

12. Regeneration and Tourism Opportunities

Introduction

Canals together with their heritage and environmental assets are among Shropshire's key strengths as a tourism destination. Market towns located on canals such as Ellesmere, Market Drayton and Whitchurch benefit from the visiting boats and the attractiveness of the canal scene. With the restoration of the Shrewsbury branch of the Shropshire Union Canal, Newport will be able to add its name to the above list. It is particularly to the town's advantage that the canal runs adjacent to the centre and some restoration work has already been carried out. A basin and warehouse still exist and there are numerous locations along the route where sensitive regeneration activity complementary to the canal's restoration can be implemented.

The town of Newport is a pleasant working town but is not noted as a busy centre for tourism at present. Harper Adams University close by is the main centre of activity and is a significant employer. The town has an attractive High Street with an historic feel but has no significant tourism attractions. However it is in within easy reach of the 500,000 residents of Shrewsbury, Telford and Wolverhampton.

The restoration of the canal presents the town of Newport a range of opportunities to improve its appeal as a visitor destination and to improve the quality of life of its inhabitants. These twin themes of tourism and regeneration are inter-related and proposals in each sphere are examined further in this section of the report on the Newport length of the canal.

Regeneration policies

Telford and Wrekin

Regeneration of Newport and the District Centres is a priority for Telford and Wrekin Borough Council. On 12th March 2007 the Council's Cabinet considered a report by the Head of Planning and Environment. The extracts relevant to Newport are reproduced below:-

Newport's traditional role has been challenged by changes to national and local retail trends. Its economy needs sustaining and hence the Core Strategy aims to support the regeneration of the market town, including development associated with promoting Newport as a visitor destination.

Community Strategy 6- Newport states: "Development in Newport will support its role as a market town. Development will be limited to that required to meet local needs including those of its rural hinterland and to support the town's regeneration.

5.4.10 ACTIONS IN NEWPORT

- *Continuing BTW Member and officer support to Newport Regeneration Partnership;*
- *Specific BTW officer support/advice to Partnership's consultants on preparation of plan for promoting Newport as a tourism and leisure destination;*
- *Traffic management measures and improvements to highway safety in the centre of Newport.*
- *Newport - proposals include the enhancement and regeneration of the High Street, mixed use redevelopment of brownfield sites, development of Youth Café as Lifelong Learning/Youth Centre, and feasibility work on canal restoration and its link to national canal network.*

Town Strategy

The Newport Regeneration Partnership commissioned WM Enterprise Consultants to produce a Town Strategy, which was published in 2004. The town is also participating in the region-wide market town tourism initiative 'Better Welcome' co-ordinated by Action for Market Towns and Heart of England Tourist Board and funded by Advantage West Midlands.

The canal is identified as a key opportunity to assist the development of tourism in the East Shropshire area working in partnership with neighbouring towns. The benefits that will accrue to Newport from a revived canal will come in three phases: -

- Revitalising the current canal scene without being joined to the national network
- Making the most of the canal when it is restored to Norbury Junction and the network
- Acting as a key service point on the route from Norbury Junction to Shrewsbury once the canal is fully open to traffic throughout.

The Newport Town Strategy notes on page 10: -

"The local tourism sector was also identified as a key opportunity for future economic growth within the Newport area; however, given that Newport does not currently possess any notable tourist attractions or facilities, the development of this sector in the Newport area should represent a longer term objective."

The report acknowledges the Regional Development Agency, Advantage West Midlands, support for tourism as a key sector and this will be reiterated following the review of the West Midlands Economic Strategy during 2007. Partnership working across East Shropshire was accepted as a key task in

the future so that tourism benefits could be gained in market towns and the rural areas.

The key emerging issues with regard to tourism development were noted as: -

“The local tourism sector offers a long term opportunity for economic growth in Newport and East Shropshire; however, in order for this to occur, a tourism infrastructure must be developed in the Newport area, including improvements to the town centre, specific tourist attractions (such as special themed events or ‘specialist’ shops) and the development of additional accommodation in the area.

In order to attract more visitors and investment to the Newport area, there is a need to market both the town of Newport and the wider East Shropshire region to a greater degree.”

In the environment section of the strategy the public consultation revealed that local people value the attractiveness of the town centre and its rural surroundings but that there was a need to provide stronger linkages and access between the two. The consultation also identified the public support for making the most of the canal through the town and specifically highlighted the potential tourism benefits thus: -

“The restoration of the Shropshire Union Canal Newport Branch would also help to attract visitors into the town in the longer term and a feasibility study is currently being undertaken regarding the re-opening of the canal to traffic (now completed by consultants WS Atkins). The 1995-2006 Telford and Wrekin Local Plan outlined the potential of bringing disused canals back into use for footpath and bridleway/cycleway uses.”

In the section on Social and Community issues, the Town Strategy identified comprehensive improvements to Victoria Park (adjacent to the Canal) together with a review of open space provision in the town.

