



River Soar & Grand Union Canal

THE STRATEGY

| July 2009 | Delivering the Promise |

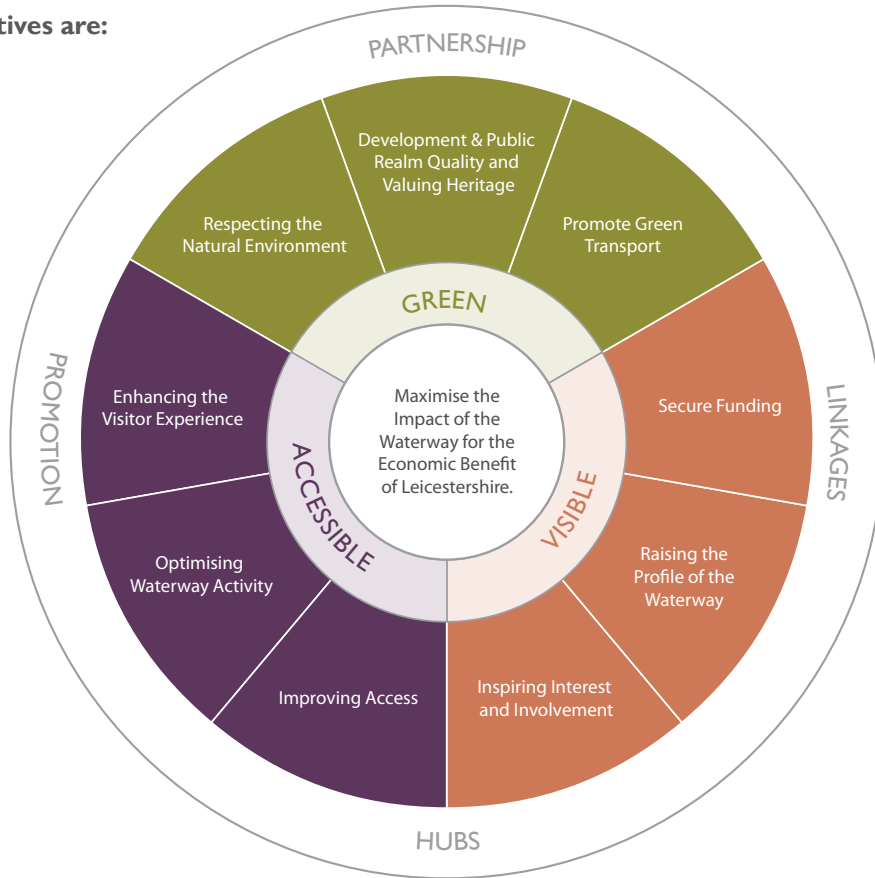


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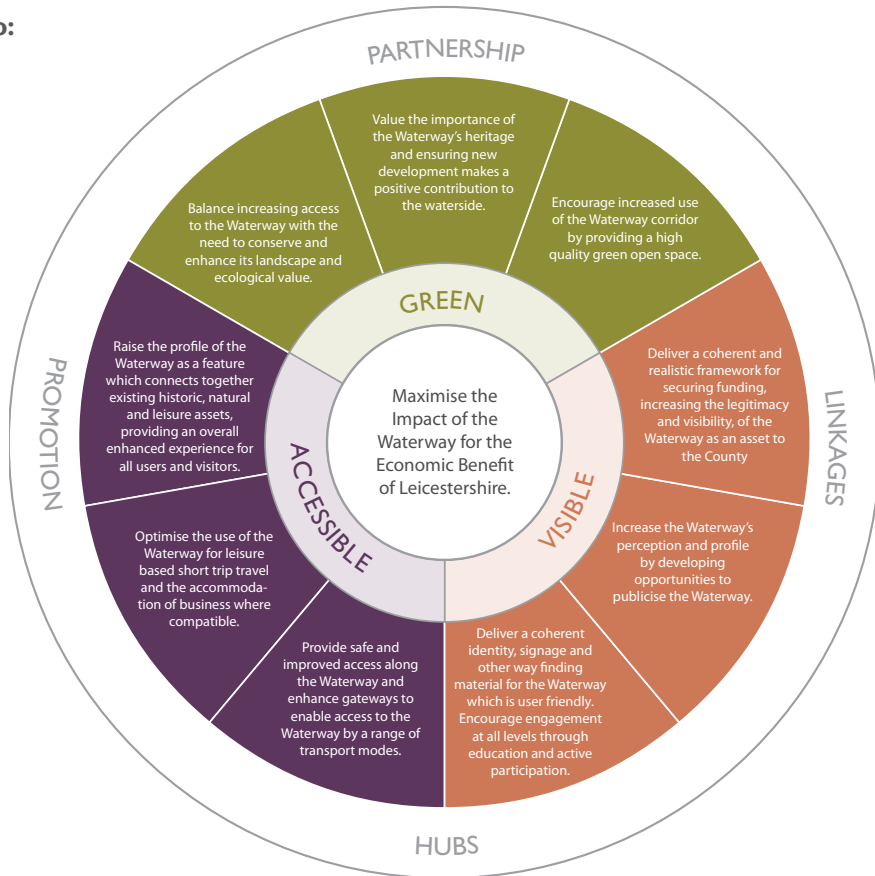
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The Strategic Objectives are:



The Strategy aims to:



STRATEGY OBJECTIVES

Introduction and Vision

This strategy provides an action plan for “delivering the promise” of the River Soar and Grand Union Canal Corridor, “the Waterway” in Leicestershire. This strategy is to guide policy and investment, providing a number of objectives which shall ensure the economic potential of the Waterway is maximised and is an economic driver in the sub-region. This Waterway corridor is currently under-exploited and under-valued with its latent potential unrealised.

The vision for the Waterway is to:

“Maximise the Impact of the Waterway for the economic benefit of Leicestershire ”

Developments across the country, from the London Docklands to the Leeds Waterfront, Chesterfield to Kennet and Avon Canals, reveal waterways can be unique assets that generate significant regeneration benefits. They can act as stimulus for new investment and provide a vital link between rural and urban environments.

The process for producing this strategy is set out in Section 1.1. In summary, this strategy document identifies the context and issues that affect the Waterway including policy and the physical conditions. From this baseline, the key objectives and subsequent priority actions which will enable the improvement of the Waterway are identified. Finally, a way forward is recommended which sets out a number of milestones which should be achieved over the short, medium and long term.

Context and Issues

The first sections of the report assess the current context within which this strategy will need to be developed and includes an assessment of the area’s socio-economic conditions and the policy framework within which the Waterway is situated. This includes a discussion of the relevant national, regional and local policies that apply to the area and that frame the development of this environmental asset. These documents primarily support the development of the Waterway as an economic and leisure resource. However, they stipulate that such growth should not be accrued at the expense of environmental quality. Five key policy themes are identified and include:

- Landscape and the natural environment
- Improving the urban offer and quality of place
- Development and heritage
- Green infrastructure; and
- The health agenda

A fundamental part of this strategy is the character assessment. The Waterway is extremely diverse along the 23 mile corridor and varies from a city centre urban landscape, to predominantly rural scenery. Understanding the function and form of the different sections ensures the strategy is tailored to meet the needs for each area, enhancing and building upon the features already in existence.

This section of the strategy is completed through an analysis of the main barriers and opportunities that are presented. The main factors identified include:

- The importance of maintaining and enhancing the landscape and ecological value of the Waterway
- The potential to maximise heritage resources along the waterway that form an integral part of its character and identity
- The need to improve access along the Waterway to pedestrians, cyclists, and all members of the local community to ensure that use of the area is maximised
- The need to improve and advertise the profile of the Waterway to increase local engagement along the corridor
- Improving existing Waterway animation and interaction so that the community can access these leisure facilities
- Improve signage of, and along the Waterway to create a cohesive and visible image of this asset
- Addressing the fragmented nature of ownership of the Waterway
- The opportunities for receiving funding for the Waterway through recent initiatives including the Leicestershire Multi-Area Agreement and the New Growth Points Initiative
- The need to address anti-social behaviour along the Waterway, to ensure that users feel safe in this space; and
- The lack of a coherent approach in planning policy to the Waterway makes the production and implementation of this strategy more complex

The Framework for Intervention

Sections 6.0 through to 8.0 of this document focus on the interventions that need to be made to deliver the vision of this strategy. These interventions fall into the three key themes of the: Green, Visible, and Accessible Waterway. These themes are supported by nine objectives:

- Respecting the Natural Environment
- Development and Public Realm and Valuing Heritage
- Promote Green Transport
- Secure Funding
- Raising the Profile of the Waterway
- Inspiring Interest and Involvement
- Improving Access
- Optimising Waterway Activity
- Enhancing the Visitor Experience

In satisfying these objectives the strategy aims to:

- Balance increasing access to the Waterway with the need to conserve and enhance its landscape and ecological value
- Value the importance of the Waterway's heritage and ensuring new development makes a positive contribution to the waterside
- Encourage increased use of the Waterway corridor by providing a high quality green open space
- Develop a coherent and realistic framework for securing funding, increasing the legitimacy and visibility of the Waterway as an asset to the County
- Increase the Waterway's perception and profile by developing opportunities to publicise the Waterway
- Develop a coherent identity, signage and other way finding material for the Waterway which is user friendly. Encourage engagement at all levels through education and active participation
- Provide safe and improved access along the Waterway and enhance gateways to enable access to the Waterway by a range of transport modes

- Optimise the use of the Waterway for leisure based short trip travel and the accommodation of business where compatible
- Raise the profile of the Waterway as a feature which connects together existing historic, natural and leisure assets, providing an overall enhanced experience for all users and visitors

These objectives form the basis on which future projects can be assessed to measure their alignment with the Strategy's Vision.

Action Plan

Following on from these objectives, an Action Plan is set out. There are four elements to the Action Plan which are required to deliver the Vision for the Waterway. These elements are:

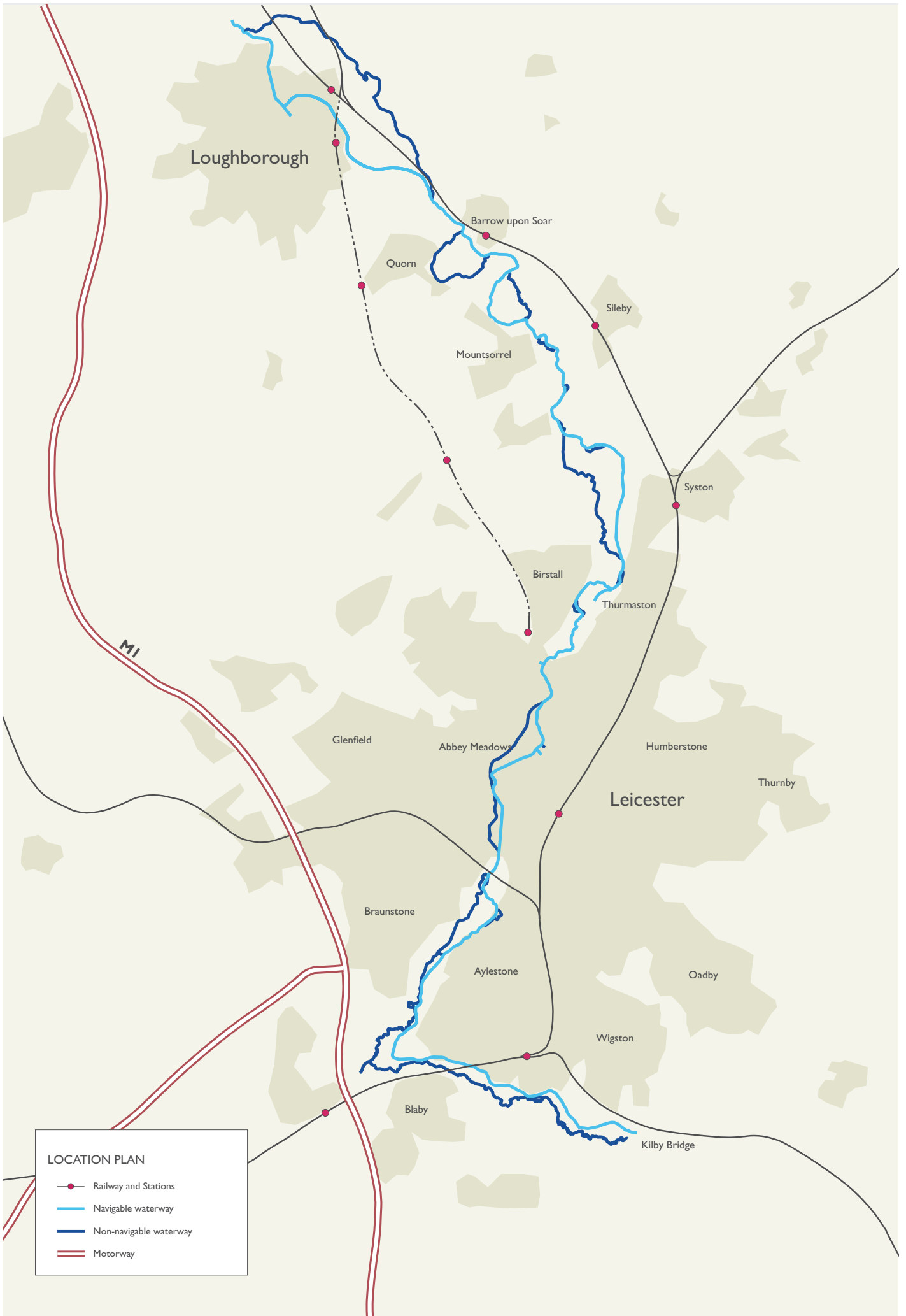
- **Partnership** – the full economic potential will only be realised through effective leadership and partnership
- **Develop the Hubs** – focused redevelopment on seven selected areas/clusters of activity will provide a focus for maximising economic returns. These areas include:
 - Kilby Bridge, South Wigston and Blaby
 - Aylestone
 - Leicester City Centre
 - Belgrave and Abbey Meadows
 - Watermead Country Park
 - Barrow Upon Soar
 - Loughborough
- **Improve the linkages to and along the Waterway** – there is a significant need to improve accessibility to and along the corridor to enable and increase local engagement; and
- **Promotion of the Waterway** - the Waterway needs to be promoted to both visitors and investors to ensure that the maximum returns from this are obtained and to combat its current low profile

The Way Forward

The Strategy concludes with a way forward, identifying actions for the short and medium term as a pre-requisite for ensuring the long term future of the Waterway. This includes identifying ten priority projects which have been formulated to ensure that they can be achieved within the next two years. This will help to build upon the momentum created through the generation of this strategy.

