

Herefordshire & Gloucestershire Canal Trust

Business Plan 2026

Introduction

The Herefordshire & Gloucestershire Canal Trust (HGCT) was formed in 1992 from a society established in 1983. Its aim is to restore the canal from the River Severn at Gloucester to the City of Hereford.

In December 2024, the Board of Trustees approved a long-term strategy for the Trust. This was published on the Trust's website and can be found at www.h-g-canal.org.uk/restoration/#strategy.

Review of 2025 Targets and Future Plans for 2026

The Board has identified six main projects for the Trust, together with a commitment to maintain the remaining eight restoration sites;

Protecting and Restoring the Line of the Canal

Unless the line of the canal continues to be protected and preserved, the full restoration of the canal from Gloucester to Hereford will not be possible. It is therefore vital that the Trust remains vigilant in protecting the line of the canal against potentially damaging developments and changes of use.

The Trust will continue to monitor all planning applications to ensure that the planning policies adopted by the relevant local authorities to protect the line of the canal are upheld. It will also continue to secure the right to restore the canal through the purchase of land on which the canal lies or by agreeing long-term access arrangements with landowners.

Over to Rudford

The Trust has a project to restore the lock connecting the River Severn to the restored basin at Over and to complete the restoration of the canal to the next lock at Rudford, a distance of 3.5 miles.

The Trust will also continue its public engagement activities at the restored Over Basin and along the 500-yard stretch of canal around Vineyard Hill. These activities include operating boat trips and supporting community groups, such as the Scouts and Sailing4Disabled, in their use of the basin.

Malswick

This project is divided into two sections: Malswick East and Malswick West. Considerable work has already been completed, including the construction of culverts and the excavation of significant lengths of new canal within the Malswick West project.

Malswick East can now progress following the granting of planning permission. The aim is to create additional winding holes, a slipway, and a bridge to maintain farm access while supporting the existing footpath across the site.

Newent/Oxenhall

The first work to restore the canal in the Newent area began around 2005 on the site of the former railway station. The station itself occupied the line of the original canal as far as the Ell Brook crossing, where the railway diverged from the canal route on its way to Ledbury.

Good progress has been made on restoring the site from behind the fire station to the canal at Oxenhall. The team has begun clearing the site, and the station platforms have been uncovered and are now being restored.

A partnership with the New Model Institute for Technology and Engineering (NMITE) will help develop ideas for carrying boats across Bridge Street. An inclined plane would provide a unique crossing, creating a significant tourist attraction while bringing additional visitors and income to the area.

Plans for the site include recreating the original station building as a café, tourist attraction and Herefordshire & Gloucestershire Canal visitor centre, providing benefits for both the local community and visitors. Owing to the size of the site and the complexity of crossing Bridge Street, considerable planning work has been required.

Extensive work has also been undertaken to prepare the reports needed to support the planning application. Some of these required environmental surveys to be carried out over all four seasons, which were completed in mid-2026. Work is now focused on meeting the biodiversity requirements introduced by the Government.

Ledbury

The line of the canal through Ledbury was completely lost during the construction of the railway but has since been restored as a greenway following the railway's closure in the 1960s. A new canal route will run north from the A449/A417 roundabout, parallel to the A417, before passing beneath the railway viaduct. It will then continue around a new residential development north of the viaduct before rejoining the original route. This new section is expected to include a number of new locks south of the railway.

The Trust is working with the developers, Bloor Homes, through a Section 106 planning agreement, which includes a financial contribution towards restoring a substantial length of the canal alongside the new development.

Progress during 2025 has been slower than anticipated due to delays in agreeing amendments to the Section 106 agreement. These amendments arose from a revised canal route proposed by the Trust, which required formal approval. The revised agreement was finally signed in July 2025.

The revised route will assist both the housing development and the restoration of the canal by making use of the River Leadon to pass beneath existing road bridges before rejoining the original canal route south of Ledbury.

Hereford

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 & Gloucestershire Canal Trust, Herefordshire Council and the Aylestone Park Association. As a result, a quarter-mile section of canal along the northern boundary of the park has been restored.

A key priority is the development of a community basin at Aylestone Park, similar to that already created at Over. This will enhance public engagement and provide facilities for community groups. Longer-term plans focus on the redevelopment of the Holmer Industrial Estate immediately to the west, incorporating the restoration of the canal from Aylestone Park to the eastern portal of Aylestone Tunnel.

A regular Hereford work party now meets every Thursday. This followed the granting of permission by the landowner to clear the line of the canal between Aylestone Park and Roman Road. The work party has generated increased local interest in the canal and has received strong encouragement from the Aylestone Park Association, which manages the park.

Relationships with Herefordshire Council continue to strengthen. A proposal to create a walking and cycling route from Aylestone Park to Hereford Railway Station (the proposed Transport Hub) along the line of the former canal has been well received.

Progress on the Holmer site has been significantly delayed following the original developer entering administration. A replacement developer has now been appointed, and discussions have resumed. It is anticipated that the transfer of land will take place towards the end of 2026.