

Joining the Dots – a strategy for the restoration of the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal

Summary of the strategy.

The full restoration of the Herefordshire & Gloucestershire Canal, abandoned for boat traffic in the 19th century, is feasible and will bring many advantages to the area economically, for leisure, for preserving its heritage and the environment and as a vehicle of improving people's health.

Over the next 10 years, the Canal Trust will *engage with the public and* focus on 6 main areas

1. Protecting and Restoring the line of the canal

Unless the line of the canal can continue to be protected and preserved, full restoration of the canal from Gloucester to Hereford will not be possible. It is vital that the Trust maintains its vigilance to protect the line of the canal against potentially damaging developments and/or changes of use.

2. Volunteers

With little or no funds to pay for a professional workforce, the building of a bigger and enthusiastic volunteer force will be essential to a successful restoration of the canal. This is particularly urgent given the age structure of the existing volunteer cadre.

3. Maintaining the current sites

The 12 current sites represent tangible progress towards the full restoration of the canal. As such, they should be used to positively publicise the Trust's progress as well as being a vehicle for generating funds and recruiting volunteers.

4. Green, health and well-being

There is a trend for people to go out into the countryside and green spaces for walks etc for the benefit of both their physical and mental health. Where towpaths have been restored, but particularly in locations where canal restoration is not imminent, the development of walks of a reasonable length (say greater than a mile) along the canal would provide a pleasant facility for people but also be beneficial in enhancing public opinion of the benefit of the restoration of the canal.

5. Fundraising

The Trust should identify potential sources of large funds such as the Heritage Lottery Fund and establish a strategy on how to approach such funds and start to develop relationships with those funds. They should also develop expertise on all levels of suitable funding, building credibility through successful bids and subsequent project execution.

6. Getting boats onto the canal

Canals were built for boats and there are also significant advantages in prioritising projects which would support boats using stretches of the canal, not least as the restoration projects across the country which have been most successful in attracting funds tend to be those focussed on extending the cruising range of the canal for navigation.

Purpose of this document

The strategy agreed by the Trustees and members of the charity will enable its resources to be focussed most effectively. For those charities that require significant financial support from Trusts and Foundations, an approved coherent and achievable strategy document is essential.

This document contains no plans but provides the framework within which the Trust can identify annual or longer-term budgets and funding for efforts for which individuals can be accountable for their execution.

Approval of this long-term strategy for the Trust will give comfort to volunteers, supporters and funders of the Trust that existing projects are not futile, but part of a coherent strategy which will lead to the full restoration of the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal.

Introduction

When the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal Trust was formed in 1992, it was said that boats would be sailing from the Severn at Gloucester to a restored basin at Hereford “within 10 years”. Experience over the past 30 years has shown that ambition is unlikely to be achieved within the lifetimes of those reading this paper. However, that should not detract from the fact that work today will help towards restoring the canal from Gloucester to Hereford in a sustainable way and ensuring that it will be here for future generations.

As the canal is restored, sections of green corridor are created for all to enjoy can then be turned into blue corridors for further leisure activities, ensuring the local heritage and the environment is saved and further protected. A further advantage is the involvement with the local communities along the line which brings positive health benefits as well as appreciation for their local heritage and brings a smile to everyone involved.

History of the Canal

The canal was originally envisaged as a route in 1777 at the height of so-called “Canal Mania” and would run from Stourport-on-Severn to Hereford, via Leominster, with a return link to the Severn near Gloucester, making a semi-circular route of at least seventy miles.

In 1789 plans for a route from Hereford, via Ledbury to the Severn near Gloucester were developed. Shortly afterwards the course east of Ledbury was revised down the Leadon Valley to Gloucester, with a branch to Newent, attracted by the hope of lucrative traffic from the coalfields at Newent down to Gloucester.

By 1795 the canal was opened to Newent, and in 1798 it was opened to one mile short of Ledbury.

Construction then ceased due to lack of funds, commencing again in 1829 and the canal was finally completed on 22nd May 1845 when the Hereford basin was filled with water and boats finally arrived in the city.

The Newent coalfields proved to be not as productive as predicted and the canal suffered competition from the railways almost as soon as it had been completed.

After running at a loss for many years, carrying mainly agricultural goods, the navigation from Hereford to Ledbury was closed and then in 1881 the line from Ledbury to Gloucester was leased to the Great Western Railway and a railway line constructed along much of the canal bed, but with rental income continuing to be paid to the Canal Company. This section was subsequently Nationalised as part of the 'Railway Grouping' in 1948 and income to the Canal company ceased and the Canal Company was wound up.