- Form a strong, Waterway Partnership consisting of the local authorities and key agencies. This Partnership should champion and take responsibility for ensuring the delivery of this Strategy
- Develop a destination management plan for the Waterway
- Draft an Access strategy to identify which areas need to be improved, secure agreement/funding and commence access upgrades
- Compile a funding strategy and promote the Waterway's potential to deliver other funding related objectives
- Undertake an area-wide desk study to define the significance of the environmental resource
- Develop masterplans for the 'hubs'
- Promote the Waterway with strong and attractive image through all literature and marketing material
- Support the development of a new visitor centre at Watermead focusing on USP – nature, eco-energy, etc
- Establish a "Friends of the Waterway" volunteer group
- Prepare a design aid for the Waterway as a source of inspiration for new waterside and public development

Ultimately, this strategy aims to improve the environmental quality of the Waterway and maximise economic returns from it. In doing this it endeavours to create a corridor where people want to live, work, visit and invest and do business.



1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Role of the Strategy

This is a strategy to improve and promote a 23 mile long corridor of the River Soar and Grand Union Canal in Leicestershire in the East Midlands. The strategy sets out the wider rationale, context, strategic priorities and actions for maximising the positive economic, social and environmental contribution of the River Soar and Grand Union Canal Corridor, “the Waterway”.

The section of the Waterway covered by this strategy runs from Kilby Bridge in the south, through the centre of Leicester, north to Loughborough Meadows. The width of the corridor varies along the route to take into account the numerous features along the Soar Valley.

THE VISION OF THIS STRATEGY IS TO:

“Maximise the Impact of the Waterway for the economic benefit of Leicestershire – ‘Delivering the promise’”

The Waterway is not currently fulfilling its potential for a number of reasons, including its low profile and poor accessibility in places. This strategy recommends a series of actions to improve the physical landscape of the Waterway and more crucially how the Waterway is utilised. The emphasis is on outlining a route-map of short to medium term interventions that are realistic and affordable, and can help to put in place the conditions to secure long term change.

This strategy complements the emerging Local Development Frameworks and the Masterplans guiding development in central Leicester, Charnwood, Blaby, and Oadby and Wigston. It provides a unified strategy for the Waterway as it passes through this part of Leicestershire.

1.2 Process for Producing the Strategy

A structured approach has been used to develop this strategy with reference to a substantial body of existing research, supplemented with site and desk based analysis. A series of reviews of the area have been undertaken to inform its development. These include understanding the policy context for the area, the importance of the Waterway as a natural corridor, its regional economic importance, and the Waterway’s physical issues and assets. From this baseline review, a number of key objectives reflecting the key themes have been identified.

The study team has undertaken a wide ranging consultation with stakeholders and the public in the preparation of this strategy. This has included meetings and presentations with key public organisations and a web based public consultation exercise.

The consultation has been used to confirm the key objectives and test a number of ideas. The outcome is a route map identifying priority projects or interventions which will maximise the Waterway’s environmental and economic potential. The Strategy concludes with a way forward which identifies time based milestones divided into the short, medium, and long term.





“Waterway projects can also bring about softer impacts in relation to area based regeneration including an improvement in the image of an area, an increase in the quality of life of residents as well as better transport links. These softer impacts should not be undervalued.”

(East Midlands Inland Waterways Study, June 2007)

1.3 The Steering Group

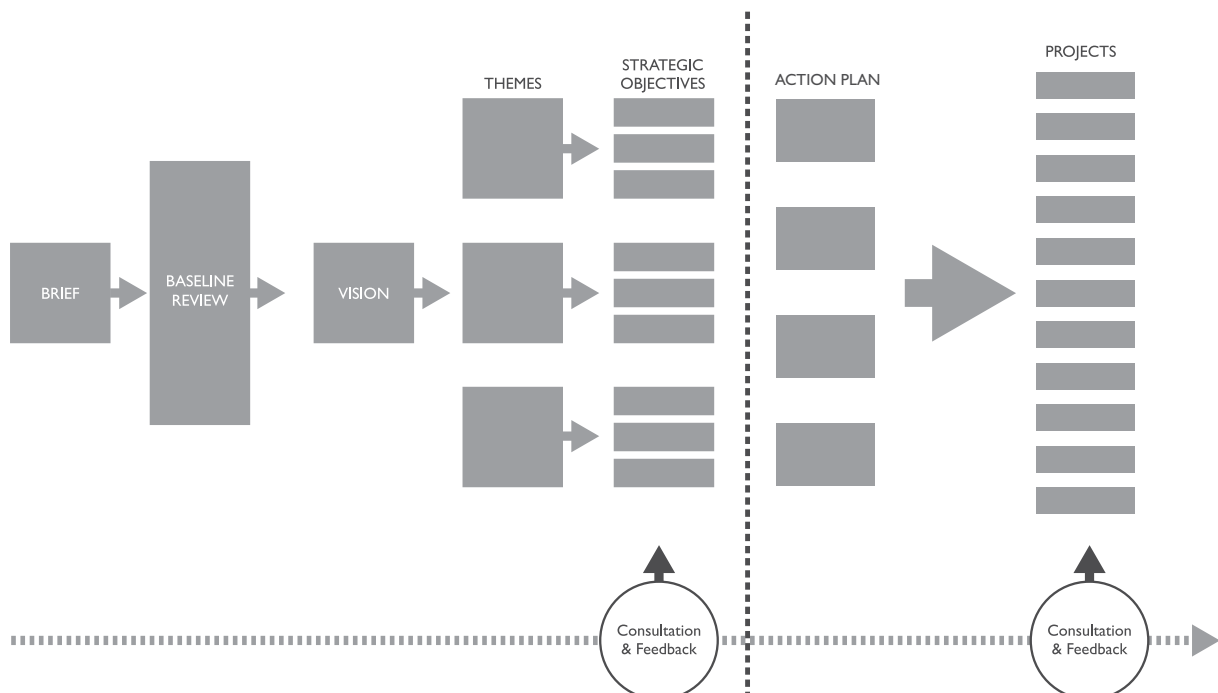
A Steering Group, with officer representatives from British Waterways (BW), Blaby District Council, Charnwood Borough Council, Leicester City Council, Leicestershire County Council, Leicestershire Promotions, Oadby and Wigston Borough Council, Prospect Leicestershire (formerly known as Leicester Regeneration Company) and the Inland Waterways Association was chaired by the Waterways Trust. This Steering Group guided the production of the strategy, providing valuable information and feedback to the drafting stages. The Steering Group will own and oversee delivery of the strategy on completion.

Funding from the East Midlands Regional Development Agency (emda) and match funding from British Waterways and The Waterways Trust was provided to produce the River Soar and Grand Union Canal Strategy.

1.4 The Structure of the Strategy

This document sets out the strategy to be used in the transformation of the Waterway. This is structured around the following sections:

- Section Two outlines the **context** of the Waterway and the issues facing the area
- Section Three states the **vision** for the future of the Waterway
- Section Four defines the **character** of the Waterway
- Section Five details the **barriers** and **opportunities** to realising the vision
- Section Six sets out a **framework for intervention**
- Section Seven highlights the **actions** required to ensure the delivery of the vision; and
- Section Eight discusses the **way forward**





“Waterway projects bring about significant economic benefits to the locality in which they are found, particularly through increased employment (both direct and indirect), land and property impacts as well as through an increase in the general competitiveness of an area. There are numerous case study examples of waterway projects throughout the UK that demonstrate the type and level of economic benefits flowing out of waterway regeneration activity.”

(East Midlands Inland Waterways Study, June 2007)₁

2.0 CONTEXT

2.1 Introduction

This section sets out the context for this strategy and the economic argument for investment in the Waterway. This recognises the wider value that waterways can play in regenerating places and the positive impact that this can have on communities.

2.2 Social and Economic Profile

The population of Leicester Shire* is approx 900,000 (2004 mid year population estimates state that 909,000 people lived in Leicester Shire₂). This represents an increase of 6.4% in the 10 year period from 1994. Recent projections from the Office of National Statistics indicate that the population of the East Midlands will increase from 4.3 million in 2006 to 4.8 million in 2016, an increase of 11%, and then to 5.5 million by 2031. This means it is projected to be the fastest growing region in England.

In comparison with the wider sub-region, Leicester Shire has an older population with a higher proportion of people over retirement age. However, the population structure is broadly similar to that of the region and country.

An analysis of the employment base in Leicester Shire reveals that 408,198 people are employed in the area. The largest employment sector is distribution, hotels and restaurants, followed by manufacturing (see figure 2.1). In comparison with the national average, the sub-region clearly has a disproportionately large amount of people employed in manufacturing, while it has a relatively low number of people in financial and business services and public administration, education, and health.

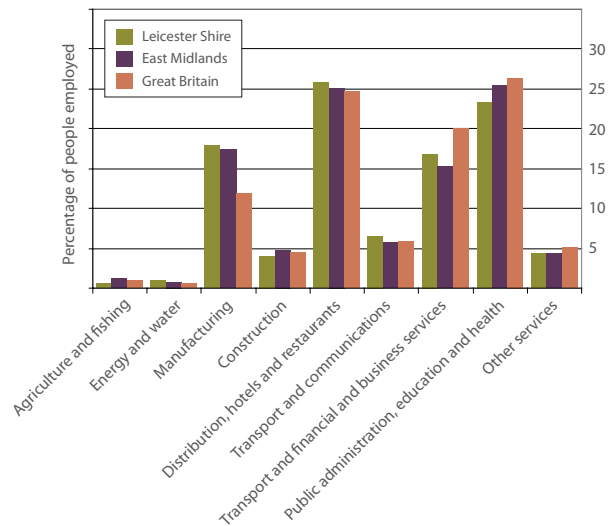
* Leicester Shire incorporates the data from the County and Leicester City.

** Leicestershire County incorporates the seven districts of Blaby, Charnwood, Harborough, Hinckley and Bosworth, Melton, North West Leicestershire, and Oadby and Wigston.

*** Claimant count is a count of those people who are claiming unemployment related benefits.

Figure 2.1: Employment by Sector, 2004

Source: Annual Business Inquiry (ABI), 2004



The economic activity rate varies significantly between Leicestershire County** (83.3%) and Leicester City (70.2), generating an average figure for the Shire of 79.1%. Similarly the claimant count*** in Leicester City stands at 4.8% whilst the County figure is only 1.4% generating a total figure for the Shire of 2.5%. Perhaps the starkest contrast between the affluence of the county and that of the city though is displayed through an analysis of the Index of Multiple Deprivation which reveals that while Leicester City is the 29th most deprived area in the country, the County is 136th most deprived out of 149. Such data analysis reveals that the County is significantly more wealthy than the City and thus the Waterway can be seen to run through areas of significant polarisation that face different problems and opportunities.

The average cost of a home in Leicester City in 2005 was £132,532, which is £44,693 lower than the average for a property in the County. However, when the lower average employee earnings are taken into account the affordability of homes is worse in the City. Hence it is clear that the Waterway passes through areas that vary significantly in terms of their socio-economic profile and the opportunities that they offer their residents.

2.3 Tourism

In understanding the benefits to be created in the economy through improving the offer of the Waterway, it is important to understand the current dimensions and contribution of tourism to the County's economy. The strategic importance of tourism is reflected in the East Midlands Tourism Strategy 2003-2010 'Destination East Midlands',³.

The data below is generated from the STEAM*₄ model and outlines the significance of tourism related activity.

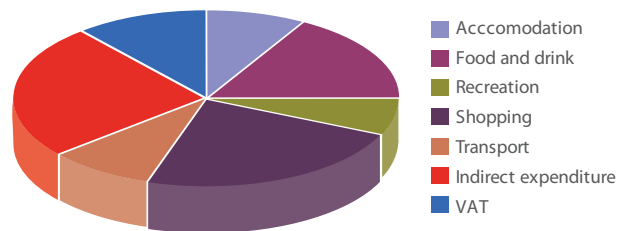
In 2007, tourism in Leicester Shire generated in excess of £1.2 billion for the County's economy. This represents an increase of almost £300 million since 2004. Figure 2.2 demonstrates that the two main sectors where this revenue was generated were indirect expenditure and shopping, which equated to £310 and £289 million respectively.