Under Transport, the Strategy notes that the town’s cycle network is inadequate with no dedicated routes running through the centre. Public consultation highlighted the need for new cycle routes including a link to Harper Adams University College.

Overall the long-term vision for Newport has been identified as follows: -

“To develop Newport as a place where people want to live, work, visit and shop, and where people can celebrate Newport’s history, while building for the future.”

The restoration of the Shrewsbury and Newport Canal is entirely complementary to this goal and is expected to make a major contribution to tourism and regeneration in the town over the next 20 years.

Local opinion

In 2006, Harper Adams University's "Leading Leisure Consultancy Partnership" conducted an opinion survey amongst local residents. A considerable majority of local residents were supportive of the restoration of the canal but some expressed their frustration at the lack of progress.

When asked what activities they used the canal for 97% said walking, 10% said cycling, 10% said fishing and 3% running or jogging.

68% were aware of the existence of the Shrewsbury and Newport Canals Trust.

81% had visited Norbury Junction and a further 13% knew of its location.

84% were aware of the intention to reconnect the canal with Norbury Junction.

90% thought the reconnection was a good idea with 87% supporting the proposal.

When asked what activities they would participate in along the newly restored section the responses were as follows: -

- Walking 90%
- Running or jogging 10%
- Cycling 10%
- Fishing 3%
- Boating 3%
- None 10%

Asked if they felt the reconnection of the canal between Norbury Junction and Newport would help develop the town as a tourist destination - 84% agreed and 16% disagreed.

When asked if they would hire a boat and take a day trip from Newport to Norbury Junction as a leisure activity - 61% said they would and 39% said they would not.

In other comments people were concerned about the amount of litter along the canal, wanted to see faster progress and were supportive of creating new amenities for visitors.

The regeneration benefits of canal restoration

In 2005, the Inland Waterways Advisory Council published a report into regeneration issues on canals and waterways called 'Just Add Water'. The report advocated an innovative approach to harnessing the regeneration potential of restored canals. In rural areas it suggested the creation of hubs where a mix of different services could be provided satisfying local and visitor markets. The scale and range of activities and services would vary according to the availability of land and buildings, proximity to population and other factors. The principle has been adopted before – to promote the sustainability of rural pubs and also stations on rural branch-line railways. The overarching objective is the same – to provide services and amenities, which generate private sector revenue while supporting not-for-profit activities which enhance the quality of life of local people.

Given the potential of the canal in Newport adjacent to the town centre with its buildings, wharf, lock and tow path, this approach is to be recommended. This theme is developed below with details of various activities and key target groups, which will benefit.



Canal at Newport – Shrewsbury and Newport Canals Trust

Tourism potential

For Newport to realise its full potential as a visitor destination the town should take an holistic view of the services and amenities it has to offer visitors. These include accommodation, eating and drinking facilities, shopping, special events, sightseeing, wet weather facilities and recreational amenities of all types. The latter would include walking, cycling and horse-riding routes, interpretation of local history and opportunities for people to pursue special

interests such as photography, painting, nature watching and others. The Better Welcome programme is organised in such a way that every aspect of the town's tourism offer is examined from the point of view of the producers (hoteliers, shop-keepers etc) and the purchasers or consumers (visitors and local residents).

Improving the town's appearance and viability as a visitor destination will have beneficial consequences for the local community and help to instil a stronger sense of pride in the place and bring economic benefits to Newport's residents.

Creating new opportunities for visitors and local residents

The "hub" approach enables the canal's potential regeneration and tourism benefits to the town to be assessed. The various developments and markets need to be mapped against twin axes of "Not-for-profit/commercial" and "local need/visitor need". The IWAC report suggests there are three natural clusters of activities: -

- Largely not-for-profit activities aimed at local people (bottom left of grid)
- Commercial services for locals (top left)
- Commercial activities primarily provided for visitors (top right)

Some activities can cross over into different segments as, for instance, they can be enjoyed by both visitors and residents alike e.g. play areas, fishing and information services. Some facilities are directed at impulse purchase while others act as destination 'pullers' e.g. an ice cream van as opposed to a visitor exhibition centre. Both are important to enhancing the visitor experience. The mix of activities is crucial to success and should satisfy both resident and visitor segments. The tourism (visitors from outside the town) and regeneration (local community) features of the hub should complement each other. If they fail in this respect there is a risk of failure as conflict arises between the two groups.

The example below from "Just Add Water" of how the principle can be applied. Not all of these activities will be appropriate for the Newport section:-

Commercial			
Local Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retail • Business services • Insurance • Entertainment • Post Office • Vet • Fishing • Housing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retail – leisure goods • Café • Bike hire • Trip boat • Boat hire • Crafts/gallery • Events • Accommodation 	Visitor Needs
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information • Police/CSO's • Bus stop • Play area • Car park • Health/welfare • Recycling centre • Education • Citizens advice • Religious/meeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information • Police/CSO's • Bus stop • Play area • Car park • Boat pump out • Interpretation • Trails • Picnic area 	
Not for profit			

Before undertaking this task for Newport it is worth outlining some of the features of the canal in Newport and the possibilities for creating new activities and attractions.