Restoration to date

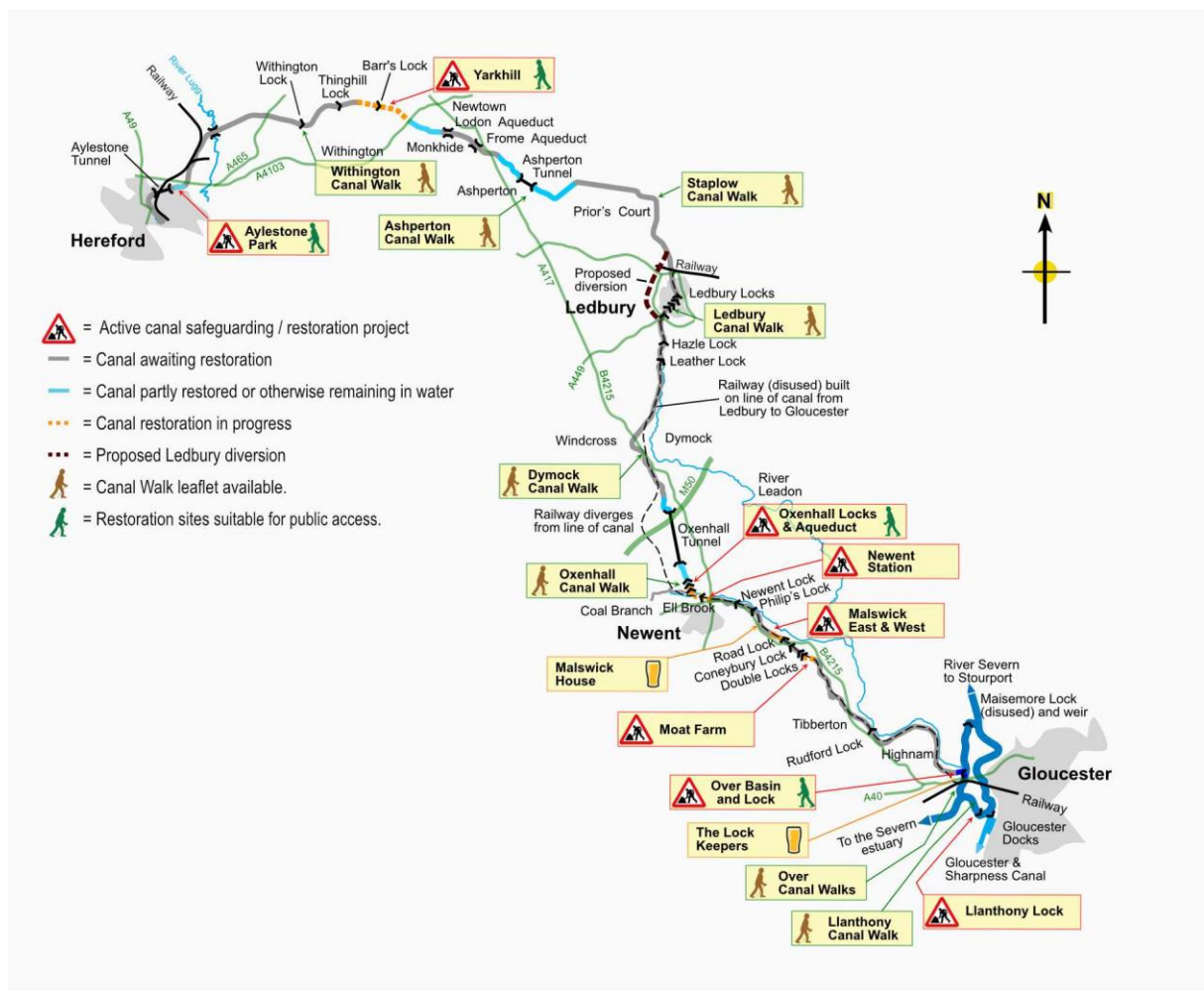
Starting in the 1950s and peaking in the 70s and 80s, the canal restoration movement added as many miles of navigable canals to the waterways system as were built during the height of canal mania in the 1770s. Many canal restoration societies were formed, and the Herefordshire & Gloucestershire canal was no exception. Eventually in 1992, the canal society converted itself into a Trust and celebrated with an Open Day at Monkhide to show off the restoration of the canal from the Hereford-Worcester Road to past the Skew Bridge, reported the skewest bridge on the canal network.