Tourism in the County also supported 19,602 jobs in interrelated sectors including accommodation, food and drink, and recreation.

37,252,000 days were spent in the county by tourists during this year and almost 30 million of these days were single day visits. With such a high percentage of visits being for just one day it is perhaps unsurprising that accommodation makes a relatively low contribution to the area's economy. However, the number of 'overnight' visitors to Leicester Shire increased by 4.3% between 2006 and 2007.

Figure 2.2: Analysis of expenditure by sector of contributions to the economy



* STEAM (Scarborough Tourism Economic Activity Monitor) is a well established economic impact study model used by tourism organisations and local authorities.

2.4 The Importance of Waterways in the Regional Economic Strategy

In creating a strategy for the Waterway it is important to adopt a sustainable approach that will maximise economic benefits whilst improving environmental quality and social cohesion. The importance of this perspective is reflected in the Government's Vision for the country's waterways, which states that:

"The inland waterways are an important asset for future generations to enjoy and the Government is keen to see them maintained and developed in a sustainable way so that they fulfil their social, economic and environmental potential. We want to ensure that the many benefits and opportunities they provide are used to the full."

(Waterways for Tomorrow, 2000)⁵

This is supported by the East Midlands Regional Economic Strategy (RES)⁶, which sets out the aspirations for economic development in the region. The RES focuses heavily on ensuring the economic growth of the region is sustainable and has regard to the existing infrastructure provision (including the natural environment). The overall vision as set out in the RES states:

"The East Midlands will be a flourishing region - with growing and innovative businesses, skilled people in good quality jobs, participating in healthy, inclusive communities and living in thriving and attractive places."

The strategy recognises the role of the natural environment as a key tool in enabling economic growth within the region, both through improving connectivity in the region (contributing to improvements in the environment, quality of life and wellbeing of East Midland's residents) and improving access to recreation, sport, and cultural facilities.

The RES clearly identifies the dependency of the wider economy on environmental infrastructure, providing the necessary support to a growing economic base. The RES sets out to achieve an East Midlands which "is a great place to live - with a good quality natural and built environment, with equal access to high quality services, cultural, leisure, sporting and civic opportunities, where people want to live and work."

2.5 Regional Spatial Strategy Priorities

The spatial vision for the East Midlands region is outlined in the Regional Spatial Strategy (2009)⁷. This states that by 2026:

"The East Midlands will be recognised as a Region with a high quality of life and strong healthy sustainable communities that thrives because of its vibrant economy, rich cultural and environmental diversity and the way it creatively addresses social inequalities, manages its resources and contributes to a safer, more inclusive society."

This document designates the Waterway as a Strategic River Corridor in the region and Policy 33 Regional Priorities for Strategic River Corridors states that:

"The natural and cultural environment of the Strategic River Corridors of the Nene, Trent, Soar, Welland, Witham and Derwent, along with their tributaries, and rivers which contribute to river corridors of a strategic nature in adjoining Regions, should be protected and enhanced.

Local Authorities and other relevant public bodies should work together across regional boundaries to protect and enhance the multi-functional importance of strategic river corridors as part of the Region's Green Infrastructure, including for wildlife, landscape and townscape, regeneration and economic diversification, education, recreation, the historic environment including archaeology, and managing flood risk."

This provides an important contextual point for this strategy as it recognises the importance of the Waterway at a regional scale. It also acknowledges the strategic and multi-dimensional role that waterways can play in transforming places and communities. The wider importance of Green Infrastructure, biodiversity, and healthy communities within this document is discussed later in this chapter.

2.6 Recognising the Economic Potential of Waterways

Well maintained waterways can attract wider investment and the development of the economy as a whole. Waterway development and access opportunities contribute significantly to public perception of places and space. Some of the most high profile and recognised physical regeneration projects in the country, including the London Docklands, Leeds Waterfront, Liverpool’s Albert Docks, Birmingham’s Brindley Place and Salford Quays are waterfront developments.



Waterways can play a significant part in the regeneration of rural and urban communities (see case study on page 18). Government policy states that waterways can act as ‘catalysts’ for ‘economic and social regeneration’. Interventions into waterways can provide a focus for regeneration and investment opportunities and increase the value of existing developments in the area. The East Midlands Inland Waterways Study (2007) concluded that:

“Waterway projects bring about significant economic benefits to the locality in which they are found, particularly through increased employment (both direct and indirect), land and property impacts as well as through an increase in the general competitiveness of an area. There are numerous case study examples of waterway projects throughout the UK that demonstrate the type and level of economic benefits flowing out of waterway regeneration activity. Waterway projects can also bring about softer impacts in relation to area based regeneration including an improvement in the image of an area, an increase in the quality of life of residents as well as better transport links. These softer impacts should not be undervalued”

(East Midlands Inland Waterways Study, June 2007)₁

The RES also recognises the potential benefits of increasing the tourism industry and the knock on benefits in terms of encouraging an enterprise culture and creating job opportunities. The condition of the built and green environment plays an integral role in developing opportunities for tourism, and improvement of these environs forms a key objective within the Strategy.

The benefits generated by waterway projects fall into three main categories:

- employment impacts – creating both direct and indirect employment
- property impacts – arising from the effect of the regenerated area on the commercial and residential property markets. Property related impacts may include increased developer/ investor confidence, bringing forward of vacant or underused sites and enhancement of the vibrancy and vitality of an area, particularly with tourism and leisure based schemes; and
- competitiveness impacts – a broad range of impacts which act to improve the relative position and image of an area so that it compares more favourably with other locations (boosting its attractiveness as a place to live, work and invest). This may include enhancing the unique characteristics of the area so that it is more diverse and therefore a distinctive place in the wider region.

The third of these impact types, competitiveness, is particularly important in terms of realising long-term economic growth. Competitiveness impacts include a range of investment, social, transport and environmental benefits. Such impacts, particularly those relating to the environment, are more difficult to measure. However, they ultimately represent the factors that have the most significant impact and are the most noticeable to the local community.



The East Midlands Inland Waterways Study of 2007 identifies that all the masterplans developed by the main urban centres in the region refer to their river or canalside as one of their major assets while at the same time often stating that their waterside is presently hidden or greatly under utilised. Large waterside projects in the East Midlands include Nottingham Waterside, an 18km waterfront regeneration scheme which will create over 3,000 new homes, and Derby's riverside project. Loughborough Wharf to the northern edge of this study area has recently received £13 million of investment in a new waterside development. The Leicester Masterplan (2002) identifies the regeneration of the Waterside as one of five priority projects for the regeneration of the City. The document states that the potential of this area is currently under-utilised and represents the opportunity to create a vibrant and cosmopolitan city centre. 10,000m² of new offices and 3,500 new homes (1,100 of which are already committed) are proposed as part of the marina's redevelopment. The waterside developments in Leicester and Loughborough provide examples of the potential of the Waterway and the high quality regeneration programmes that can occur along it.

CASE STUDY 1 - RURAL

KENNET AND AVON CANAL⁸

The regeneration of this 140km long waterway began in the mid 1990s as a result of the realisation that the maintenance costs were unsustainable without wider investment. A £30 million investment in the Waterway was made by the National Lottery Heritage Fund in 1996 to secure the future of the canal. This grant at the time of donation represented the largest single amount given for any project. As a result of this five year programme (completed in 2005) it is estimated that the canal now generates an additional £35 million for the local economy each year from growth in visitor spend. This represents an increase of 59% between 1996 and 2005. In this same timeframe tourist visits to the area increased by 22%, whilst 385 additional leisure and tourism jobs have been created and 700 jobs safeguarded.

Along the length of the canal 2,700 new jobs have been created in canalside offices and shops that have grown around this environmental asset. An additional 1,000 dwellings have been created here.

The canal is also viewed as an important part of the local area and in a 2005 community survey 90% of respondents stated that its existence made this part of the country special. Additionally 80% of respondents stated that they were proud of the Kennet and Avon Canal. Such impacts represent the more intangible benefits that regeneration can supply for a local community.

CASE STUDY 2 - URBAN

THE LEEDS WATERFRONT

The Leeds Waterfront has been a significant attractor of investment over recent years with significant levels of new development including new riverside apartments, restaurants and the construction of Clarence Dock, a new mixed-use development incorporating residential development, office and retail space clustered around the Royal Armouries Museum, a popular visitor attraction. This private investment has grown from the grass roots investment and initiatives developed by the former Leeds Development Corporation and BW.

The early investment by the LDA and BW has transformed the appearance and use of the River, which now functions as an attractive place to visit and functions as part of a high-quality living and working environment. This early investment provided a catalyst and investment continues and is spreading outwards from the Waterside, developing links between the water and identified regeneration areas such as the ISIS development at Granary Wharf.

The Leeds Waterfront is celebrated through annual events such as the Leeds Waterside Festival which offers street theatre, performers, bands, on the water activity, walks by the Civic Trust, living sculptures and river cruises and celebrates the history of the Waterway as well as reflecting its modern function as a leisure opportunity. The Festival is organised by Aire Action Leeds (a partnership made up of British Waterways, the Environment Agency, Leeds City Council, Yorkshire Water and Waterfront Association) which seeks to protect and improve the appearance, wildlife richness and encourage more people to actively use the waterfront whether they live, work or visit the waterways and their waterfront, ensuring that the recreational and leisure opportunities of the River are balanced alongside the ecological and environmental benefits the River brings to the City Centre.

2.7 Improving Quality of Place and the Urban Offer through Waterway Development

‘Quality of Place’ is a vital driver of an area’s economic competitiveness and prosperity. High quality public realm in urban, rural and waterside locations, forms an important component of ‘quality of place’ and has the potential to deliver significant economic and social benefits. In spite of the difficulties involved in measuring such impacts they are increasingly acknowledged and are a material consideration in development interventions to promote economic competitiveness and vitality.

An area where such interventions are recognised as important is improving the urban offer of the region (see figure 2.3). Counter urbanisation or the process by which the residents of the region’s towns and cities are choosing to move to rural areas, is a significant phenomenon in the East Midlands. This decreasing population in urban areas, is of significance as it weakens the position of these places which represent the key drivers of the region’s economy. This in turn creates significant pressures on the provision of services in both rural and urban areas as the region’s population becomes more dispersed and the ability to meet demands becomes more complex. Improving the condition of the Waterway could play a significant part in helping improve the ‘urban offer’ and thus make cities and towns attractive places that people in the region want to live in.

Evidence suggests that interventions into ‘quality of place’ need to be of a significant scale to secure wider and more valuable economic development benefits. Larger scale schemes often provide the commercial incentive for private sector involvement, whilst the public sector can play an important role through masterplanning and site assembly. Smaller scale opportunities are often led by public sector bodies and these can also

provide significant benefits. An approach that can adopt a middle ground is the development of a chain of projects whereby a number of smaller schemes are linked together to create a joined up approach. This can provide the opportunity to gain greater potential overall benefits and economies of scale. This ‘chain of projects’ could also provide commercial incentives for the private sector.

The strategy for the Waterway provides the opportunity to develop a supportive framework for such a chain. This would be particularly advantageous in light of the cross-boundary nature of the Waterway. The Waterway corridor could represent an important opportunity to make investments that contribute significantly to enhancing the region’s ‘quality of place’ and to delivering long-term benefits on a large scale. This would recognise the economic potential of the Waterway whilst ensuring the environmental characteristics and social benefits of the Waterway are retained and enhanced.

Figure 2.3: A Framework for Intervention into Communities
 Source: Capturing the Urban Offer in the East Midlands, (2008) emda; Regeneris Consulting,



2.8 Developing Economic Potential through Delivering High Quality Green Infrastructure

The Waterway forms a key part of the Region's Green Infrastructure. A high quality Green Infrastructure network is central to the delivery of sustainable development objectives. The East Midlands Green Infrastructure Scoping Study (2006)¹⁰ recognises the importance of Green Infrastructure not just as an environmental resource but also for providing economic development potential along with other multiple public benefits (including flood prevention, air quality amelioration, recreation and amenity as well as improving health). Policy IC in the Regional Spatial Strategy (2009) stresses the importance of promoting Green Infrastructure to protect and enhance the environmental quality of urban rural settlements.

Strategic River Corridors create significant opportunities for developing Green Infrastructure, providing access corridors and linkages to the wider network. The development of Strategic River Corridors within the East Midlands has already been successfully implemented through the OnTrent Initiative¹¹. This initiative seeks to secure a balance between the heavy industrial heritage of the river valley (recognising the legacy of mineral extraction alongside electricity generation activities), agricultural activity, development opportunities and the natural heritage of the area. The Partnership approach actively engages with landowners and businesses (including farmers) to develop opportunities for improving the Waterway and creating sustainable public access. The OnTrent Initiative provides an exemplar partnership project which the Partners should seek to learn from in the development of a cohesive strategy for the Waterway.

The River Corridor passes through or in close proximity to three key Green Wedges** (the Sence and Soar Valley South Green Wedge, the Rothley Brook Meadows Green Wedge and the Soar Valley North Green Wedge) which also provide opportunities for extending the Green Infrastructure offer. The Green Wedges will continue to provide open countryside space within the area and offer opportunities for outdoor recreation and landscape preservation. These open spaces provide an important mechanism for providing public open space, particularly compensating for the loss of private open space within existing large settlements. The Waterway provides an important green link between the urban areas and the Green Wedges and the Partners should consider the potential for further developing such links.



