.

A series of 'Key Initiatives' have been suggested for each theme, which would need to be taken forward with funding and in partnership with the organisations and individuals with an interest in the canal corridor. Partnerships and funding are addressed in more detail at the end of the Strategy document.

## Landscape, Heritage & Ecology

The distinctive, predominantly rural corridor of the Grantham Canal needs both protection and enhancement. The environmental quality of the canal corridor is of increasing importance as a resource which supports many aspects of the countryside as well as being important for the health and quality of life of the local community. We will seek to protect and enhance the local distinctiveness of the canal corridor.

The Grantham Canal has a diverse plant assemblage with species of significance at a national and local level. The current low level of leisure activity on the water itself offers a unique opportunity to manage the canal for the continued development of these plants and habitats and the fauna they support. This would be in line with the Biodiversity Action Plan

(BAP) targets and initiatives set out for individual species and habitats and with British Waterways' duty to further the conservation and enhancement of flora and fauna.

In terms of heritage, the priority is to consolidate the built fabric of the canal to prevent further loss, damage and deterioration. This is essential until funds are available to fully restore the historic fabric.

### Key Initiatives

1. Seek to implement the detailed recommendations in the Action Plan to protect and reinforce the local landscape character, built and natural heritage and to conserve the fabric of the canal and existing waterspace.
2. Develop partnerships with bodies such as the Countryside Agency, Country Landowners Association, and FWAG, as well as adjacent landowners, to promote enhancement and diversification of landscape and wildlife habitats along the canal.
3. Prepare a Biodiversity Action Plan, drawing on the ecological survey work and Action Plan already prepared.
4. In partnership with the Woodland Trust and landowners, set up a 'Woods and Waterways' pilot initiative to identify areas for new woodland planting alongside the Grantham Canal.

5. Set up a project with partners such as Common Ground, the Countryside Agency, English Nature and ACRE to conserve and celebrate the local distinctiveness of the canal. This could be progressed with the local communities through the Local Heritage Initiative.
6. Ensure that contractors and volunteers implementing projects along the canal have the necessary skills, training and supervision in heritage and landscape conservation.

## Recreation, Access, Tourism & Rural Enterprise

The canal is a valuable linear recreational asset and even if it is not restored for navigation, it has the potential to absorb much greater use without affecting its essential character and value. Opportunities should be sought to improve access and facilities for informal recreation, consistent with the conservation and enhancement of the tranquil rural landscape character, wildlife habitats, heritage assets and natural resources of the canal and its wider corridor.

Recreation and tourism can be significant contributors to the economy of rural areas. Tourism can also help fund environmental improvements and the conservation of the local landscape and heritage, providing additional jobs and income and helping to support and underpin local services and facilities. The challenge is to develop the Grantham Canal in a



sustainable way that exploits the attractive environment, without adversely affecting it.

Commercial opportunities which could provide additional income and jobs could include cycle hire, rowing boat hire, canal side camping sites, bunk houses, tea rooms, restaurants, traditional inns, ice cream sales, village shops, information centres and bed & breakfast accommodation. The Stilton cheese creameries also have the potential to attract visitors to the area, particularly if associated with speciality shops where the cheese could be sold.

If these commercial opportunities could be realised, it has been estimated that the enhancement of the Grantham Canal as a 'linear park' in line with this Strategy will generate substantial economic benefits for the canal corridor. The benefits include:

- Gross visitor expenditure per year - £2.6 million
- Income retained within the local economy - £1.0 million
- Permanent jobs created - 103

These projections have been based on the 'mature' waterway and have been assumed to be achieved about 5 years after project completion. It is likely that the commercial opportunities will develop over a period of time, particularly after sufficient 'footfall' has been created at key locations.

A programme of 'open day' events, guided walks, craft fairs and touring theatres could also help generate increased visitors to the canal corridor and secure the future of local businesses.

Successful marketing is vital to promote the identity of the canal and attract visitors to the canal corridor. This should be undertaken in partnership with the local authorities, the tourist board, local businesses and attractions and interest groups.