The Newport section of the Canal runs westwards from Forton Bridge through a green space around the A41 bypass, then adjacent to a housing development, passing the town basin and wharf, crossing under the High Street to emerge in open country almost immediately after leaving the town centre. This layout it is ideally located to maximise the tourism and regeneration benefits from the canal's restoration as a navigable waterway. The route has firmly become established in the town's infrastructure and much remains today. Some of the route is in water and original canal side buildings and other key assets survive.

The authors of the Atkins Feasibility Study of 2004 highlighted the potential for tourism and regeneration at four key locations along the entire canal route from Norbury Junction to Shrewsbury. They identified Newport as one of these four locations and described the Town Lock and Basin at Newport as: -

“A tremendous opportunity for a major canal focus which would boost the whole area adjacent to the canal and potentially have much greater benefits for the town as a whole.”

Sensitive restoration of the warehouse, waterside area and town lock would create a new focus for visitors with the existing car park acting as the first introduction for visitors. Interpretation boards including a town map should be provided here promoting all that Newport has to offer the visitor.

The warehouse has no windows at present and would require a source of natural light if it is to be used by the public. The building could house an exhibition about Newport and the canal's history and provide information about Newport and district to visitors. It could provide refreshments and act as a booking centre for trip boats and other canal-related activities such as fishing.

Once the canal is linked to the mainline at Norbury Junction the basin will provide a good and central mooring point for visiting boats. Experience in other towns has shown that the provision of short-term moorings close to the town centre can bring long-term economic benefits through the spending in shops by the occupants of visiting boats. Overnight moorings could be established at the basin and Newport pubs and restaurants would benefit from visitors using this facility. Water and washing facilities should be incorporated into the scheme.

Any business premises adjacent to the canal have the potential to directly benefit from its restoration. This is particularly the case with canal-side pubs where the water creates an attractive environment for customers. The Swan Inn is well placed and could develop a beer garden with good views of the canal. The Bridge Inn nearby could also benefit from canal-based customers. The Cosy Hall community centre would be in a good position to take advantage of the regeneration of the canal-side.

New commercial development could be initiated as a result of the canal's restoration. Sites worthy of consideration are the Water Lane and Salter's Lane areas.

To the east of the town a deviation from the original route of the canal is required to accommodate access under the A41 by-pass. This is the most costly element of the Newport section restoration and could be funded as part of a Section 106 agreement if 200 houses were permitted on a site of approx 10.89 hectares (including the new route of the canal and some open space for recreation).

The full restoration will take time to implement and the beneficial impact on the regeneration of the town will be felt in two phases.

First phase - provided funding is available there are no physical constraints to making a start on this section, including the warehouse and basin area to create a new tourist focus for the town based on the canal architecture. Upon completion this phase, the scheme would create a new attraction and give the promoters of the canal's restoration a major publicity opportunity. An early move to implement this scheme should encourage private sector investment

and formal plans to be drawn up for allied developments on the sites mentioned above.

Second phase - once the canal was connected to the main line at Norbury, the restored Newport section and town wharf would be ready to welcome the first boats to visit Newport from the national network since the Second World War. The connection to the main line will give Newport a substantial further commercial boost as canal enthusiasts flock to the new route both by boat and other means. The active waterway with its brightly coloured boats coming and going will prove to be a great attraction and considerably enhance Newport's character and offering to visitors. This would be further enhanced when boats are able to proceed westwards in the direction of Shrewsbury.

Visitor markets

The distinction between canal users and other visitor markets should be clearly made. The economic benefits of the restoration of the canal will come from those who are using it in the following ways: -

Water-based - boaters, canoeists, anglers

Land-based - walkers, cyclists, horse-riders and others.

General visitors - those who are attracted to the town simply because it has become a more interesting place to visit.

The latter include those whom consultants Atkins calls "gongoozlers", people who want to come and simply take in the attractive scene without participating in any particular activity.

Visitor expenditure from non-users of the canal is estimated to be around £10 per person per day with half of all visitors spending nothing. Therefore it is vital that there are spending opportunities created by the canal in order for Newport to gain maximum benefit from tourism expenditure. These are examined later in the report.

A successful implementation of the Newport length could result in an additional 30,000 visitors p.a. to Newport as a direct result of the creation of a new canal-side attraction. In addition the effect of the canal restoration in, making the town generally more attractive would see further visitors and shoppers coming to Newport. While it is difficult to exactly forecast these in numerical terms a conservative estimate would be at least 20,000 p.a. from this source. Consequently an additional 50,000 visitors p.a. overall would create an economic uplift of £500,000 p.a.