* The On Trent Initiative is a major partner project to benefit wildlife and people along the Trent Valley (www.ontrent.org.uk).

** Green Wedges are extensive areas of predominantly open/green character which penetrate towards the City Centre from the edge of Leicester.

2.9 Alignment with Other Initiatives

Green Infrastructure provision forms a key driver for future development within the East Midlands. The 3 Cities & 3 Counties Growth Point (the 6C's Partnership)* consists of Derby City, Derbyshire County, Leicester City, Leicestershire County, Nottingham City and Nottingham County Councils Programme of Development highlights the role for Green Infrastructure as an important tool in the developing region, with the partnership vision highlighting this relationship between economic development and environmental protection:

“The Three Cities Sub-area will be an area where the principles of sustainability are implemented through new development and regeneration. This will involve the significant strengthening of the complementary roles of the 3 Principal Urban Areas by providing new jobs, homes, services, community facilities and green and environmental infrastructure in and around them. The role of Sub-Regional Centres will be maintained through appropriate development, and the needs of other settlements requiring regeneration will be met in a sustainable way. Natural and cultural assets will be protected and enhanced.”

(3 Cities and 3 Counties New Growth Point Partnership For Growth Programme of Development 2006-2026)¹²

Policy 12 in the RSS stresses that Green Infrastructure will need to play a vital role in the delivery of the 3 Cities and 3 Counties Programme. This will serve to address past environmental degradation and contribute to the development of sustainable communities.

Existing projects and programmes such as the Stepping Stones**¹³ project provide evidence of the importance of Green Infrastructure within the region. Stepping Stones has been in existence for over 17 years and is supported by the Local Authority partners. The project has a key role in ensuring appropriate Green Infrastructure is effectively planned for within new and existing developments.

The 6Cs Partnership is separately developing a Green Infrastructure strategy for the sub-region which will develop a long term vision and strategic framework for delivery of green infrastructure across the 6Cs area. The Strategy will aim to protect, enhance and extend networks of green spaces and natural elements in and around the three cities, connecting with their surrounding towns and villages. Focusing on a key strand of Green Infrastructure, the Waterway strategy offers an important opportunity to influence the provision of Green Infrastructure and create links with the Green Infrastructure strategy to develop a cohesive infrastructure network within the sub-region.

Additionally, the possibility of utilising the Waterway to link up wider transport networks has also been investigated as a significant opportunity. The Great Central Railway Project as well as developing a more comprehensive heritage tourism attraction experience, seeks to enhance commercial freight opportunities and also passenger transport between Leicester and Loughborough.

The One Leicester Vision produced by the Leicester Partnership supports the objectives that would tie into the improvement of the Waterway. The Leicester Partnership*** incorporates public, private, business, community and voluntary organisations to create a united and holistic approach to development in the city.

* The 6C's Partnership consists of Derby City, Derbyshire County, Leicester City, Leicestershire County, Nottingham City and Nottingham County Councils).

** Stepping Stones represents a Partnership working in and around Leicester that aim to improve greenspace and make a high quality green infrastructure available to all.

*** The Leicester Partnership is a partnership between Leicester City Council and Leicester Shire Promotions Ltd (www.oneleicester.com).

The main priorities of the Partnership as set in ‘One Leicester: Shaping Britain’s Sustainable City’¹⁴, are:

- Investing in our children
- Planning for people not cars
- Reducing our carbon footprint
- Creating thriving, safe communities
- Improving wellbeing and health
- Talking up Leicester; and
- Investing in skills and enterprise

This Partnership therefore sets as priorities the need to create healthy and active communities, where people participate in attractive environments. In this sense the objectives of the Partnership would align with the desire to improve the Waterway.



2.10 The Importance of Maximising the Quality of Natural Environment

Only 2% of the East Midlands Region is legally designated as nature conservation or geological sites compared with the national average of 7.5%. This is one of the lowest of any region in England. The RSS states that:

“Overall there has been a significant decline in biodiversity and to compensate for past losses, regional habitat restoration and creation targets through the delivery of ‘green infrastructure’ needs to be proportionally greater than in other regions. The particularly low regional proportion of woodland cover offers a specific opportunity for habitat creation.”

In light of the condition of the region’s resources, improving the ecological and natural value of the Waterway takes on increased significance. The Waterway links a number of green features throughout the urban and rural environments. The importance and integrity of this linkage to the movement and migration of plants and animals is well recognised in this part of Leicestershire. The Waterway is known to be home to great crested newts, water voles and kingfishers. In addition a significant proportion of the land within the corridor is flood plain which inevitably protects areas of open space. These wetland areas and undisturbed meadows provide a rich and diverse waterside environment.

The Waterway also suffers from unwanted species and has had a significant problem with floating pennywort since 2004. The plant causes blockages to navigation and has severe ecological effects (blocking light to underwater plants). The Environment Agency, British Waterways and Leicester City Council have invested £100,000 in clearing the plant from the Waterway in 2008.

2.11 The Health Agenda

There are strong links between the state of the environment and people's health, although these are not always explicit and well understood. The provision of attractive green space can improve air quality and people's physical and mental well being. The Government's revised Sustainable Development Strategy 'Securing the Future'(2005)¹⁵ states that a healthy society, and thus healthy communities, is one of the five guiding principles of the document.

This theme is also recognised within the central vision of the RSS, which looks to create 'healthy sustainable communities'. Policy 1D in the RSS recognises the importance of green infrastructure in improving the health of the region. This stresses the need for access to facilities that provide people with the opportunity to engage in physical activity and have 'healthy lifestyles'. Additionally, Policy 28 Regional Priorities for Environmental and Green Infrastructure states that spaces for both formal and informal recreational activity are required to encourage this.

The East Midlands NHS vision for future healthcare, 'From Evidence to Excellence'¹⁶, identifies the importance of establishing a long-term physical activity social marketing programme. Availability of free exercise and recreation activities increases the potential effectiveness of such programmes, providing resources which are universally accessible.



The need to encourage healthier communities and increase activity levels across Leicestershire is recognised within the strategic themes of the Leicestershire Local Area Agreement.¹⁷

Marketing opportunities for the Waterway should include its potential as a free exercise resource, and forging strong links with the Primary Care Trusts. The potential for the Waterway to contribute to developing healthier communities also contributes to the overwhelming need to improve accessibility across the study area, ensuring an acceptable level of access is provided prior to publicising the exercise potential of the Waterway.



“Despite increasing recognition of their value to society, the full potential of the waterways is still not being realised. Much of this is a legacy of their long historic decline and an association of the canals with industrial decay. Such a perception is now out of date and the positive benefits and opportunities which the waterways offer need to be recognised. Where this has been done the benefits can clearly be seen.”

(Planning a future for the inland waterways IWAAC 2001) 18

3.0 THE VISION

Recognising the natural, regional and local aspirations for waterways to play a key role in the development, regeneration and contribution to quality of place, a simple vision for the Waterway is set out below.

THE VISION OF THIS STRATEGY IS TO:

“Maximise the impact of the Waterway for the economic benefit of Leicestershire – ‘Delivering the promise’”

The vision represents an exciting and challenging way forward for the Waterway, one that will build on successes to date and will effectively focus its activity into the future.

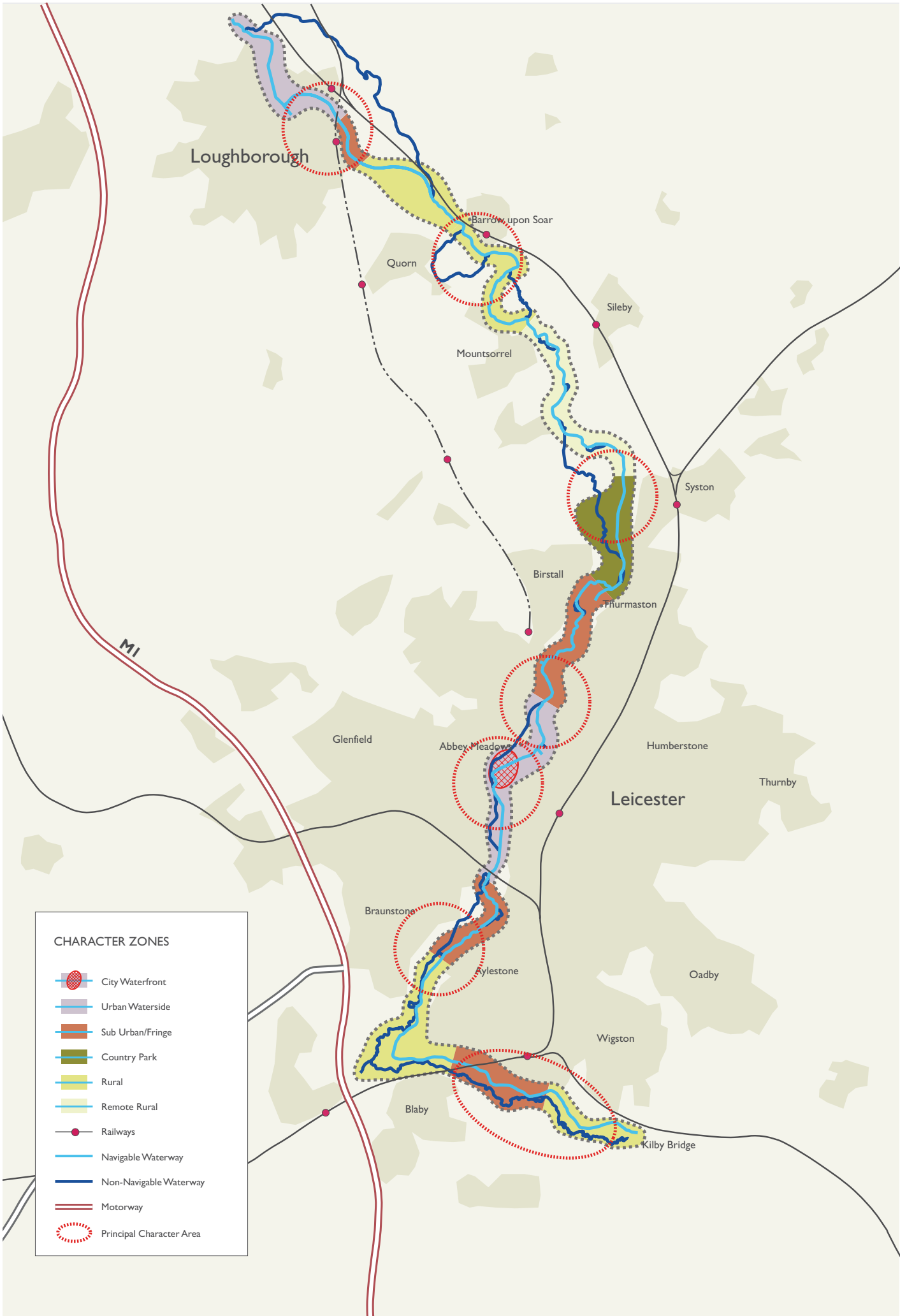
It is envisaged that by 2020, the Waterway will be a nationally recognised example of how the waterside can be used to balance the needs of the environment in conjunction with high quality development and public realm which meets the needs of the communities through which it passes.

The Waterway will no longer be a hidden asset but considered integral to the lives of those who live and work in the corridor. The Waterway, in combination with the excellent strategic transport links, will be an attractive place to invest and do business, attracting new businesses as well as retaining those already located within the corridor.



This will be achieved through partnership working and shared commitment, enhancing the linkages between assets, developing the special qualities of the Waterway hubs and promoting the Waterway in a positive and co-ordinated way.

The potential of the Waterway should be realised through the delicate balance between the needs of residents, visitors and the ecological and working landscape.



4.0 THE CHARACTER OF THE WATERWAY

4.1 Introduction

This section outlines the character of the Waterway in the study area. As the character of the corridor is ever changing from rural to urban, such an assessment provides a necessary baseline for this strategy.

4.2 Overview of the Waterway

The section of Waterway in the study winds its way northwards from Kilby Bridge, through Leicester and finishes just north of Loughborough Wharf. Along the way, the waterway environment is ever changing from rural in nature to areas of post industrial decline, to regenerated urban centre, before returning to a predominantly rural landscape. This changing face should be seen as a significant positive for the corridor. It offers one of the greatest challenges as the strategy needs to respect these differing environments.

The study has identified a number of distinctive character 'zones' along the corridor which vary from highly developed 'urban waterfront' to quiet and tranquil 'rural' areas in a relatively short distance. One of the distinctive features of the Waterway is that it has navigable and non-navigable channels that intertwine creating "islands". This provides the corridor with a distinctive quality and could generate additional development opportunities as well as conserving the natural environment.

The elements that contribute to the waterway character include:

- Landscape treatments
- Density and type of vegetation
- Building layout, infrastructure and urban grain
- Form, scale and massing of buildings
- Uses
- Historic associations
- Access and movement

4.2.1 Principal Character Areas

The seven principal character areas which make up the Waterway corridor range from 'city centre waterfront' to 'rural', are;

- Kilby Bridge, South Wigston and Blaby
- Aylestone
- Leicester City Centre
- Belgrave and Abbey Meadows
- Watermead and Environs
- Barrow Upon Soar and Mountsorrel
- Loughborough and Environs

4.3.1 Character Area 1 – Kilby Bridge, South Wigston and Blaby

Kilby Bridge, a small settlement located 4 miles south of the centre of Leicester. Both Blaby and South Wigston are larger settlements hosting an extensive range of facilities and are popular commuter villages. Residential properties back onto the canal on both sides, notably with a number of high quality family housing developments. Typically housing on the opposite side of the tow path actively engage the waterfront, often with private moorings, while those adjacent to the towpath are typified by high fences and hedgerows reflecting the need for security. The Waterway forms the southern boundary to the urban development which extends from the City. This stretch is almost entirely within the Sence and Soar Valley South Green Wedge and beyond the development are open fields offering a rural, tranquil outlook. There are few bridge crossings and opportunities to join the Waterway are remote. The existing canal yard at Kilby Bridge features a mix of low key wharfside buildings, with a public house (The Navigation) on the main road next to the canal bridge.