The key achievements in the early work to restore the canal was to protect the line of the canal wherever possible from development and secure an alternative route for the canal where developments had already taken place.

Working with the four planning authorities (Herefordshire, Forest of Dean, Tewkesbury and Gloucester City) and backed by local politicians, including MPs, the complete route of the canal from the Severn at Gloucester to Hereford has been safeguarded by those planning authorities.

Since the late 1980s, 12 different sites have been partially restored, some by encouragement of landowners and some opportunistically as a result of section 106 planning gains of housing developments. Starting from the Severn at Gloucester, these sites are at Llantony, Over, Moat Farm, Malswick, Newent, Oxenhall, Dymock, Ledbury, Monkhide, Yarkhill, Kymin and Aylestone Park in Hereford. Some of these sites are shown on the map below.

The Trust have also gained ownership of a number of canalside properties which provide rental income which contribute to the Trust's aim for the canal to be sustainable both ecologically but also financially. A number of other properties pay a covenant to support the canal in their area.



A review of the individual sites is given in Appendix 2

Description of the Strategy

Protecting and Restoring the line of the canal

Unless the line of the canal can continue to be protected and preserved, full restoration of the canal from Gloucester to Hereford will not be possible. It is vital that the Trust maintains its vigilance to protect the line of the canal against potentially damaging developments and/or changes of use.

Having said that, the Trust should not feel obliged to stick religiously to the line of the canal as dug between 1794 to 1845. To achieve full navigation, it may be necessary to be pragmatic, as has already happened at Ledbury, for example, and design an alternative route for the canal where appropriate. This might be required due to a development or to overcome highly expensive engineering challenges.

In all cases, any such diversions must be protected with the same vigour as the current line.

Although the canal structures and furniture have disappeared in a number of areas, there still exists a large number of sites where the local heritage of the canal can be seen and admired.

The land on which the canal was built was originally owned by the canal company. However, over the past 150 years that ownership has been lost and the land absorbed into neighbouring land holdings and formally recognised as such by the Land Registry. While this is not always the case.

Whilst some landowners may be supportive for the canal to be restored on their land, that positivity may not survive into subsequent generations. As such, it is very advantageous for the Trust to own the land where restoration is to take place or if that is not feasible acquire long lease agreements (>100 years) and should be a high priority for the Trust's financial resources.

Volunteers

With little or no funds to pay for a professional workforce, the building of a bigger and enthusiastic volunteer force will be essential to a successful restoration of the canal. This is particularly urgent given the age structure of the existing volunteer cadre.

Volunteers will most likely have been generated from or for specific projects. People donating their time need to feel that it will make a concrete contribution either to their local project or towards the restoration of the canal. It is hoped that this strategy will give some support to the latter.

It will be key to continue to recruit new members to the Trust. Membership provides the Trust with both funds and a pool of potential volunteers, not just people involved in physical restoration but also potential Trustees, fundraisers and influencers.

The last of these are vital in developing and maintaining relationships and partnerships with local authorities from Parish to County Councils.

Building on the existing promotion of what the Trust has achieved, especially how members of the public can already benefit from the restoration, will be key in all the above.

Another key factor in the recruitment and retention of volunteers is relentless optimism and positivity, again aiming to give them a sense of achievement with their donated time.

As well as individuals, groups such as the IWA's WRG, young people working for a Duke of Edinburgh award, youth groups such as scouts and guides as well as corporate team working can be used to advance restoration. Prior to engaging with such groups projects which are achievable and seen to be in support of this strategy should be identified as well as the mechanisms to enable them to see progress for their efforts and encouragement to return.

The need for more volunteers also extends to the need to recruit more Trustees to ensure adequate management resources for an expanded restoration and maintenance programme.

Maintaining the current sites

The 12 sites at Llantony, Over, Moat Farm, Malswick, Newent, Oxenhall, Dymock, Ledbury, Monkhide, Yarkhill, Kymin & Aylestone Park in Hereford where restoration can be viewed (See Appendix 2 for more detail of the individual sites) represent tangible progress towards the full restoration of the canal. As such, they should be used to positively publicise the Trust's progress as well as being a vehicle for generating funds and recruiting volunteers.

In contrast, allowing such sites to fall back into nature's grasp could imply to some that the Trust is not capable of achieving its ultimate aim.