On the basis that the Newport section will be restored to water before connection to the mainline, certain assumptions about the range of new activities generated on this section alone have to be made. Lessons can be learned from some of the other smaller isolated sections on the canal system.

For example the Grand Western Canal at Tiverton in Devon maintains a well used horse drawn boat attraction, which is one of the flagship visitor destinations in the town.

In Leicestershire there is a proposal to extend a canal that is already linked to the national network. The extension of the Ashby Canal from Snarestone to Measham will bring significant regeneration benefits to this town, which was badly hit by the closure of the deep coal mining industry. The project summary report outlines the impact the project will have: -

- The attraction of 150,000 visitors per annum into the area boosting spending within the local economy by some £2.7 million.
- The stimulation of £6.45 million of inward investment from the private sector to develop 5,300 square metres of mixed-use residential, retail and business units.
- The creation of over 160 temporary jobs and over 70 permanent jobs.
- Reclamation of derelict and under-used land to create a recreational and wildlife corridor acting as a gateway into the National Forest.
- The strengthening of the local community through the restoration of heritage and local pride.
- Improved health by enabling access to a safe walking and cycling route.
- A more environmentally and culturally educated and aware community.

While the Ashby Canal is connected to the main network it should be emphasised in Newport's case that isolation from the rest of the canal system should not be seen as a problem provided a canal atmosphere has been created. The basin, wharf, warehouse and lock in Newport provide the raw materials with which to do this.

Once restored, this area could be the base for a trip boat providing leisurely cruises along this section. The canal needs activity to bring it alive and boats do just this. Other craft such as canoes or pedal boats could be based here creating a busy water based business.

The clearance and restoration of the towpath between the town and A41 will create new leisure facilities for walking, wildlife watching and fishing. The route can be used by cyclists who may be local residents using a traffic free route into town or visitors enjoying the peace and quiet of the canal scene.

Creating a canal hub in Newport

This section provides a summary of the numerous activities associated with the restoration of the canal that will promote new regeneration and tourism opportunities in Newport. If implemented in a phased approach the benefits will accrue to the town over a period of time as the canal's restoration takes

place. There are also estimates of the quantifiable outputs from the investment in new and regenerated amenities.

The table below represents the first phase of renewing the Newport stretch of the canal **before** linking to the national network. Benefits for the Community (on the left side) and Visitors (on the right side) are shown together with a distinction between Commercial (upper half) and Not for profit items (lower half).

Commercial			
Local Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing inc affordable • Café/refreshments • Crafts • Events • Fishing • Gallery • Children’s play • Active kids – canoeing • Improved retail offer • Pub investment • Water Lane/Salter’s Lane development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boat hire • Cycle hire • Café/refreshments • Chandlery • Crafts • Events • Fishing • Gallery • Children’s play • Trip boat • Improved retail offer • Pub investment • Craft workspace/studios 	Visitor Needs
Local Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Piazza/public realm space • Education – school visits • Cosy Hall Community Centre • Victoria Park • Open space – deviation area • Walking on tow path • Safe cycle route • Links between town and country • Better litter management • Events • Information/interpretation • Workspace – jobs • Car parking • Reduce vandalism • Health benefits through improved recreation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Events • Information • Interpretation • Children’s play • Picnic area • Recycling • Trails • Piazza/public realm • Car parking • Cycle route 	Visitor Needs
Not for profit			

It is worth stating that there will be significant overlap between activities in the table so some items are repeated to emphasise this point. Facilities that are primarily used by or aimed at visitor markets can be enjoyed by local residents thus enhancing the quality of life in the town. The high profile location of the canal will ensure that local people benefit from its restoration as well as visitors to the town.

Regeneration projects and outputs

First Phase

This section examines the benefits to be accrued from the initial phase (before connection to the main line) of the restoration of the canal in Newport.

Canal restoration – regeneration (commercial)

The work to restore the canal, which is described in Section 7 of this report, is to be carried out utilising a mix of volunteer and contract labour. The balance between the two will become clearer as time progresses but there is considerable potential for 15 temporary jobs to be created, especially plant drivers and professional surveyors and technical staff. Atkins estimates that these would be split 80% – 20% in favour of the local workforce.

Housing – regeneration (commercial)

The deviation to cross the A41 can be financed by a Section 106 agreement arising out of planning permission for a housing development on adjacent land. The indicative total is 200 properties some of which will be affordable. The construction phase of this project will create a wide range of construction trades jobs. The proximity to water will increase the value of the properties facing the canal by about 20% and the value of others within a short distance by 8%.

Details of the housing proposal is set out below.