4.3.2 Character Area 2 – Aylestone

Immediately south of Leicester, the canal and river diverge to form an island adjacent to the Walkers Stadium and St Mary's Mill. The canal corridor very quickly changes from green and open to the industrialised City fringe. Sandwiched between two of Leicester's main residential areas is the Aylestone Riverside Park. The Park provides opportunities to walk and cycle adjacent to the waters edge or alternatively connect to the Great Central Way, which continues all the way up to Loughborough. Low grade parking is provided at several locations within the park; however, these are poorly signposted and poorly maintained.

4.3.3 Character Area 3 – Leicester City Centre

For a short length the canal becomes a highly developed 'urban waterfront', with largescale buildings and areas of public realm. An increasing number of bridge crossings help to ensure the canal does not become a barrier to movement. Within the central urban area, there are attractive areas of 'wide water' (generally associated with weirs), which provide characterful areas of waterspace and opportunities for wildlife in an otherwise highly developed urban environment.

Both the hospital and the university are located in close proximity and help add to the ambience and character of a very lively and well used section of the Waterway.

4.3.4 Character Area 4 – Abbey Meadows

To the north of Leicester City Centre, the canal and river act to create an "island." The character changes from the derelict or degrading industrial works/buildings of Abbey Meadows to the 'sub urban fringe'. The area is within the City Masterplan area and the clearance of the derelict buildings is slowly getting underway. This area is home to a number of key attractions. Abbey Park, housing the remains of a 12th Century Abbey as well as impressive and well maintained gardens and boating lake. The National Space Centre (NSC) which can be seen from the canal but is difficult to access directly; and Belgrave outdoor activity centre, the focus of a number of on the water activities such as canoeing and kayaking. The quality of access provision along the water's edge is good with the provision of a separate cycleway and pedestrian footpath.

4.3.5 Character Area 5 – Watermead Country Park and Birstall

Watermead Country Park is a key area of countryside and green wedge on the north of Leicester City. It is bounded by the large villages of Thurmaston to the east, Birstall to the west and Syston to the north. The area has been extensively worked for sand and gravel and now lakes, woods and wildlife replace the former industrial landscape.

The Park receives over 250,000 visitors annually with a network of attractive and popular countryside walks/ cycle routes as well as angling and boating facilities. Watermead enjoys good access by road, with plenty of car parking and picnicking opportunities. It features public toilets located close to the canal, although these are not particularly prominent within the Country Park.

Watermead lacks comprehensive visitor facilities in terms of refreshments, education and information, although there has long been an ambition by key agencies and stakeholders to provide them, befitting the status of the Country Park as a local/regional attraction. To the east of Watermead is Thurmaston. Thurmaston benefits from two substantial marinas but access to the Country Park is difficult and is presently subject to improvements as part of the Sustrans Connect2 lottery funding.

4.3.6 Character Area 6 – Barrow Upon Soar and Mountsorrel

Barrow upon Soar is a rural settlement, where the character and sense of the Waterway as a river navigation becomes much more obvious. There are dramatic weirs and flood warning lights at key locks. Pilling's Lock Marina offers attractive new facilities for boaters to the south of the Waterway, including café/retail. However, the facilities are for the exclusive use of boat owners and the development is largely inaccessible to visitors using the towpath.

Mountsorrel is a similarly attractive destination, with the Waterside Inn being a focus for coach trips linking up with day trips on the canal. The town hosts other attractions such as the Stonehurst Family Farm and Motor Museum as well as a small marina.

Barrow Upon Soar and Mountsorrel are divided by the A6 with several substantial road bridges crossing both the river and canal. The route is characterised by grazing land and access to the waters edge is shared with livestock. There is a lack of a defined path and cycling is almost impossible due to the number of turnstiles and gates. The limited number of cross valley links means that the Waterway feels a little fragmented, isolating the settlements and communities in the vicinity.

4.3.7 Character Area 7 – Loughborough & Environs

On the approach to Loughborough, the Grand Union Canal threads its way through the town, sandwiched between the edge of the settlement and the railway. Within easy reach of the canal are the railway station, the Great Central Railway (Historic Railway) and the Bell Foundry, all key regional visitor destinations. The canal skirts a mix of industry as it leaves the town in both directions, forming a natural edge between low grade industrial uses and open countryside.

Loughborough is a thriving university town which has just reinvented its historic canal basin – a former coal wharf and once a magnet for heavy industrial use. Loughborough Canal Basin has recently undergone comprehensive redevelopment and regeneration, with a mix of café bars/restaurants and student housing focused around the reinvigorated canal terminus. The canal arm, which links the town with the main canal, and the basin itself, provide limited scope for visiting craft to moor (short term), encouraging increased use and activity on the water.



“Waterway corridors can also act as key focal areas for the diversification of agricultural activities. Indeed the Rural White Paper suggests that rural waterways can present important opportunities to develop new enterprises such as businesses, telecottages, shops, cafes and community centres, visitor centres and museums, self-catering accommodation, and boat related industries. Potential activities linked to the waterways could include the creation of marina facilities, craft outlets, bed and breakfast accommodation and wildlife reserves.”

Planning a future for the inland waterways IWAAC 2001

5.0 THE ISSUES

5.1 Overview

This section discusses the barriers and opportunities to delivering the vision for the Waterway. Key issues facing the Waterway are then discussed to generate a baseline from which the vision will need to be built upon.

5.2 Physical Issues Affecting the Waterway

5.2.1 Landscape and Ecological Value of the Waterway

The diverse and ever-changing landscape value of the Waterway has been discussed in section 4, whilst the ecological contribution of the corridor as a site of biodiversity and as home to various species has been detailed in section 2.10. It is important to recognise and acknowledge the ecological significance of the Waterway.

Much of the study area is located within the flood plain of the Soar Valley. A number of roads cross the river and are understood to experience access restrictions during flood events particularly between Sibley Mill and Barrow upon Soar. The River Soar has a number of tributaries within the study area. To the south of Leicester these include the River Sence and Whetstone Brook. The principal tributaries to the north of Leicester are the River Wreake, the Fishpool, Woods and Rothley Brook. Flood issues occur at the confluence of these tributaries, particularly where the rivers combine at Cossington, where the timing of peak flood flows can have a significant impact on flood depths.

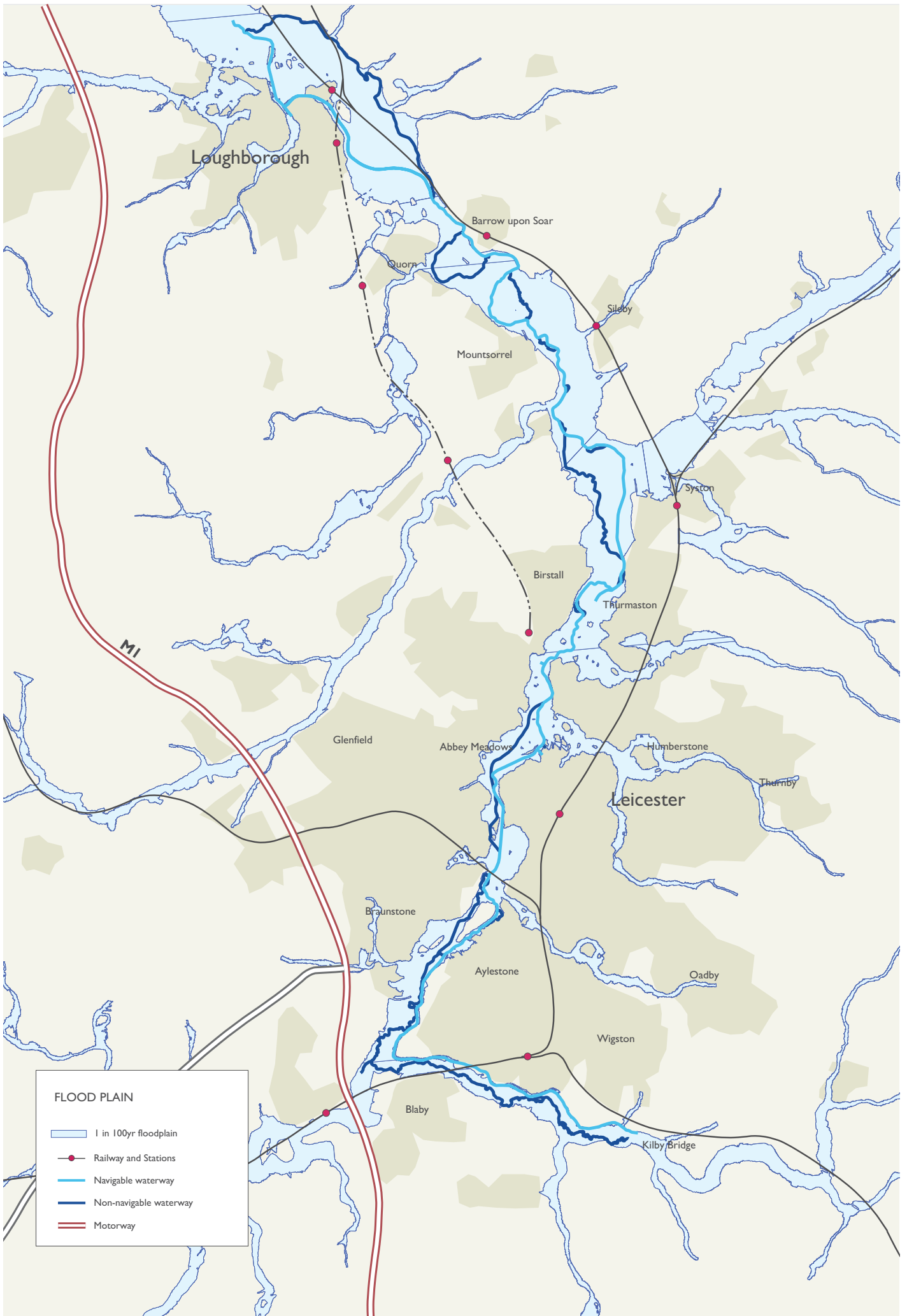
During industrialisation in the late 18th Century, buildings within Loughborough and Leicester were constructed right up to the edge of the river bank in order to allow convenient access to the water. As well as removing land from the natural floodplain, this created constrictions to flood conveyance. The effect on flood risk from this development was sufficient on issue in the early 1900s for the Leicester City Council

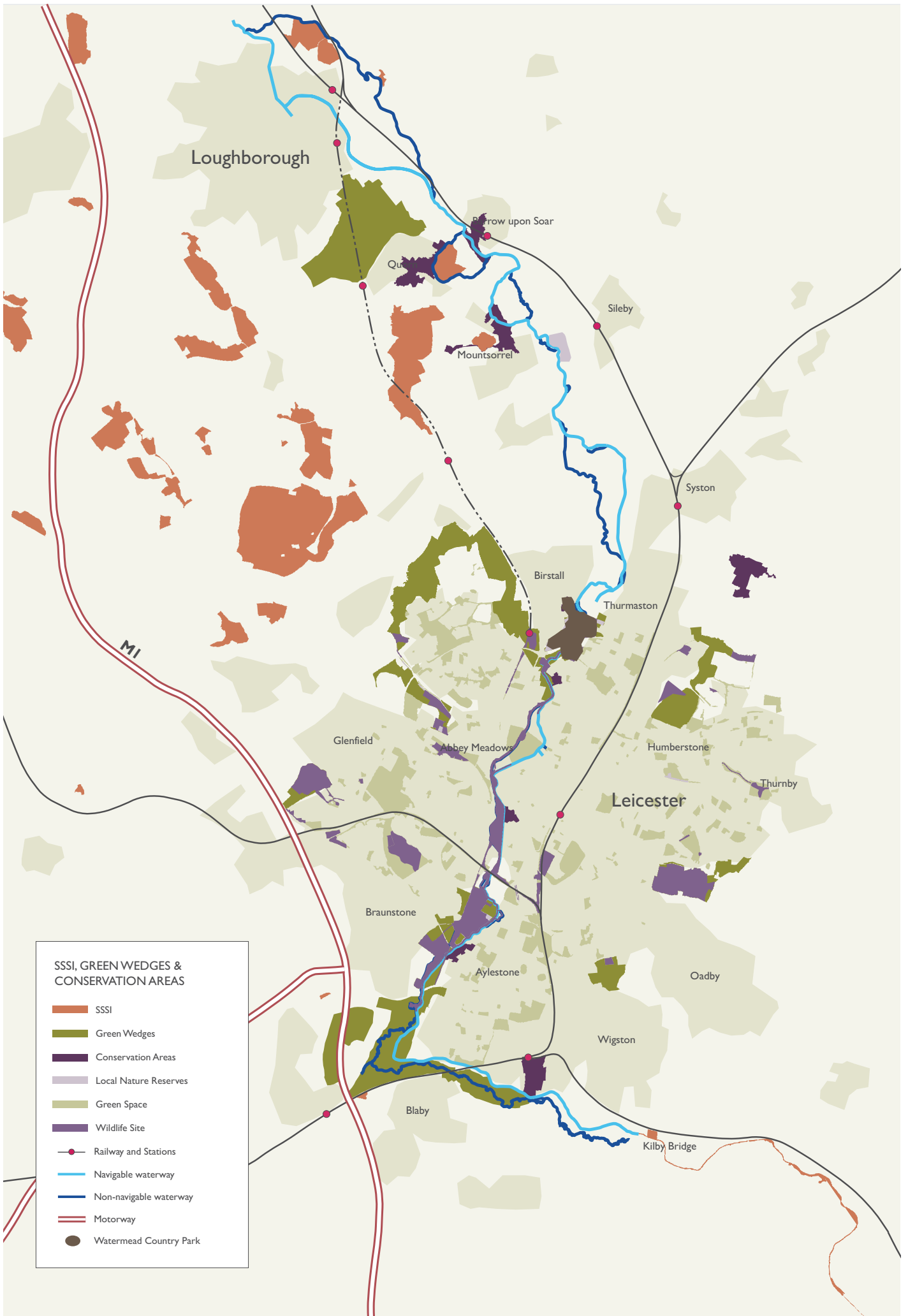
to undertake a significant improvements programme, widening the weirs to allow greater flow. This improved the situation but many of the buildings remain to this day and further inappropriate development in the floodplain has increased flood risk.