In the short to medium term horizon, there are limited opportunities for boating on the canal, apart from the potential for short trips on existing navigable stretches of the waterway eg. at Hickling Basin and Woolsthorpe. However, in the long term, there may be opportunities for restoration of certain stretches to navigation standard and it is crucial that this potential is safeguarded. We will continue to seek funding for restoration of stretches of the canal for navigation where at all possible.

A key aim in developing and maintaining new and existing recreational links along the Grantham Canal is to provide a safe and well designed environment with access for all users wherever possible. In order to avoid insensitive and inappropriate proposals, access for all should be seen as part of the general process of planning and management of the canal environment. The level/types of access which are achievable at any given location will vary and it should be recognised that not all locations will be suitable for all potential users. The aim should be to conserve the variety of character and experience available to users.

The key access points along the canal have been categorised as primary, secondary or tertiary nodes, consistent with the strategic approach for the canal corridor (see map ).

## *Primary access nodes*

Key focal points, or high profile access points where car parking and disabled facilities will also be developed. New users will be actively encouraged onto the canal through the use of off-site signage and wider scale advertising. Key users will be identified and targeted. Primary nodes have been identified at Hickling Basin, Woolsthorpe Bridge, and Denton Wharf. Harby Bridge could also form a key focal point, but this would be dependent on any future potential to use Harby Mill and Warehouse for canal-related leisure use.

## *Secondary access nodes*

Secondary access points where there will be minor upgrading to existing facilities such as car parking and local promotion through sensitive signage. Any crossing points will be made safe as part of the overall strategy for access for all. Secondary nodes have been identified at Trent Lock, Gamston, Cotgrave, Foss Bridge, Cropwell, Mackleys Bridge, Hose, Langar Bridge, Stathern Bridge, Easthorpe Bridge, Muston, Casthorpe Bridge, Harlaxton, Vincent Bridge, the A1 Junction and Earlsfield.

## *Tertiary access nodes*

Low key access points where the objective is to provide a low key user facility for the local community. Access will be developed from the canal towing path to existing features alongside the canal. Tertiary nodes have been identified at Blue Hill, Vimy Ridge, Redmile, Bottesford Wharf.



## *The Towing path*

Improvements to the towing path along the entire length of the canal will provide a continuous link of benefit to cyclists, walkers, and other users. It is essential, however, that improvements to the towing path are consistent with the strategic approach and with the valued rural characteristics of the canal corridor.

A key length at Gamston on the edge of Nottingham, has been identified to be developed as a first priority for Access for All. It has been selected due to its accessibility from areas of new housing and community development, points of interest, potential parking, public transport services, visitor facilities and ability to accommodate improvements without detriment to the local landscape character.

### Key Initiatives

7. Protect existing waterspace and seek funding for the full restoration of the canal to navigation, linked to the River Trent.
8. Review signage of access routes to the canal corridor and canal at key gateway locations (eg. Nottingham, Grantham, Holme Pierrepont) through an imaginative programme of public art.
9. Prepare a signage strategy incorporating recommendations in the Action Plan, to ensure a co-ordinated approach to signage and interpretation, whilst recognising and enhancing local identity and sense of place.

10. Create and reinforce the signs and physical linkages to existing tourism attractions, such as Belvoir Castle.
11. Promote and extend the existing 'Discover the Grantham Canal' circular walks, utilising the canal corridor in conjunction with nearby attractions
12. Undertake a detailed access audit of the 'Access for All' priority lengths and seek funding to implement its recommendations.
13. Improve safety for towpath users at road crossing points, in partnership with the local authority Highways departments.
14. Seek funding to produce a leaflet and regularly updated Internet site on the Grantham Canal to promote its use as a recreation corridor. This would identify action points, circular routes and the standard of access available.
15. Develop integrated marketing and e-commerce for rural businesses and tourism, linking to nearby attractions such as Belvoir Castle.
16. Prepare visitor management strategies for key 'honey-pot' sites along the canal (eg. Hickling Basin, Woolsthorpe and Denton Wharf) and work with the local authorities and public transport operators to explore opportunities for the extension and promotion of public transport services to these areas.