**Proposed Housing Development
Combined With Canal Diversion
Site Numbers 42 & 160**

Recreational Space	1.05ha +	Total area including Canal &
Potential Connection	1.08ha +	Recreational space = 10.89ha approx
to Existing Park		Total houses on indicative layout shown = 200
Canal Diversion	0.61ha += 2.74ha	
Housing	8.15ha density = 25.54 per ha	



Appendix - 3

Retail and catering – regeneration/tourism (commercial)

The canal is predicted to act as a catalyst for renewal of Newport’s existing town centre facilities. The improvement to the environment will lead to more investment in shops and catering outlets. New shops will open and existing ones will be improved. The effect of this will be to make the town centre more

attractive to local shoppers as well as visitors. The public houses/restaurants closest to the canal are likely to react positively to the canal's renewal and invest in the quality of their facilities including the outside areas. The wharf would be an excellent location for some kind of café/refreshment facility.

Overall this sector could grow by 5 businesses and create an additional 11 jobs.

Crafts, boats and events – regeneration/tourism (commercial)

Canal wharfs have proved very popular for the setting up of craft businesses. There are opportunities close to the canal or other nearby sites in Newport. Special events could be craft orientated, water based or connected with food and drink. Fishing competitions could be held.

The new booking office would act as a central point for booking fishing and boat trips. A water-based activity centre could be set up to hire out canoes and pedal-boats. A restaurant boat could be based at the wharf making short trips in an eastwards direction.

Atkins estimates that a trip boat would carry around 3,200 passengers. at £3.50 per head during a year while a restaurant boat would carry around 1,800 passengers at a charge of £20.

A new cycle hire business could prove to be successful especially if new and dedicated paths are created elsewhere in the town as suggested by the Town Regeneration Strategy.

Overall this sector could produce between 4 and 5 f/t jobs and 5 p/t jobs.

Community benefits – regeneration (not for profit)

Victoria Park lies alongside the canal and would make an excellent area for children's play for families attracted to the restored canal. A dedicated picnic area could be set up here with tables, benches and barbecue facilities.

The Cosy Community Hall is adjacent to the canal and could take advantage of its location to offer new services to canal users. This would assist its long-term financial viability.

The improvement to the towpath would create additional and safe walking and cycling routes making connections to the countryside. The path requires active management to keep it tidy. In the residents' survey, local people identified litter and dog mess as two problems associated with the canal in its present state.

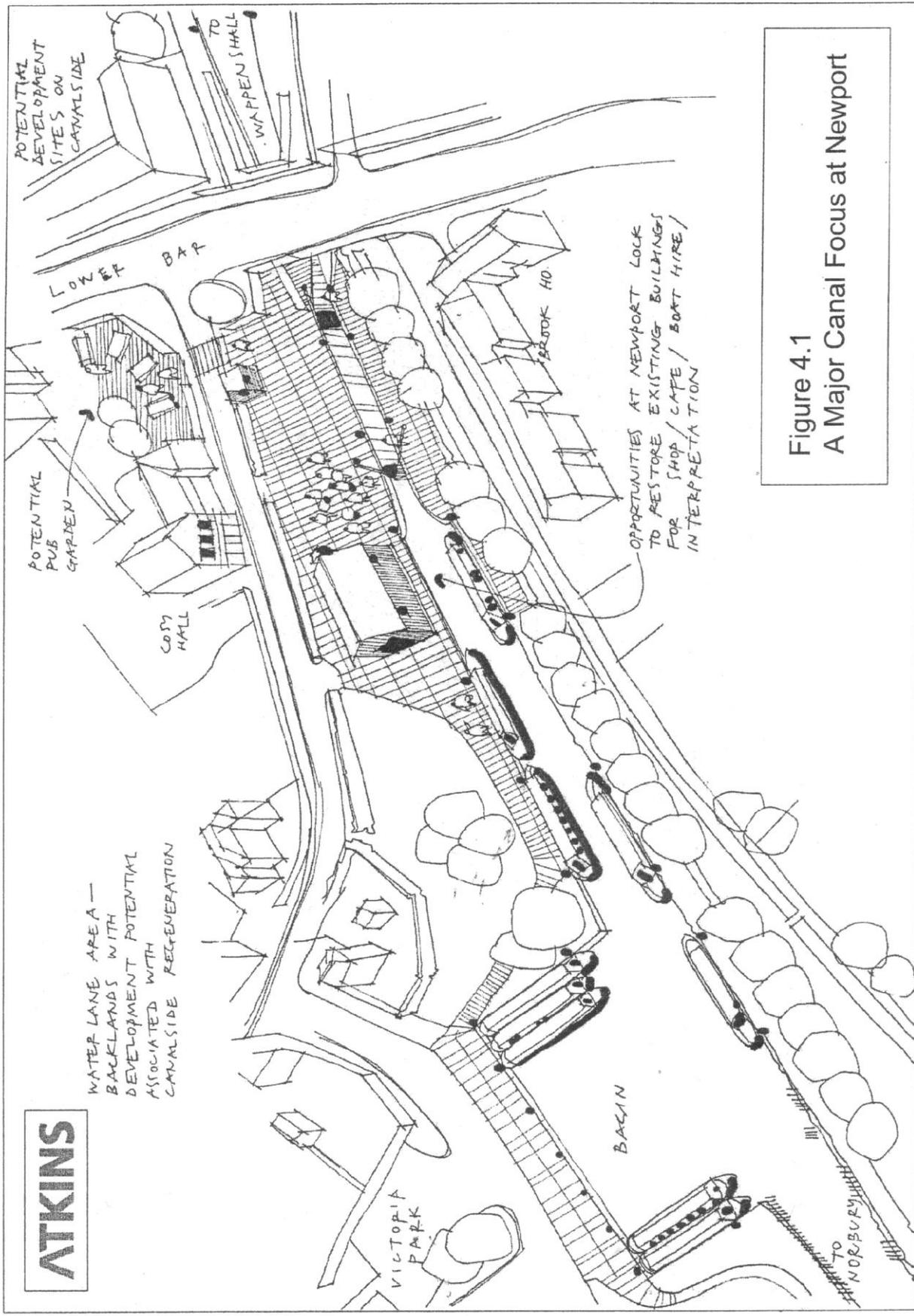
Information and interpretation – regeneration/tourism (not for profit)