The Environment Agency Flood Risk Management Strategy (2006)¹⁹, found that the approach for flood plain protection varies across the catchment. At this time, there was no agreed approach to considering flood risk as part of development proposals. To a degree, this approach will have been superseded by the introduction of national guidance contained within PPS25₂₀ (Development and Flood Risk, published December 2006). This strategy should support the main principles of PPS25 in seeking to manage water and balance flood risk. In practice this means balancing flood risk with promoting development and encouraging bio-diversity.

The fundamental challenge for this strategy will be to deliver increased development activity along the Waterway that supports and enhances the ecological and landscape quality of the area. Thus development should not compromise the quality of the natural environment, rather it should seek to increase it.







5.2.2 Heritage

The Waterway itself must be considered as an important historic entity in its own right, due to the strategic role it has played throughout history since the navigation was opened in 1778. Along the route there remains a rich heritage linked to the historic industries which the canal originally served including locks, lockkeepers' cottages, bridges, mills and factories. Some of these industrial buildings have been renovated, some demolished, but a significant number are either derelict or used for low grade industrial purposes. Areas of known heritage interest within Leicester include:

- Bath Lane between A47 and Evans Weir, an area of high archaeological potential
- Frog Island area – listed buildings and buildings of historic interest
- Abbey Park has a Grade II Listing in the Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest. The River Soar flows through the Park, whilst there is pedestrian access across the River to the Abbey Grounds
- St Margaret's Way, which runs alongside the Grade I Listed Abbot Penny's Wall; and
- Charnwood District, where there are the Grade II Listed Buildings of Cossington Mill and Cotes Mill

The potential of many of these historic buildings has yet to be realised and there exists a significant opportunity to develop these derelict or low grade industrial purpose buildings. The re-use of these buildings can help to develop and reinforce the unique character and local distinctiveness of the Waterway. Additionally, the Waterway runs next to two nationally important archaeological monuments, Leicester Abbey and Leicester Castle Park.

5.2.3 Access to and along the Waterway

While in some areas the towpath provides an excellent linear route with provision for pedestrians and cyclists alike, there are other areas where the condition of the towpath is either poor or in some cases non-existent. It is not possible to cycle the route in full and at Cossington there is limited access to the canalside due to bank erosion.

Most but not all the entire navigable Waterway is owned by British Waterways including the towpath. Areas with no towpath indicate private ownership. In most such cases, towpaths and riverside paths are not public rights of way but routes that can be used by the public with the permission of the landowner.

The Waterway is crossed by a number of major arterial routes. However, in numerous locations these crossings act as a barrier with no defined route onto the canal. They therefore reduce the connectivity of the Waterway to the surrounding areas. There is a general lack of gateways onto the Waterway and access by car is very limited. Parking provision is often poorly sign-posted with limited facilities. This is not conducive to encouraging visitors to stop off and enjoy particular sections of the Waterway.

With a number of railway stations located within easy reach of the Waterway there is untapped potential in terms of linking different modes of transport together.

The result is that the use of the Waterway as a mode of connection is not maximised and without a hierarchy of access points or gateways it is difficult to manage visitor numbers.

5.2.4 Waterway Animation and Interaction

The Waterway is a popular boating facility. While there are no local boating figures available, a significant number of boats can be seen either moored or travelling along the Waterway. This is a major positive in terms of providing animation along the canal length.

There are also other opportunities for users to physically interact with the Waterway. Existing opportunities include a boat trip centre, an outdoor pursuits centre, several sea cadet buildings, an active rowing club, parks and a few picnic sites. There are also numerous pubs and restaurants along the Waterway.

Angling is popular along the Waterway, and anglers are an important resource in terms of reporting issues/problems to the authorities such as the presence of floating pennywort.

Whilst some of the existing facilities are in good condition and are evidently in active use, there are a number which visually detract from the setting and character of the Waterway. The length of the Waterway is such that in areas where existing facilities are poor, public perceptions of the route as a whole are likely to have negative connotations.

The potential for leisure facilities in existing plans, policies and strategies is predominantly linked to identified sites. However, there is a recognition that the waterside could be a destination for increased numbers of boaters as well as providing potential for additional watersports. This could incorporate the potential for long-stay or permanent moorings for residential boats, as well as opportunities for encouraging river cruise holidays and tourism activities.

There is little evidence of public art investment along the Waterway except for the King Lear and Millennium Mammoth sculptures situated within Watermead Country Park. An attempt was made to introduce some interactive artwork close to Frog Island in Leicester; however, it was vandalised and subsequently removed. Choosing locations which have a high footfall and are visible from a wide area is important in determining where public art may be located in the future.

5.2.5 Signage

Signage to and from the Waterway is poor. The signage provides very little in the way of directional information such as identifying upcoming destinations and distances to these destinations. There is a significant reliance on Leicestershire County Council markers, but in many cases these are simply statutory footpath markers and nothing more in terms of directional information.

There is no sign linkage for pedestrians to adjacent parks such as Abbey Park and Watermead Country Park.

Along the Waterway route, there is limited signage informing users that they are actually on the River Soar and Grand Union Canal route.

Linking to observation about the quality of signage, there is little information given to encourage boaters to stop (rather than pass through this Waterway stretch to destinations outside). There are isolated examples of information, interpretation and wayfinding material at Watermead Country Park but this is not standard along the route of the Waterway.

In summary, the present signage fails to adequately inform users about the full offer within the Waterway corridor. Neither does it add positively to the identity of the Waterway.

5.2.6 “Ownership” of the Waterway

“Ownership” of the Waterway is across several organisations. British Waterways own and operate the majority of the Waterway within the context of their overall responsibility for the UK’s inland waterways. The local authorities have responsibility for the wider corridor. There is no single organisation with the remit to promote and manage the wider Waterway corridor, as it would be if the area was a designated regional park.

The number of stakeholders makes the implementation of a cohesive and holistic strategy much more difficult.

The delivery of this strategy will require the support of numerous stakeholders and partners. However, at present no formal partnership exists to achieve this and therefore this could represent a significant stumbling block. Without the formation of a partnership that takes account of the diverse range of interests involved, it seems unlikely that true potential of the Waterway will be realised.

5.2.7 Low profile/lack of distinctive identity

At present the Waterway has a low profile in the area and is often referred to as “a hidden asset.” The Waterway’s identity can be confusing as it has a number of different titles along the route: Grand Union Canal, Leicester Navigation, the Leicester Line and the River Soar. This lack of a distinct identity is problematic when trying to market the Waterway.

The promotional material available is compiled by a number of sources and the quality of the material is varied and inconsistent. The material reviewed does not adequately illustrate the full offer of the Waterway.

The random nature of the signage, with over 10 different signage providers, also fails to provide the Waterway with any distinction.

The importance that profile and brand have in terms of community ownership can be seen from other initiatives. The Trans-Pennine Trail is over 130 miles long yet through a consistent identity it is able to harbour volunteer groups along the route. These additional benefits have valuable knock-on effects in terms of maintenance and security.

The lack of a brand or a single initiative which illustrates the offer of the Waterway is a barrier to increasing engagement. Hence the corridor is not widely known about and the facilities that currently exist are less well used than may have been anticipated.

5.2.8 Anti-social behaviour

Overall the quality of the Waterway is generally good with limited evidence of anti-social behaviour; however, visible signs include low level graffiti and broken glass. The fear of anti-social behaviour may be a barrier to people using the Waterway including the towpath, a fear which increases after dark.



5.2.9 Lack of coherent approach on role of Waterway in planning policy

A significant barrier to delivering the vision is the lack of a clear direction at the Strategic Level of local planning policy on the role of the Waterway. While the emerging Leicester Core Strategy₂₁ (which is at the Issues and Options stage) makes reference to the importance of Waterways, it does not give specific details on how these assets should be promoted. Instead recommendations are merely made to improve access to the Waterway and improve cycling facilities. Local Development Frameworks are important documents for providing a range of priorities for a diverse range of partners. Consequently, if a project is not identified as a priority then it is unlikely to be implemented. For instance, there is no coherent approach in planning policy (or in practice) to capturing developer contributions (planning gain) to fund improvements to the Waterway and its environs.

The Waterway is included as a priority in some regeneration masterplans, for example the Leicester City Centre masterplan. However, (partly as a result of the lack of coherent approach in strategic planning policy) there is no consistent approach to the way masterplans consider the Waterway. This leads to a tendency to divide the Waterway into different elements and thus a holistic approach is not utilised to develop its potential.

5.2.10 Quality of development

Within any waterside development, high quality design which engages rather than turns its back on the Waterway is preferred. There are some good examples within the study area, both old and new; however, there are examples of even some of the more recent developments failing to make the most of their location, resulting in severe restrictions to waterside access. This issue needs to be resolved to ensure that the potential of the Waterway is maximised in all, and not just some, developments that take place. The problem is exacerbated by the lack of clear planning policies on waterside development.

5.2.11 Approach to funding

At present there is no clear set of priorities in terms of projects for the Waterfront area. Neither is there a clear framework for how these projects might be funded. Without the creation and adoption of such an approach it will be almost impossible to implement and deliver this strategy.

Gain from planning obligations for use in developing the Waterway may not presently be reaching the potential that they could be. However, the forthcoming Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) may provide the ideal opportunity to overcome this issue. Furthermore, there are a number of recent changes to regional funding arrangements which need to be considered. See overleaf.

THE LEICESTERSHIRE MULTI AREA AGREEMENT

The Leicestershire Multi Area Agreement (MAA), signed in January 2009, represents joint working between Leicester City and Leicestershire County Councils in association with emda, the Learning and Skills Council, JobCentre plus, and three local universities (DeMonfort, Leicester, and Loughborough). By 2020 the MAA aims to make Leicester and Leicestershire a prosperous, enterprising and dynamic economy, driven by innovative businesses, creative people, a highly skilled, local workforce and with a sustainable infrastructure. This will necessitate a concerted, co-ordinated and strategic programme of investment into the county. This will in part be assisted through the devolved funding from emda that the MAA Board is responsible for co-ordinating. The implications of the MAA for the Waterway are significant, as one of the three key themes within the agreement is to improve the quality of places making them more attractive spaces to invest. The regeneration of the Waterway appears well situated to benefit from this potential funding source as the cross-boundary nature of this governance structure replicates the cross-boundary nature of the Waterway.



THE NEW GROWTH POINTS INITIATIVE

The Waterway falls within the 3 Cities and 3 Counties (6Cs) Growth Point. The vision of the 3 Cities growth point, consisting of Derby, Leicester, and Nottingham, is:

“...to harness “The Power of Three” to fulfil the economic potential of the 3 Cities as locations for growth in the Knowledge Economy, in so doing increasing the contribution the Tri-City Region makes to regional and national economic growth and prosperity.”