As such, resources must be deployed to ensure that the sites are maintained and developed where possible. Each site should develop and implement a plan for local community involvement in their project.

No further discrete sites should be developed (except see below) unless they are created from opportunistic funds as a result of Section 106 planning gains or where adequate funding can be secured from other sources.

Green, health and well-being

Canals are seen to be attractive to the general population. Examination of the number of times that views of canals are shown on national and local weather forecasts are symptomatic. There is also a trend for people to go out into the countryside and green spaces for walks etc for the benefit of both their physical and mental health.

Where towpaths have been restored, but particularly in locations where canal restoration is not imminent, the development of walks of a reasonable length (say greater than a mile) along the canal would provide a pleasant facility for people but also be beneficial in enhancing public opinion of the benefit of the restoration of the canal.

This will require identification of parking for cars at least at one end unless close to housing there may be a demand for walking routes without car parking, gaining permission from landowners and installing signage where needed.

Fundraising

Whilst much can be achieved by volunteers, inevitably financial resources are required for the purchase of materials and engineering expertise if full restoration is to be achieved. The Trust also needs to appreciate the levels of funding required for major projects. For example, restoring navigation under a road which has been dropped is likely to cost in the order of £1m or more for a major road such as the A4103 from Hereford to Worcester at Monkhide.

Some estimates for the restoration of a single lock have started at £250,000 but may increase depending on access and ground layout. These funds will not be achieved by raffles or sponsored walks nor by the donations of generous individuals, although these should not be discouraged either as they will be essential in most cases. In the past, significant funds for canal restoration have been provided by local authorities, however this seems to be a diminishing resource.

As such, the Trust should identify potential sources of large funds such as the Heritage Lottery Fund and establish a strategy on how to approach such funds and start to develop relationships with those funds. Advice from groups such as the IWA should prove useful here.

Identifying funds for smaller projects should not be neglected and as discussed above, building relationships with local communities by the existing restoration sites will be very helpful. As with a number of the other focus areas, promotion of the heritage and value of the canal in health and well-being will bring benefits from individual giving.

Getting boats onto the canal

Canals were built for boats. This may seem an obvious statement, but there are also significant advantages in prioritising projects which would support boats using stretches of the canal.

The restoration projects across the country which have been most successful in attracting funds tend to be those such as the Montgomery where investment has focussed on extending the cruising range of the canal for navigation.

There are two options which can be developed to achieve this. Restoration of the lock at Over would allow boats to move from the tidal Severn onto the canal. This would promote projects to extend the canal past Vineyard Hill and on to the Lassington Flats. Alternatively, if a significantly long unbroken stretch of canal can be restored, perhaps 5 miles or greater, then this might attract boats to be moored on the canal with a reasonable cruising stretch. It would be preferable if such a length could be created by connecting two (or more) of the existing restoration sites – joining the dots.

In both cases, the Trust should consider options for the creation of facilities for boats, such as water points, rubbish disposal and Elsan facilities. It seems likely that utilising the mains services at the Trust's properties such as The Lockkeepers and Malswick House might be advantageous.

One financial advantage to the Trust for encouraging boats onto the canal would be income from boat licenses.

Appendix 1

The Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal Trust

The Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal Trust was created from a society that was initial created on 13th April 1983. From 1992 the H&G Canal Trust is a registered Charity and company.

A board of Trustees oversee the operation of the canal restoration. Meeting monthly. Most of the membership is in the two counties of Herefordshire and Gloucestershire which is currently over 1,100. They are kept up to date with a quarterly magazine called the Wharfinger which is also distributed to over 1,500 people in hardcopy and electronic.

Each Trustee has an area of focus to enable the organisation to move forward. The Trustees are supported by business process and suitable policies.

The areas of focus are

1. Chairman, filling in the gaps and supporting other trustees as required.
2. Finance, supported by electronic banking with a need for dual signatures done via remote banking application. As documented in our Finance policy.
3. Fundraising, looking outside the box for funding from grants and other opportunities to enable the restoration to move forward.
4. Land, the need for land is a major requirement for the restoration of the canal. Working with landowners we gain access to the land for restoration, improve the environment and this is done via long lease or access agreement or purchasing the land.
5. Environment is a more and more important as we gain access to more bits of land. Ensuring we stay within the law, if a TPO (Tree Preservation Order) or other habitat designations are in place. Highlighting the biodiversity of a site and how we can improve it, while protecting what is already present.
6. Health and Safety following best practices from the Inland Waterways Association (IWA) and aligning with Health and Safety Executive (HSE) Also supported by an external safety consulting firm as documented in our H&S Policy.
7. Engineering to work the canal corridor ensuring we have the resources that we require on site. Such as a suitable water supply and the best way to do the restoration in the most sustainable way.
8. Promotions to ensure we get the message out about the work that is occurring along the canal corridor. This is done via the web site, Facebook and YouTube as well as attending a number of promotional events as well as talks given at various venues. This has proved a successful route to get volunteers