The wharf would provide an excellent site for a new Visitor Information Centre promoting the town and the wider attractions of Shropshire. Depending on the availability of resources this should be manned by paid staff. The wharf should provide some form of interpretation of the canal's history

New information boards should be provided in the car park to orientate visitors encouraging them to explore the town as well as the canal thus spreading expenditure around many businesses.

Greater use of the car park would generate additional pay-and-display revenue to be re-invested in not for profit initiatives.

The Visitor Information Centre could create between 2 and 3 jobs.



ATKINS

Figure 4.1
A Major Canal Focus at Newport

Canal-side and urban developments – regeneration/tourism (commercial and not for profit)

British Waterways Board have identified that canal-side residential properties attract a price premium of up to 20%. This was established through research by the University of Newcastle.

Away from the wharf there are brown-field sites, which could be developed in line with the Town Regeneration Strategy. These developments could include additional residential, retail, business units and offices. The creation of new jobs could help to make the town's economy more sustainable and reduce the level of out-commuting to Telford and other neighbouring towns. The restoration of the canal could help to accelerate the development of brown-field land in the town centre.

Estimating the overall number of jobs to be created during the first phase is difficult to quantify but is likely to be in the range of 17 to 19 f/t and 5 p/t.

Phase Two Benefits

Once the canal is linked to the national network at Norbury Junction, Newport will see a further significant uplift in economic benefit. Boat hirers and owners will be able to cruise to the town and spend time moored adjacent to the centre.

Spend per day per boat is estimated to be £49 according to the Atkins report. Newport will initially be at the end of the line so boats may be inclined to spend the night there, refuel if necessary and take on extra provisions. Experience in other towns where the canal passes by is that there are the higher economic benefits from the canal if there are more spending opportunities. Newport's traders can take advantage of this new source of revenue and indeed the town could establish a reputation for being one of the best 'service stations' on the national network. The creation of a livelier canal scene with boats arriving and departing will boost the tourism impact of the restoration of the canal. A further increase of 25 to 30% in visitor numbers could be expected.

Phase Three Benefits

When the canal is open throughout from Norbury to Shrewsbury the town of Newport will be a key stopping place along the route. By this time the regeneration benefits of the canal will be seen in the town and its appeal to visitors will have increased considerably. The quality and range of shops and attractions will have increased. There will be more accommodation for visitors and the quality of life of local residents will have improved considerably.

It is expected that by the time the canal has been completed for a year, Newport could be welcoming an additional 100,000 visitors a year

Summary of Economic Benefits – Phase 1

The restoration of the canal at Newport presents the town with a wide range of opportunities for regeneration and developing a new tourism market. The creation of a canal hub providing new services to residents and visitors will reap the potential of the canal and spread the benefits through the town centre and beyond.

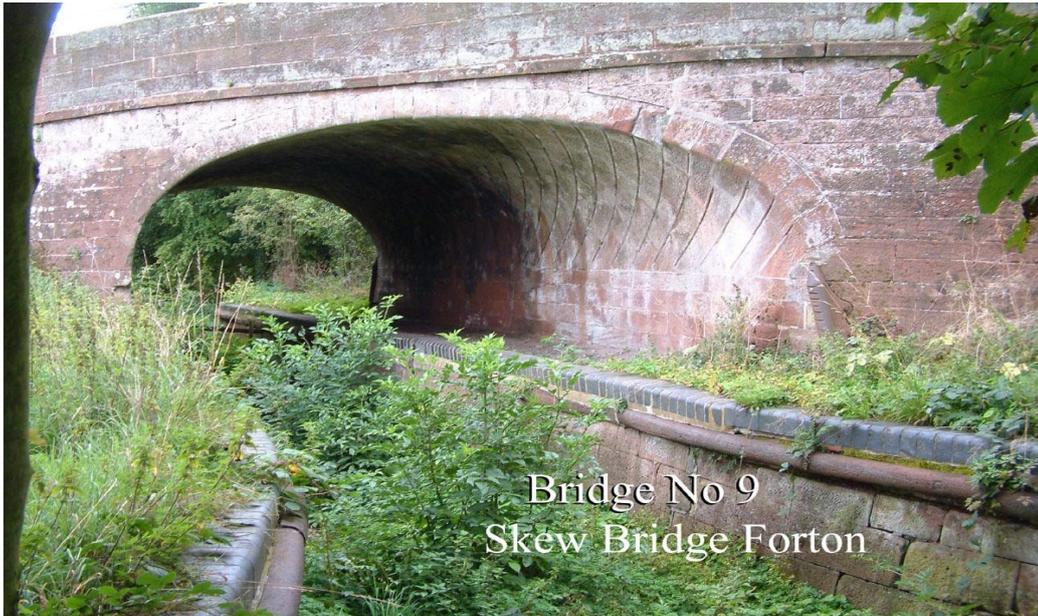
Local people are knowledgeable and enthusiastic about the project and anxious for it to be implemented as speedily as possible. The restoration of the canal is embraced by official regeneration strategies and complementary to the objectives of sustainable development.