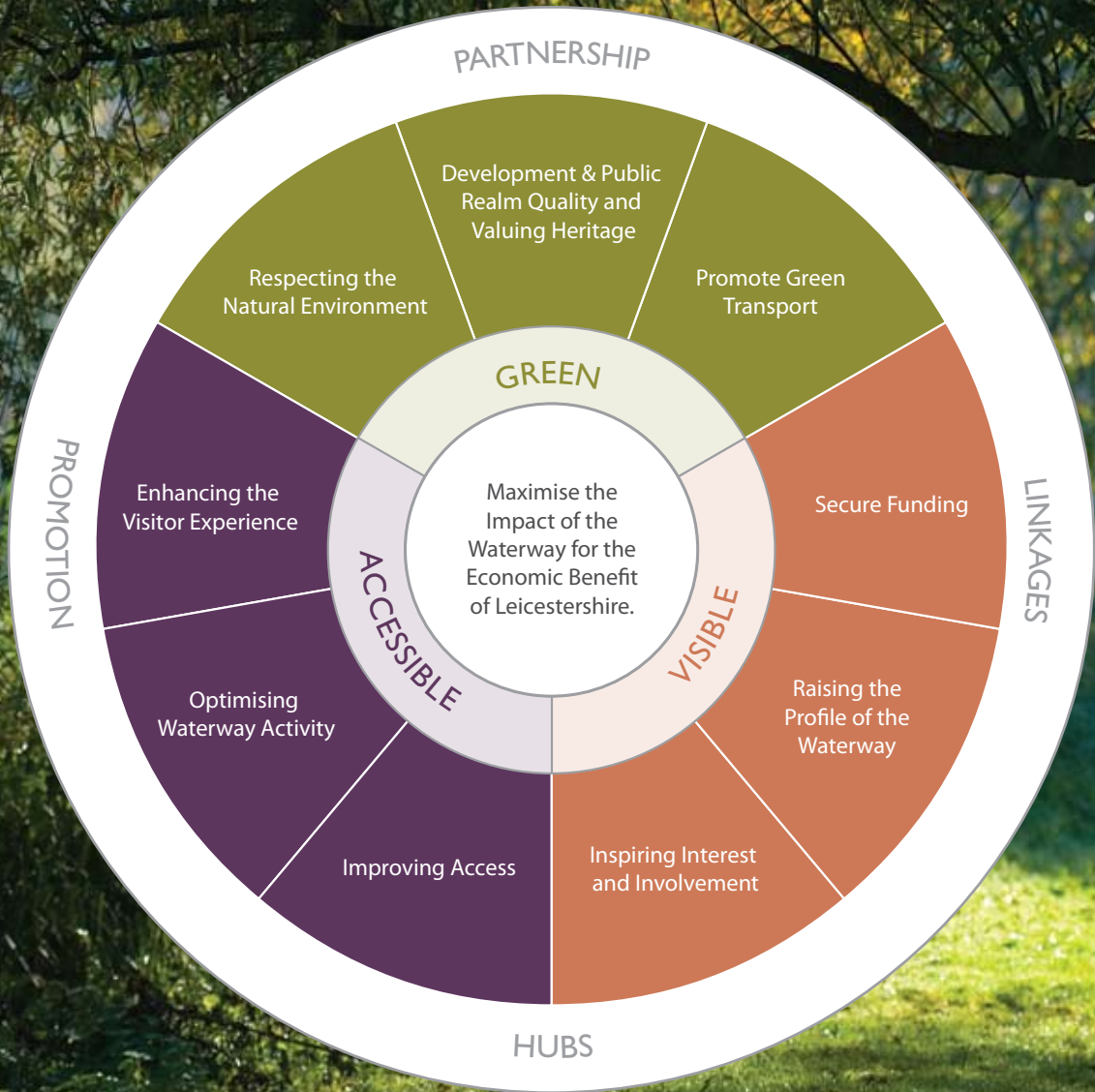
One of the eight core ambitions for the three cities is to create a Regional Riverside Corridor covering the Rivers Derwent, Soar and Trent and their tributaries. This corridor will be tasked with protecting wildlife and making the countryside more accessible for recreation. Hence, the Waterway appears likely to be eligible for funding from this source as it is clearly one of the strategic priorities for the Growth Point as a whole. Fundamentally, it is clear that funding will be required from a wide range of sources to finance the actions entailed within this strategy and thus achieve the true potential of the Waterway.



5.3 Conclusions on Main Issues

This section of the strategy summarises the main issues affecting the functioning of the Waterway. These main issues form the basis for the development of a coherent Waterway strategy. Specific aims to tackle these issues are set out in subsequent sections of this report, developing a bespoke strategy for the Waterway.

- Visitor experience of the Waterway is severely constrained by inconsistent access provision and poor signage linking the Waterway to the surrounding communities. These two issues affect the day to day function of the Waterway and lead to negative perceptions and thus under-utilisation
- At present there is no cohesive accessibility strategy for the Waterway. Accessibility strategies should seek to improve cycle and pedestrian access to the Waterway and explore the potential for developing an integrated accessibility strategy, linking with modes of public transport
- The role of the Waterway as an important green open space is not fully recognised. The Waterway has the potential to add to the open space provision within Leicestershire and contribute to achieving the aspirations of the Local Area Agreement in relation to establishing healthier communities and promoting greater use of existing open space. Improving the branding and marketing of the Waterway will create additional awareness of the Waterway potential as well as widening the potential visitor base
- The signage standards along the Corridor are currently poor and do not provide any sense of identity. Branding of the Waterway should incorporate the potential for a standardised palette of signage types and the potential for improving the street furniture available along the Waterway. Information displays along the Waterway are generally poor and in need of comprehensive improvement and upgrading
- Whilst economic development opportunities have been explored within Loughborough and Leicester, waterside development potential has not been maximised outside these large settlements. There is the potential to accentuate the role of the Waterway, particularly within rural areas, creating a greater link with existing communities;
- The Waterway is reasonably well-utilised and areas such as the Leicestershire Waterside and Loughborough Wharf have sought to maximise the economic benefits of the Waterway. Development opportunities to provide additional waterside services and facilities should be considered at strategic points along the route, improving the offer at existing destinations and exploring the potential for additional destination points
- Improving the economic potential must also be balanced against protecting the ecological and historical value of the Waterway. These assets also have the potential to bring economic benefits to the County, through linkage of attractions and tourism opportunities. Flood risk issues also constrain the opportunities for waterside development
- The Waterway strategy must incorporate links to the key strategies for Leicestershire and the East Midlands, encompassing a number of high level policies and visions (contained in the Regional Spatial Strategy and Regional Economic Strategy). These high-level links will be critical in enabling the Partnership to access additional funding resources to implement the projects outlined in the action plan
- The Waterway needs to be seen as an entity at a strategic planning level by key agencies (Local Authorities and Regional Development Agency)



“The role of the Strategy is to highlight the significance of the waterway corridor and explore opportunities for enhancement, branding and interpretation, with a clear focus on delivery.”

6.0 FRAMEWORK FOR INTERVENTION

While many of the issues identified in the previous section are rooted in historic and often quite complex matters, this strategy seeks to be straightforward and transparent to ensure maximum impact and effective communication to a wide audience. The key issues have therefore been distilled into key themes for ease of communication and understanding.

- enable physical access along and to the Waterway for users by a means which is appropriate to the diverse character of the route
- The strategy is therefore based on three simple themes:
 - The Green Waterway
 - The Visible Waterway
 - The Accessible Waterway

6.1 Themes of the Strategy

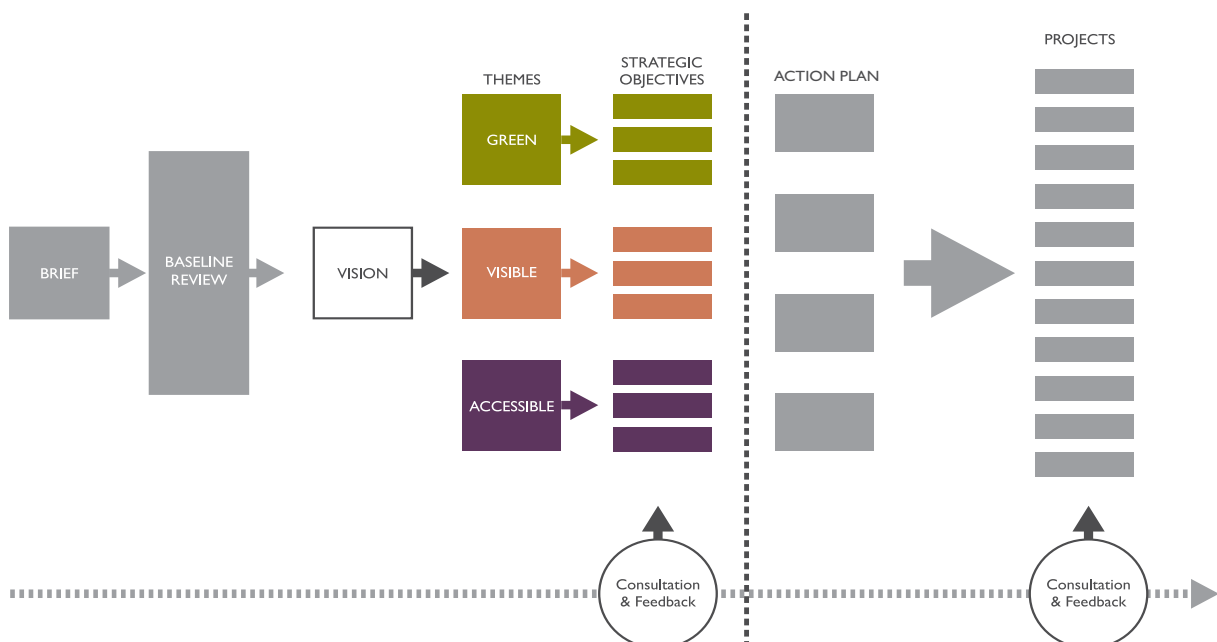
Analysis of the issues along the route demonstrates that the Waterway is rich in history, nature, and character. However, to make a stronger contribution to the 'quality of place' and to realise its economic potential there is a need to:

- recognise the value of the Waterway in aiding the transition of urban to rural environments, bringing nature and greenspace into the suburbs and centres and adding interest and character to the rural landscape
- provide the Waterway with a stronger identity which attracts users and enables them to navigate between and enjoy designations along the route

6.2 Building on the Waterway Themes

Building on the themes of **Green, Visible, and Accessible**, and prior to the development of an Action Plan, nine complementary objectives have been developed. These are, in effect, a description of what needs to be done to deliver the themes and criteria against which any potential projects should be assessed. The objectives have equal status and are strongly interdependent, so the overall success of the Strategy will be dependent on delivering all the objectives.

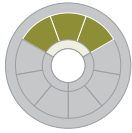
The following section of this Strategy describes the nine objectives.





“While opportunities for protecting or developing wildlife value may be very limited on a few stretches of waterway, in the majority of cases good planning, design and management practice will provide tangible wildlife benefits, increasing their attractiveness for many users and contributing towards realising their full potential as a multifunctional resource.”

(Britain's Inland Waterways: Balancing the needs of navigation and aquatic wildlife – IWAC 2008)²²



GREEN

THE GREEN WATERWAY

Green Objective 1: Respecting the Natural Environment

THE STRATEGY AIMS TO:

Balance increasing access to the Waterway with the need to conserve and enhance its landscape and ecological value.

At the heart of this strategy is a desire to enable people to have an increasing awareness of the Waterway and consider it to be a feature which adds value to where they live and visit. It is acknowledged that any attempts to increase access to and use of the Waterway must be carefully managed to ensure it does not have a negative impact on the Waterway's ecological and landscape value. It is essential to support and maintain the Waterway as a continuous wildlife corridor and key component of the green network. It is also important to improve the biological quality of the Waterway to ensure its accordance with the Water Framework Directive.

The Waterway includes stretches of canal, navigable and non-navigable river. This provides the opportunity to restrict the activity of people to the navigable sections, limiting access to the non-navigable sections and thus providing a haven for wildlife.

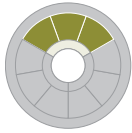


In addition, with the exception of where the Waterway passes close to central Loughborough, parts of Watermead Country Park and through Leicester City Centre, public access is typically restricted to a single side of the Waterway, where the towpath is located. This retains space for wildlife and enables public activity to be directed towards more appropriate locations.



“Local Authorities, statutory environmental bodies and developers should work with the voluntary sector, landowners and local communities to ensure the delivery, protection and enhancement of Environmental Infrastructure across the Region. Such infrastructure should contribute to a high quality natural and built environment and to the delivery of sustainable communities.”

The Draft East Midlands Regional Plan, Policy 27 – Regional Priorities for Environmental and Green Infrastructure



GREEN

THE GREEN WATERWAY

Green Objective 2: Development & Public Realm Quality and Valuing Heritage

THE STRATEGY AIMS TO:

Value the importance of the Waterway's heritage and ensuring new development makes a positive contribution to the waterside.

This aspiration seeks to set an expectation for a high quality environment by recognising the contribution of the built heritage and aiming for a step change in the design of new development and the contribution it makes to the Waterway.

The settlements along the route of the Waterway will continue to evolve and change. Indeed, on the waterside it is hoped that there will be development to support a more active role which is appropriate in policy, nature, and scale to the character area. However, new development should respect the built heritage of the settlements along the route and meet minimum quality standards.

It is therefore important to set the scene for development with a clear list of guidelines which will ensure a coherent and holistic approach to managing future change. These guidelines can be carried forward within emerging Local Development Frameworks to provide a co-ordinated approach when considering waterside development.

Recognising the character and diversity of the Waterway is the first step in setting a framework, as there is a risk that the diversity and interest along the Waterway will be lost through the introduction of a uniform waterside solution.

It is recognised that there are existing plans guided by Masterplanning principles at Windmill Road in Loughborough, Waterside and Abbey Park in central Leicester and Blaby Park in Wigston. This strategy does not seek to revisit these developments but rather set out some principles for areas along the route which may come forward subsequently.