9. Government relationships. Working with local and central government to gain support for the restoration of the canal and the improvements it can bring to an area. Boosting health, access to nature and visitors to the area.
10. Membership to ensure our records are correct, reaching out to the membership and volunteers to support the restoration work and support of the quarterly magazine, the Wharfinger.
11. Site operations, focusing on the restoration sites to support them in moving from a naked site to a green corridor and finally a blue corridor. Sharing best practices and volunteers as well as helping to set budgets.
12. Compliance is to ensure all policies are in place and we are aligned with the latest laws and regulations, so we are able to operate safely and gain funding.

Appendix 2

History and status of the restoration sites

The history and current status of the 12 sites (the dots) on the canal where restoration has taken place is given below, starting at the Gloucester end and moving up the canal to Hereford.

Llanthony (Leader: Ralph Barber)

The starting point for the Herefordshire & Gloucestershire canal from the connected waterways system has always been Gloucester docks. In order to reach the main section of the canal at Over, boats must cross Alney Island to pass onto the tidal section of the Severn. Initially a lock was constructed at Maisemore at the northern end of the island which suffered significant problems with silting. Subsequently, a lock was constructed at Llanthony in 1871 which permitted full size H&G width boats to gain entry to the canal.

Until the 1980's British Waterways owned both Llanthony and Maisemore locks, and in 2000, Maisemore lock, the adjacent property and the surrounding land was sold and now is in private hands.

Early in 2007 a national review by British Waterways led to their decision early in 2007 to dispose of Llanthony as a non-operational asset. This consisted of a pair of cottages, the lock, and surrounding land. This parcel was acquired by the Trust thanks to the receipt of a significant legacy.

This has not only brought the lock into ownership by the Trust but provides a valuable income from the rents on the cottages.

When the Canal Trust bought Llanthony Lock and cottages the whole area was very overgrown. Initially, exploratory surveys were carried out and from these, developing specific work programmes which would not only stop the site from deteriorating any further but would start the long haul in realising its full potential.

A major clearance of the undergrowth on both side of the river was undertaken, and an infestation of Japanese Knotweed has been eliminated. The undergrowth around the lock has been cleared to stop any further deterioration of the brickwork, which is generally in good condition.

Wooden fencing has been renewed around the lock and cottages giving the residents some privacy from passing visitors. Ornate iron fencing in front the cottages has been painstakingly restored. Several trees were removed where they posed a safety risk, together with regular planting with native trees wherever possible.

The Trust has engaged with Community Feedback, and they are keeping the lock clear and as it is also part of a national footpath where this passes through the H&G Canal Trust land, they are keeping that clear as well.

Over Lock (Leader: Roger Morgan)

Very little is known about the 19th-century lock at Over which takes the canal from the tidal Severn to the main canal. David Bick's book has only one sentence about this key element of the canal and that is to suggest that the lock was 30 ft deep. Other sources such as the book "Rowing Holiday by Canal in 1873" also mentions a depth of 30 ft.

If we were to build such a lock now, it would be the deepest lock on the canal system, beating the current deepest lock, Tuel Lane on the Rochdale, by a whopping 10 feet! However, other sources suggest that the lock was actually 13 ft deep.

Our current idea is to replace the existing Bailey bridge at Over with a traditional canal humpback bridge capable of taking machinery to maintain and extend the canal beyond Vineyard Hill. This is consistent with the historic bridges on the canal, which are all made of stone. The lock beneath the bridge would be capable of seeing full-size narrow boats (70 ft) pass from the Severn into Over basin as the Trust has made the strategic decision to restore the canal to the canal narrow gauge of a little over 7ft rather than the historic width of 10ft 8ins. The current exit width as constructed during the restoration of the basin is 8ft 6 ins.