17. Establish a Grantham Canal 'long distance challenge', with a certificate for walking or cycling the entire route of the canal, linked to national or regional competitions and sponsored events.
18. Establish a project with Sport England to develop the role of the Grantham Canal in providing inclusive sports and recreation opportunities eg. canoeing, angling, cycling.
19. Identify locations, opportunities and partners to develop sensitive visitor attractions along the canal (eg. Stilton cheese shops, tea rooms, bicycle hire outlets)
20. Work with the Country Landowners Association and local landowners to identify opportunities for waterway related farm diversification.
21. Establish a project with the rail and bus providers to link walking or cycling along the Grantham Canal with a return journey by bus or train.

## Community

Much of the activity along the Grantham Canal, as with all waterways has direct local impact, from use and development, to misuse and conflict. Sustainability is about local involvement, because local people are best placed to identify problems and propose and implement solutions. Community involvement, whether it is in the urban areas of Nottingham or Grantham or in the rural villages, represents a



substantial resource and may also help to secure external funding.

Opportunities should be sought for community benefits within the locality of the canal, including education initiatives, recreation opportunities close to home for local residents, the integration of recreation with the natural environment, providing a focus for activities under Agenda 21, opportunities for health and fitness schemes in association with local community health interests, the development of enhanced recreational facilities and infrastructure for disadvantaged groups, such as disabled people and a focus for special events.

## Key Initiatives

22. Promote and extend the Waterways Challenge initiative to establish links with local schools and develop the interest of young people in the Grantham Canal.
23. Seek funding to produce educational material specific to the Grantham Canal for use in local schools.
24. Develop a community/school adoption scheme to foster local involvement and 'ownership'. This could include an arts project with a local artist to develop signage or interpretation for the canal corridor.
25. Seek sponsorship to develop a 'health trail' leaflet on the canal in association with a local health clinic/doctor's surgery.

26. Develop a programme of regular family events on the canal at key locations eg. nature walks, living history plays etc.
27. Establish a network of voluntary rural countryside wardens along the canal, in partnership with the local communities.
28. Establish a project officer post to develop partnership work with local communities, landowners and volunteers, and co-ordinate the activities of volunteer wardens
29. Extend and initiate community led projects, to celebrate the local history, traditions and character of the canal through performances, recordings, literature and arts eg through the Local Heritage Initiative.

## Partnerships and Funding

Implementation of the Grantham Canal Strategy will require the support and partnership of local authorities, the East Midlands Regional Development Agency, the Grantham Canal Partnership, the Countryside Agency, the Environment Agency, English Nature, the Country Landowners Association, local Wildlife Trusts, CPRE, the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group, the local communities and all other organisations and individuals with an interest in the canal corridor.

Through partnership, we will seek to ensure that the Grantham Canal Strategy and the Action Plan figure prominently in the objectives, policies and programmes of these organisations.

This will enable the local and regional benefits of the Grantham Canal to be tailored to locally agreed environmental, economic and social needs.

The Strategy provides a framework for investment in the canal corridor. Funding and investment opportunities will need to be sought through partnership initiatives to ensure the protection and enhancement of the natural, built and recreational resources of the canal in a sustainable manner.