The following table provides a summary of the key outputs:-

Project	Outputs	Commercial	Not for profit
Construction	Temporary jobs created - 15 jobs	x	
Housing near A41	200 housing units (inc. social) Open space Temporary jobs created – 25 jobs	x x	x
Wharfside	Restoration of buildings	x	x
Café	New business - 2 jobs	x	
Boat hire & booking	New businesses - 1 job	x	
Visitor information	New service - 2 - 3 jobs New business - 1 – 2 jobs	x x	x
Crafts	New business - 3 p/t jobs	x	
Restaurant boat	New business - 2 p/t jobs	x	
Trip boat			
Town centre retail	5 new businesses - c 11 jobs	x	
Community facilities	Facilities upgraded		x
Tourism	50,000 new visitors - £0.5 million spend	x	
Transport	New cycle path and walking routes		x
Private Sector Investment	£3m in inward investment, £2.5m in added value from waterside location	x	

13. Heritage Restoration Opportunities

Bridge B9, near Meretown, at the beginning of this section is an outstanding example of a skew bridge. In a skew bridge the courses are twisted in the opposite direction to the skew. The curved coursework in the arch is in excellent condition. The bridge has a skew in excess of 45% and must be one of the most skewed bridges ever built. The development of flat deck bridges meant that the art of constructing skew masonry bridges was lost. Bridge B9 is an extreme example of the art.



The restoration of the canal channel and the town wharf create an important heritage opportunity for the regeneration of the town. The wooden warehouse at the town wharf dates to the time of the construction of the canal. It is unusual in that most wooden structures were later replaced by masonry ones, or abandoned and demolished.





There appears to be some local ambivalence to the warehouse structure which is painted black and has no windows. There was once a second warehouse but this was presented to the Ironbridge Gorge Museum in the 1960's where it has been rebuilt and is now used as the carpenter's shop.

14. Leisure, Recreation and Educational Opportunities

Leisure and Recreation

The restoration of the canal and its towpath will provide:-

- A major new amenity and leisure facility adjacent to the town centre that will subsequently connect to the Shropshire Union canal at Norbury
- A wide range of leisure activities for all abilities – angling, walking, boating, cycling, painting, photography, wildlife studies etc.
- An opportunity for people in Newport to participate in volunteer projects
- A linear park providing additional opportunities for relaxation, enjoyment and interpretation of the countryside
- Improved health by enabling access to a safe walking and cycling route.

- In the longer term, an inter-county green footpath from Stafford to Telford and, eventually, on to Shrewsbury.

Education

- The opportunity to study the role played by these canals in the economic and social history of the town. Opportunities for interpretation for the public on the town wharf and in a heritage centre in the canal warehouse.
- An environment that provides authentic local experiences and teaching and learning resources for all ages, regarding the development and use of alternative energy sources, the canal and its history, as well as the wildlife and plants that the new environment creates.

15. Sustainability and Environment

This section of canal is part of the Newport Canal SSSI, designated for its macrophyte interest and recorded as one of the best localities for aquatic plants in Shropshire. It supports a proliferation of yellow water lily.

In undertaking the restoration there is the potential for a number of adverse impacts upon the ecology and nature conservation value of the canal and its surroundings, as well as the opportunities for ecological enhancement.

The proposals for the Newport section include establishing new off-line nature reserves to re-establish the SSSI in a new location well before the restoration of the original channel for navigation.

Although the restoration will have some negative impacts through temporary disturbance, it also provides the opportunity to enhance the local environment by creating a green corridor, enhanced by the use of careful design and construction i.e. incorporating a shallow area or shelf on the opposite bank to the towpath to create a marginal habitat, re-establishing hedgerows etc.

16. Linkage with other Sections

The restoration of this section offers the opportunity for a phased approach to the restoration of the canal back to the national canal network at Norbury Junction.