Given the very large variation in river levels, it is intended to build two floating pontoons between the lock and the river which will rise and fall with the river levels. The lock will be built to a height so that boats will be able to transfer through the lock for 2 hours either side of high tide at summer river levels. The window for use of the lock will be larger during the rest of the year as the river levels increase. The pontoons will also provide a safe haven for boats transiting the tidal Severn where river conditions can be unpredictable.

We need to undertake a detailed engineering survey to decide the exact depth of the lock and determine whether we will, in fact, be challenging Tuel Lane for the record.

The vegetation around the lock sides has been cleared and the next steps will be an archaeological investigation to establish how much of the old lock still exists and its condition.

Over Basin (Leader: Dave Goff)

Following the closure of the canal in 1881, the land at Over was sold and eventually became the site of the Over Isolation Hospital built in 1903.

In 1993, the Local Health Authority decided to sell that land for a housing development with the Trust acquiring the area of the canal basin under a section 106 agreement.

The first clearance work on site began in February 1998. Later in the year work started on excavating the former canal basin, which had been filled in when the hospital was built in 1903.

The work was carried out by volunteers from the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal Trust and the Waterways Recovery Group, who had a number of work camps through 1999 and 2000 with up to 60 volunteers working on the site at times.

Materials from the demolition of the Over hospital were recycled by the Trust. This included thousands of heavy Victorian bricks that went into the building of the wharf walls. Once the main walls were completed the curved entrance to the lock was constructed and a gabion wall built along the towpath side of the basin. The wharf wall was topped with blue coping bricks. The clay that had lined the original basin was used to re-line the sides and the new basin was filled with water extracted from the River Leadon, at its confluence with the Severn, just upstream from the lock.

Following the restoration of the basin, The Wharf House was constructed and fitted out. The building is now a pub/restaurant called the Lockkeepers.

More recently, and with more help from the Waterways Recovery Group, the restoration of the next length of Canal around Vineyard Hill has been completed giving over 500m of navigable canal.

The Over Basin Project was completed in 2½ years at approximately 10% of a contractor's price of £500,000 and was used as a case study at the World Canals Conference 2000 in New York State to demonstrate the power of not-for-profit commercial partnerships.

The Trust receive rental income from the Lockkeepers as well as a covenant from the owners of the houses on the development.

Next steps will be to extend the canal further around Vineyard Hill and onto the Lassington Flats as we also work on the lock from the River Severn to the canal basin to enable access from the River Severn.

Moat Farm (Leader: Robert Heigham)

This section runs from Moat Farm Bridge near Malswick and runs for 600 yards to the site of the Double Lock staircase. It features a good length of well-defined canal bed much of which had remained virtually undisturbed since its abandonment when the railway was constructed as the

canal followed a curved alignment and was not overlaid by the railway construction which followed a straighter alignment close by. The section also features one of the roads over rail stone and cast-iron bridges typical of the area. The major work to clear the canal bed of mature trees and other vegetation was carried out in the early 2010s. A clear lock pound about 500m in length has been created and kept clear of weed growth by ongoing maintenance.

Next steps to establish the reconstruction of the Double Lock will be initiated once the section of the canal at Malswick has been extended close to this site.

Malswick (Leader: Robert Heigham)

The Trust acquired the Malswick House pub and land adjacent to the property in the 2010s. The Trust lets out the pub to tenants and receives an income from the property.

As part of the deal to support the initial land acquisition, the Trust undertook construction works across the site, including restoring two existing brick-built river bridges, building a substantial new bridge across the same watercourse, creation of various new culverted and gated accesses between fields, and provision of several hundreds of metres of new stock-proof fencing and hedges for the landowner. By early 2020, most of this work was complete, and focus moved towards the major task of re-creating about 600m of canal channel and towpath through the site, highly visible alongside the B4215.

During the Summer of 2022, the Waterways Recovery Group held three camps at Malswick, and their teams were able to assist with completing the major culverts needed to pass surface water below new canal embankments and start the major muck shifting work needed to raise existing ground level to form the embankment and cut a new canal channel across the site where existing levels were more satisfactory.

Formation of the new 600m of canal channels itself is now virtually complete.

A great deal of work still needs to be progressed including creation of a towpath, fence and hedge boundaries, wetlands and woodland habitats. Construction work on the second section to give a total length of canal of 1.3km should start (subject to Planning approval) in 2025. Once restored, it is hoped that all of this will be directly accessible from Malswick House.

The route of the canal will go through two sections of woodland, which will give the opportunity to create wildlife corridors alongside the route. The Worcestershire Wildlife Consultancy have carried out a detailed survey before any work commenced so that we could minimise any disruption to wildlife.