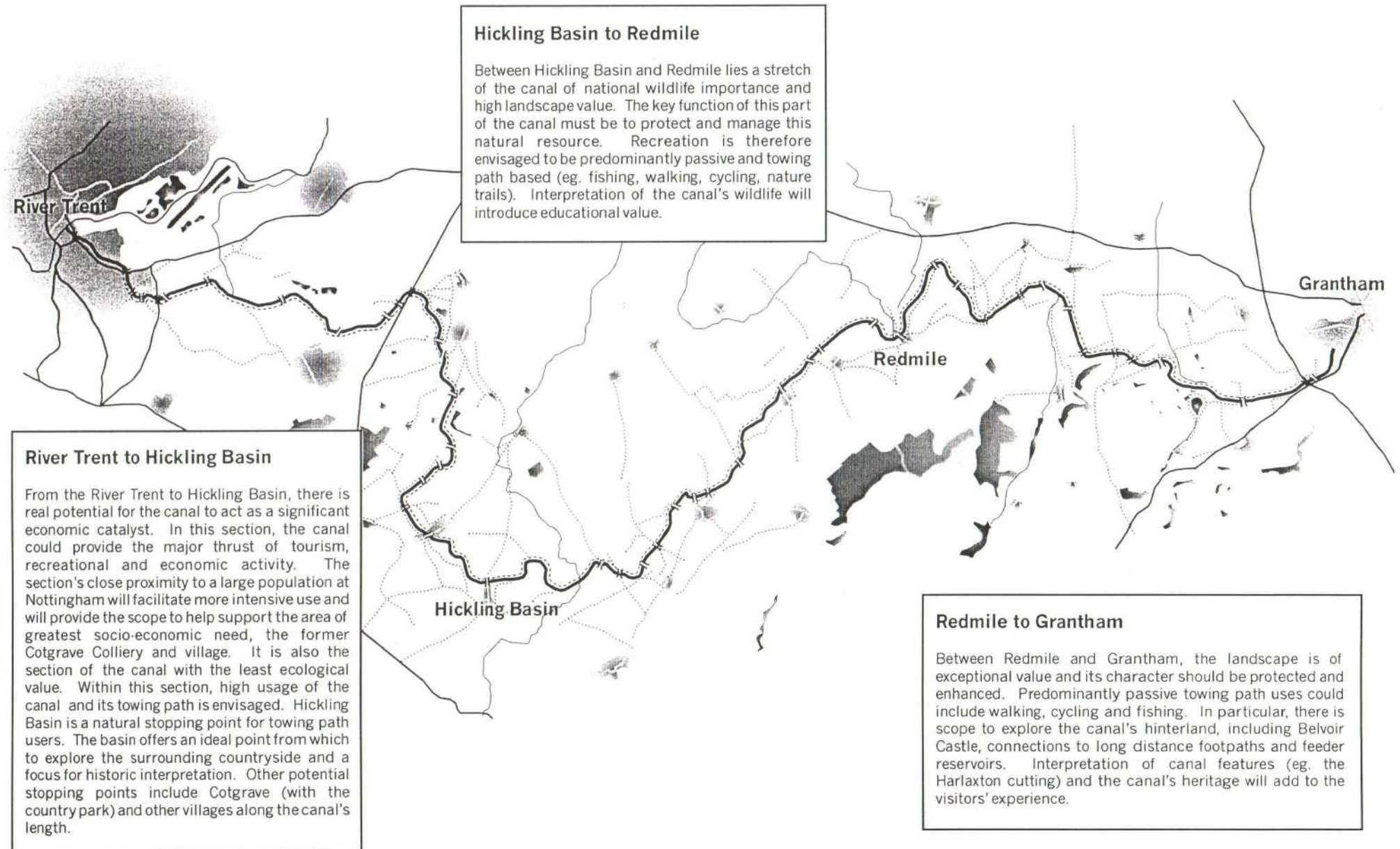
Although funding agency criteria vary between programmes, key areas where funding agreements might be sought for the Grantham Canal corridor include: sustainable rural regeneration, tourism and economic development, environmental enhancement, heritage conservation, development of rural services and involvement of local communities.

## Conclusion

The Grantham Canal Strategy and the accompanying Grantham Canal Action Plan seek an agreed vision as a basis for future partnership and investment within the canal corridor.

British Waterways is seeking the views of a wide range of organisations and individuals with an interest in the future of the canal and its wider corridor. It is only through consultation and discussion that an agreement on the way forward can be achieved.





### Supporting Documentation

The following is a list of reports and documents that have been prepared by British Waterways and which have contributed to the preparation of this Strategy:

1. Grantham Canal Action Plan, 2000 (Site specific recommendations for the whole canal, based on the Landscape Character Areas. Includes landscape, recreation, ecological and engineering recommendations and is linked to a GIS database)
2. Grantham Canal Landscape Evaluation Survey, (1995)
3. Landscape Character Assessment (Summer 1998)
4. Recreation Assessment (Summer 1998)
5. Recreation and Access Strategy, (October 1998)
6. Architectural Heritage Survey
7. Ecological Action Plan, (February 2000)
8. A Demand Analysis for Boating and Informal Recreation Activities on the Re-opening of the Navigation, (September 1995)
9. Economic Benefit Assessment
10. Review of Commercial Opportunities
11. Engineering Asset Survey, (1995)
12. Grantham Canal Strategy for Restoration, produced by Pidea Consultants, (March 1996)