The order of the phases could be:-

- (i) Restoration of 2.025 km from Forton Bridge to Newport Town Wharf (£3.481m) which provides significant economic and regeneration benefits to Newport,
- (ii) Restoration of the 4.6 km section from Norbury Junction to Forton Bridge (£16.5m) which connects the restored section of the Shrewsbury and Newport canals to the main network.
- (iii) Restoration of 4.388 km from Lubstree Wharf (Humber Arm) to Wappenshall Junction (£8.246m) which provides significant economic, tourism, recreational, educational and heritage benefits. *(Within this Phase priority could be given to the acquisition, restoration and development of the warehouses and east basin at Wappenshall “the Hub”)*

(The order of Phases (ii) and (iii) could be reversed)

- (iv) Restoration of 7.125 km between Newport Town Wharf and the Humber Arm (£9.515m) which connects phases (i) and (iii) and creates a continuous length of 18.138 km in navigable water.

17. Capital Funding

There are several funding opportunities for the restoration of the canal and the restoration and conversion of its associated buildings and structures. Funding of the section may be easier to achieve if it is broken down into identifiable separate projects that meet the criteria for individual funders.

Three key funding sources for this section are:-

- Heritage Lottery Fund – the Trust should seek a Project Planning Grant to meet the further costs of development of the project, and
- Advantage West Midlands – the West Midlands regional development agency with specific interests in economic regeneration and tourism development who also have project development grants available.
- Private sector funding through a Section 106 agreement to fund the crossing of the A 41 if the local authority allocates an appropriate area for housing in the emerging Local Development Framework. Private sector funding could amount to £1.5 - £2m.

In addition there are a number of smaller potential funders, such the environmental trusts who give grants of up to £50,000 and in certain “challenge” competitions (SITA) may give individual grants of up to £250,000 as well as a range of smaller heritage and environmental funders.

18. Partnerships

Consultation and community involvement is a key factor in successful development. The successful implementation and delivery of the restoration from Forton Bridge to Newport town wharf will require the establishment of a “project” partnership to oversee the development and delivery of the project. This should comprise all the potential stakeholders and would include:-

- The Shrewsbury and Newport Canals Trust
- Telford and Wrekin Borough Council (economic development and local planning)
- Stafford Borough Council/Staffordshire CC
- Newport Town Council
- British Waterways
- Advantage West Midlands
- Harper Adams University College
- Adjacent landowners
- Environment Agency
- Natural England
- The local regeneration and tourism partnerships

This partnership should be formed at an early stage in the development of the project.

19. Summary

Policy – The proposals fulfil the objectives of Government policy for the waterways and meet the policy objectives of the Local Plan and the emerging Core strategy.

Construction – Initial design work has established that this 2.025 km section of the canal can be constructed in 3 work packages at a total cost of £3.481m. Both contract and volunteer labour would be employed.

Land Acquisition – It is expected that the land should be able to be acquired by negotiation although compulsory purchase may be necessary as a final resort.

Economic and Tourism Development Opportunities – The restoration of this section and the creation of a “hub” at Newport will create a significant economic regeneration and tourism opportunity for the town. The outputs are estimated to be:-

- 17 – 19 f/t and 5 p/t jobs created
- 15 temporary construction jobs with an 80:20 split in favour of the local workforce
- 200 houses including affordable
- About £500,000 p.a. additional tourist spending in the local economy
- 5 new town centre retail businesses created
- 6 new wharf-side businesses
- 50,000 additional visitors' p.a.
- £3m in inward investment
- Private sector funding of between £1.5 and £2m towards the project
- £2.5m in added property values from waterside location.

In addition once the section is connected to the national canal network there will be further substantial benefits to the local economy from spending by visiting private and hire boats, chandlery, boat repairs, moorings etc.

Heritage Restoration – The redevelopment of this section includes the restoration of the town wharf, warehouse, bridges and locks in Newport. It will provide the opportunity for canal heritage interpretation at the site to enable the role of the canals in the economic and social history of Shropshire and Newport to be exhibited and explained.

Leisure Opportunities - A “green” footpath from Newport town centre to Forton Bridge providing for a wide range of leisure activities for all abilities – angling, walking, boating, cycling, painting, photography, wildlife studies etc. Improved health by enabling access to a safe walking and cycling route.

Educational Opportunities - Interpretation and exhibition of the role played by the canals and buildings in the growth of Newport. The creation of a teaching and learning resources for all ages, regarding the development and

use of alternative energy sources and modes of transport, the canal and its economic and social history, as well as the wildlife and plants that the new environment creates and encourages.

Environmental Issues - The proposals for the Newport section include establishing new off-line nature reserves to re-establish the SSSI in a new location well before the restoration of the original channel for navigation. Although the restoration will have some negative impacts through temporary disturbance, it also provides the opportunity to enhance the local environment by creating a green corridor, enhanced by the use of careful design and construction.