Newent (Leader: Robert Heigham)

The first work to restore the canal in the Newent area commenced around 2005 on the site of the former railway station, which here was itself on the line of the original canal as far as the Ell Brook crossing, where the railway left the line of the canal on its way to Ledbury. Much of the old station yard had been occupied for many years by a builder's merchant and was largely overgrown with few of the actual features visible.

The initial work of clearing of the vegetation revealed an accumulations of building materials which were recovered and then sold to raise funds or set aside for re-use by the Trust.

In 2015, the Trust took control of the lease covering much of the former Newent Station yard, including the site of station buildings.

Before significant further restoration can take place, engineering studies will be required to assess how to raise the canal from the Malswick level to that at Oxenhall (see below).

Plans have been developed for the site to go to a planning application to include recreation of the station building in keeping with its original appearance such as a café, tourist attraction and H&G Canal visitor centre of benefit to the local community and visitors. An Inclined Plane to enable the canal traffic to be taken from the canal coming from Oxenhall through the station and over Bridge St before rejoining the water in the basin that will be created behind the fire station.

Oxenhall (Lead Volunteer: Martin Boulton)

Just north of Newent lies one of the oldest restoration sites on the canal at Oxenhall, where work has been carried out by the volunteers for 40 years.

At the start of this section, the canal crosses the Ell Brook on a stone built, single arch aqueduct where the weather and the scouring of the water since the canal closed caused serious deterioration to both spandrel walls which had collapsed into the brook.

Trust volunteers have rebuilt both walls to their original height and minor repairs underneath the arch completed the restoration of the whole structure in 2009.

The Canal continues to House Lock, complete with an original Hereford and Gloucester Canal lock keeper's cottage. Before restoration the lock chamber, overspill weir and the cottage were virtually derelict. These grade II listed structures have now been fully restored to as close to the original specification as possible.

Above this section, the site of the Top Lock is known, but little of the original structure remains, however a dam has been put in place and this section of the Canal, between the portal of Oxenhall Tunnel and Top Lock, close to Winters Lane Bridge, was extensively dredged and the canal channel

fully restored by the Trust in 1992. A short way from the tunnel is Cold Harbour Bridge. As part of some of the first restoration work undertaken by Trust volunteers on the canal, the walls of the Canal beneath the bridge were strengthened with concrete and then re-faced with masonry.

Immediately south of the tunnel is the “Legger’s Rest”, a unique, arched recess built into the bank alongside the tunnel portal, where the gang of men retained to assist passage of narrow boats through the tunnel, would await their next job.

In the early 1980’s, the structures of the Legger’s Rest and the tunnel portal were in very poor condition, but both have been fully restored by the Canal Society, and more recently by the Trust.

As a result of this work, a significant length of approximately 800m of canal was fully in water, providing an attractive walk much enjoyed by the local population

The next steps at this location is linked with the plans at Newent Station to create canal through the Willows to join the Incline Plane and then the construction of a new Lock No 2 to connect the canal channel up to House Lock.

Dymock (Leader: Tony Higgins)

Work to secure the line of the canal at Dymock has progressed in spurts starting in 2004 when the Trust persuaded Gloucestershire County Council to restore a road bridge over the line of the canal, rather than just infill the space beneath.

In 2014, the Trust successfully negotiated with planners and developers to ensure that work to re-create the Canal featured significantly in plans for a new housing development which culminated in the creation of the Winding Pool – an expanse of water that will connect to the canal in the direction of Ledbury and Newent. The development won a Green Apple award in 2016.

Future developments at this site will depend on progress at Ledbury and Oxenhall.

Ledbury (Leader: Philip Marshall)

The line of canal through Ledbury town was totally subsumed by railway construction, but now restored as a greenway after railway was abandoned in 1960’s.

A new line for the canal will run north from the A449/A417 roundabout parallel to the A417 before passing underneath the railway viaduct. It will then pass around a new residential development north of the viaduct before re-joining the original route north.

Working with the developers, the major development north of the Railway Viaduct the Trust hope to create the canal around the site and then follow the route next to the A417 creating a basin for local usage and potential mooring in the future.

Monkhide (Leader: Currently Chris High)

The canal at Monkhide was originally restored by the Canal Trust (at that time H&G Canal Society) in 1983-92 with the cooperation of the local owners and a major input from the Waterways Recovery Group. The canal was fully navigable for 1.5km southeast of the Hereford-Worcester Road and under the Skew Bridge, reputed to be the skewest bridge on the canal system.

Boats were based on the section in the 1990s and open days provided opportunities for the public to walk the towpath and enjoy boat trips.

Future developments at this site will rely on on-going maintenance and major work to remove weed tree growth such as willows from the navigation.

Yarkhill (Leader: Chris High)

The Yarkhill site lies immediately adjacent to the Monkhide stretch across the main Hereford to Worcester road – the A4103.

Unlike the Monkhide section, this length was dry most of the time and had probably been so since the canal closed in 1881. However, in several places it had been filled in, and the entire section was virtually impenetrable jungle.

Immediately after an agreement was made with the land owner in 1994 the Trust started work, and over the next 2 years, a full profile canal channel and towpath was created.

After periods of heavy rain, this section of canal fills with water and the canal can once again be seen as originally created, however, the puddle clay had dried out over the 100 years of inactivity to such an extent that leaks mean that it can almost empty again within a week.

A team of volunteers do general maintenance of mowing and strimming. The towpath is now a pleasant walk attracting an ever-increasing number of walkers.

Future work is to profile and seal the canal bed, banks and towpath to regain the original form, find and seal any remaining leaks.

Kymin East (Leader: Ralph Barber)

This section runs from Barrs Lock to Westhide Lane and is intended to be a showpiece of how the Trust will continue to restore other stretches of the H&G Canal – on the basis of minimum intervention and the maximum retention of existing trees. The primary objective is that from the adjoining fields the site will retain a look much as today and that upon ultimate completion of this

length public access will also have been delivered so all can fully enjoy this attractive stretch of the Canal.

In 2012, the Waterway Recovery Group cleared an agreed defined line of the canal and towpath along this length. In the following year, volunteers continued with the clearance in line with the landowners' guidelines. The canal bed has been cleared and is in water after heavy rain for 900m.

The towpath provides a lovely walk along to Barrs Lock and the Yarkhill site.

As with the adjacent Yarkhill section, the priority here is to identify and sort out the leaks in the puddle clay.

Between these sites Barr's Lock that an archaeological dig was done to see the location and this exposed the chamber head, bottom and the overflow.

Aylestone Park (Leader: Tony Higgins)

Restoration in Hereford began in 2002 following the acquisition of the Aylestone Park site by Herefordshire Council, and the formation of a partnership between the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal Trust, Herefordshire Council and The Aylestone Park Association. The plan was to develop the site to provide much needed sports and recreational facilities, and to restore the quarter mile section of the canal running along the northern boundary of the park.

Plans to dredge the canal channel during 2004 had to be suspended following the discovery of heavy metal contamination of the silt. Complex discussions on the removal and disposal of the silt were eventually completed and the canal profile was restored and in-water by the end of 2008.

A large gathering of trail boats took place on the restored canal channel, which stretches for 230m, in May 2011.

In addition to restoring the canal itself, the Waterways Recovery Group have constructed a further 330m of new towpath towards Aylestone Tunnel portal.

A priority will be to develop a community basin at Aylestone Park, similar to that already created at Over to enhance engagement with the public and provide facilities for the use of the basin by community groups. Other future developments are focussed on the re-development of the Holmer industrial estate immediately to the west such that they include plans for restoration of the section of canal leading from Aylestone Park up to the east portal of Aylestone Tunnel.

Hereford

Although there are no specific restoration activities beyond this point, the Trust is in a strong position to take advantage of opportunities as they may arise. As above, after the short, infilled section through Holmer Trading Estate, Aylestone Tunnel takes the Canal under the main Newport to Shrewsbury/Worcester railway line and an area of high ground and is in good condition. Discussions on the future of the line through the Holmer Trading Estate are on-going (Leader: Tony Higgins).

Emerging from the tunnel, much of the original canal line has been lost beneath industrial development and a new canal channel will need to deviate along a former railway siding to avoid a large factory, and then to pass around the Widemarsh Retail Park, where a new footbridge and new road bridge were built to accommodate the future line of the Canal in 2000. The historic line is regained just before the Burcott Road site, Widemarsh Canal bridge is next and then a point is reached where continuation to the site of the original terminus basin has been blocked by the link road constructed in 2018. It is now planned that a new basin will be constructed at an alternative location alongside the link road.

Herefordshire Council are supportive to this concept and the Trust owns considerable land holdings along the line at this point which were transferred by Herefordshire Council to the Trust.