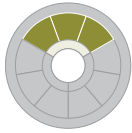
General principles for development:

- respect the historic character of the Waterway and its setting, including retention of waterspace
- are of an appropriate scale in relation to the Waterway context and give consideration to siting, orientation and massing of buildings
- incorporate site layouts which positively address the water, ensuring there is an 'active frontage' to the waterway at ground floor level
- preserve and enhance key views to/from the water and in relation to existing landmarks and features
- ensure that water-based activity can flourish, maintaining the vibrancy of the Waterfront
- support the potential for mixed use development to ensure there is life and activity throughout the day and evening
- make space for events and activities, with a focus on the water (existing/proposed waterbodies)
- create a high quality, well detailed landscape and public realm treatment, which responds to character areas
- incorporate boundary treatments which are attractive and visually permeable, ensuring the canal is not isolated from its surroundings
- use appropriate and distinctive building materials from sustainable sources which reinforce the sense of place
- are compatible with flood risk constraints and do not compromise the biodiversity value of the Waterway



“The Government’s ‘Choosing Health’ paper identifies that activity and exercise is crucial if health is to improve recognising that increasing exercise will reduce the risk of chronic diseases and premature death and effective action on diet, activity and exercise will help tackle heart disease, cancer, diabetes, stroke, high blood pressure and high cholesterol.”

(Healthy Leicester – Tackling Obesity 2007)²³



GREEN

THE GREEN WATERWAY

Green Objective 3: Promote Green Transport

THE STRATEGY AIMS TO:

Encourage increased use of the Waterway corridor by providing a high quality green open space.

There is clear evidence that access to a rural environment and green open spaces for recreational purpose has a profound effect on physical, social, and mental wellbeing. The wellbeing of a population has a subsequent effect on prosperity.

The towpath along the Waterway is an important asset as it enables walking, running and cycling, either as an alternative means of travel to work, or for purely recreational purposes. Water-based activities should also be further encouraged. There is a longstanding and successful rowing club in Leicester, an outdoor activities centre on the waterside, and opportunities to hire canoes, boats and watercycles at Barrow Upon Soar.

The Waterway is also valued very highly for the connection it provides with the environment as well as for its pure exercise benefits. It can also provide breakout space especially within the urban environments and be a place to reflect, relax or just get away from the hustle and bustle of the daily routine. The provision of a high quality environment to enable contemplative activity is a significant factor in the mental wellbeing of a population.

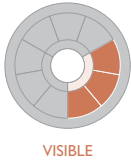


The Waterway should be promoted as an asset to add value to Natural England's "Walking a Way to Health"²⁴ campaign and deliver the objectives of the Stepping Stones Partnership where "everyone will have opportunity to participate in a healthier lifestyle". The potential for cycling the Waterway route should also be publicised.



“Funding is perhaps the most challenging issue facing many regeneration projects. The amount of finance available within the public sector is limited and the number of projects looking for funding is expanding all the time. However, the apparent shortage of capital from public sources should not be seen as a barrier to waterway projects, nor dilute the vision underpinning regeneration projects. The need for project funding is simply a challenge to be addressed in any development or regeneration scheme and is an integral part of the delivery approach.”

(Planning a future for the inland waterways IWAAC 2001)¹⁸



THE VISIBLE WATERWAY

Visible Objective 1: Secure Funding

THE STRATEGY AIMS TO:

Deliver a coherent and realistic framework for securing funding, increasing the legitimacy, and visibility, of the Waterway as an asset to the County

Capital Funding

There is a need to secure capital funding for specific projects but also to guarantee a revenue stream to ensure maintenance of the features along the route of the Waterway and the management and promotion of activities and events.

There are known to be existing waterway related projects which are 'funding deficient' and indeed high expectations in relation to what S106 contributions can realistically deliver, particularly in the current climate. There is a need to be more innovative by demonstrating how the inclusion of the Waterway can help to deliver other objectives, for which funding can then be secured. The table in Appendix A1 identifies (principally capital) funding opportunities.



Revenue Funding

The Local Authorities and British Waterways contribute to the maintenance of the towpath. But this maintenance is not comprehensive along the route, as some of the land adjoining the Waterway (particularly in the more rural areas), is in private ownership. Across the UK there has been much investment in green space and public realm in recent years, in response to wider recognition of the associated benefits high quality space confers. However, much of the focus has been upon capital improvements and questions over long-term management and maintenance have often not been adequately addressed, raising the question over the sustainability of such improvements. The funding of day-to-day maintenance is a key challenge in delivering projects whose benefits are sustainable in the long-term.

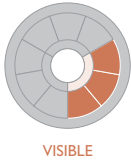
At a high level an appropriate solution suitable for measuring the social and environmental benefits of high quality public realm versus the financial cost of maintenance programmes is required.

The recent CABI publication "Making the invisible visible: the real value of park assets"²⁴, sets out the potential for developing a framework for measuring these intangible benefits. Any potential framework must be supported by a robust evidence base open to external scrutiny. This is particularly important if the evidence needs to be suitable for supporting bids for grants/funding.



“During the second half of the last century, the green space sector in England experienced significant under-investment. ...reversing the legacy of under-investment has not been helped by the way green spaces are classed for accounting purposes which has meant there has been little or no requirement to collect detailed financial data about expenditure on maintenance of individual parks and the assets they contain, and the links between expenditure and the quality of parks and green spaces. This in turn makes it difficult for green space managers to put forward compelling and well-evidenced arguments for increased funding, no matter its source.”

(Making the invisible visible: the real value of park assets, CABI 2009)²⁴



THE VISIBLE WATERWAY

Visible Objective 1: Secure Funding (cont.)

In developing programmes for planned improvements, project management and maintenance issues are generally dealt with through a combination of three traditional models:

- incorporation within local authority maintenance or management frameworks
- seeking of grant funding as a means of ensuring ongoing revenue investment; and
- delivery of projects in a way that encourages and enables local community members to share some of the maintenance or management tasks

In many cases, it is becoming increasingly clear that these 'traditional' models are no longer sufficient on their own and that new thinking is required to identify and develop alternative models and mechanisms which provide more reliable and permanent solutions.

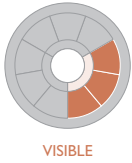
There are a variety of management approaches which can be considered, however, the evidence suggests that no single model will provide an effective solution for all projects. There is a need for a solution that combines public accountability and leadership with private income and community interests.

Some of the options which can provide a course of revenue funding are presented in Appendix A1.





“A key objective of the strategy is to promote a positive identity for the waterway. Presently the waterway has a confused identity and is ill defined in its location. Central to the strategy is the need to ensure that Leicestershire’s waterways are ‘badged’ as a clearly defined entity, embracing both city and county.”



THE VISIBLE WATERWAY

Visible Objective 2: Raising the Profile of the Waterway

THE STRATEGY AIMS TO:

Increase the Waterway's perception and profile by developing opportunities to publicise the Waterway.

The Waterway has a low profile, despite its quality and offer. This 'secret' element is part of its allure, but there is a need to increase the Waterway's perception and profile. This is not helped by the lack of a coherent identity and branding for the Waterway.

The Waterway provides an important Green Infrastructure resource for Leicestershire. This County-wide base for the Waterway should be reflected in any potential branding, reflecting the commitment of the various Local Authority Partners to the wider Waterway concept. Re-defining the River Soar and Grand Union Canal as a 'Waterway Park' could go some way to helping to change perceptions and stimulate interest. This re-branding exercise should involve community consultation exercises to gauge public opinion on any new name for the Waterway.

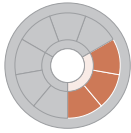


This initiative, combined with a consistency of messaging (including web based, regional/local and on the ground signage and interpretation), will enable levels of awareness and understanding to be significantly enhanced.



"Our waterways have a magnificent capacity to engage people of all ages and from all backgrounds. By maximizing this engagement, we will help more people derive benefit and enjoyment from our waterways and, in turn, secure the long term future and sustainability of our canals and rivers."

HRH The Prince of Wales - BURA and The Waterways Trust, 2008



VISIBLE

THE VISIBLE WATERWAY

Visible Objective 3: Inspiring Interest and Involvement

THE STRATEGY AIMS TO:

Deliver a coherent identity, signage and other way-finding material for the Waterway which is user friendly. Encourage engagement at all levels through education and active participation.

The strategy seeks to increase community participation in waterside activities and increase awareness of the Waterway. The Waterway is an easily accessible resource to be enjoyed as part of everyday life.

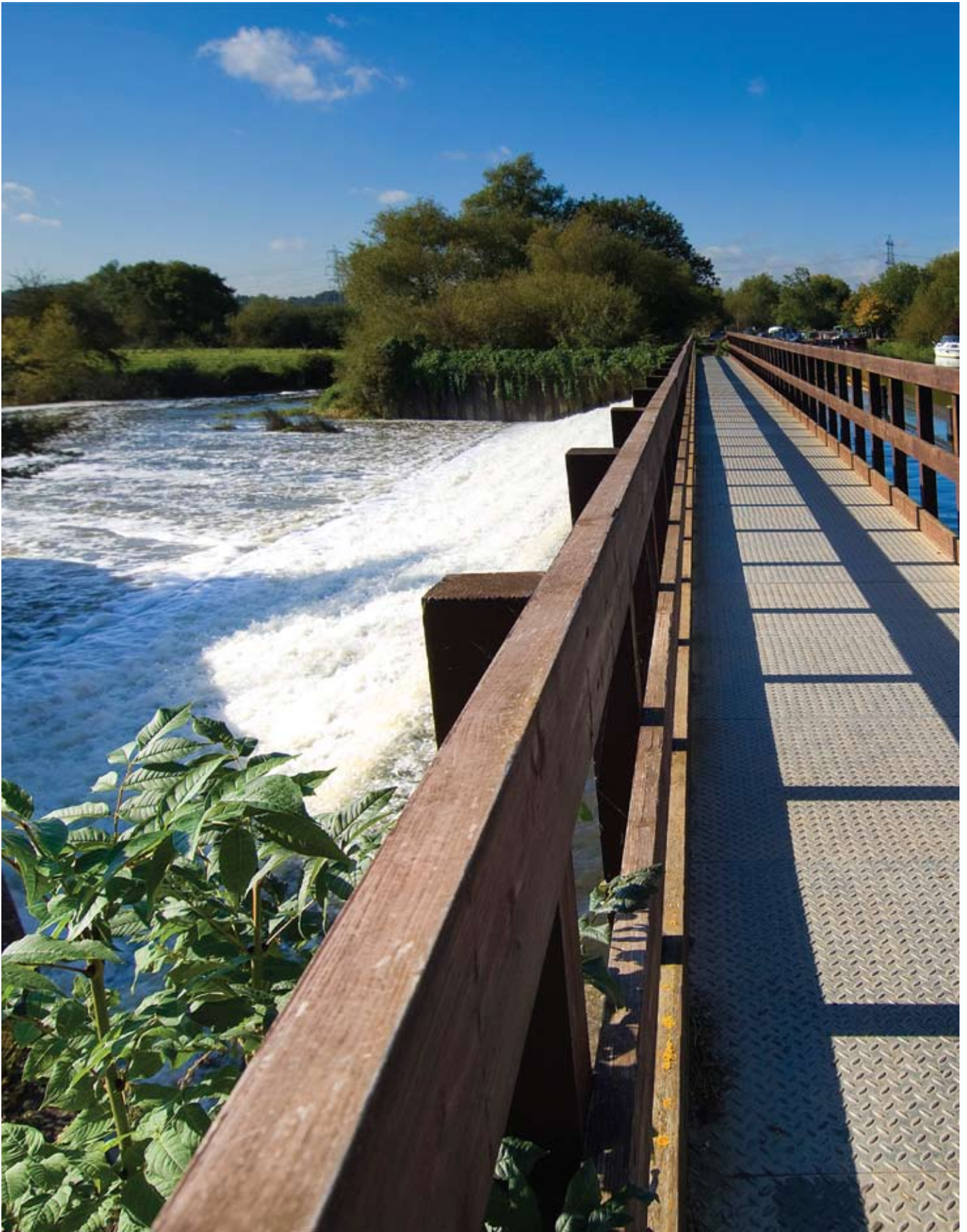
Interest in the Waterway can be generated through articulating a common identity for the Waterway (building on the objectives set out in Visible Objective 2: Increase the Waterway's perception and profile by developing opportunities to publicise the Waterway). This identity should incorporate clear and common wayfinding material (such as signage) directing users both to and along the Waterway. To inspire interest, this signage should be used to draw attention to interesting features along the Waterway, highlight viewing areas, and link attractions and key destinations. Consideration should be given to making such signage innovative through the use of materials and energy. For example, solar and water power could be used to power 'talking' interactive points.



Community engagement in the Waterway is already successfully inspired through the annual Loughborough and Leicester Waterside Festivals. These should be used as a launch pad for raising awareness of the richness of the Waterway and to promote water activities. The potential for hosting additional Waterway events should be considered; these could include an annual boat race, a Waterway linked triathlon, themed walks, open air performances on floating stages, or a floating market.

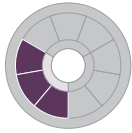
Opportunities for creating a unique identity should incorporate the establishment of a volunteer group to undertake and organise wardening and adoption schemes. These opportunities should seek to go beyond low level maintenance and should include opportunities to improve or develop new skills which may be used to enhance future employment prospects.

Community engagement could be fostered through a "The Friends of the Waterway" scheme which could have responsibility for organising activities such as education days, including heritage and nature trails and children's perspectives.



“Accessibility is fundamental to both the waterside and the waterspace for two reasons. To be sustainable, waterway improvements need to be integrated into the wider area so that a sense of ownership and responsibility is created. Secondly, accessibility encourages use and activity, which drives regeneration.”

(Planning a future for the inland waterways, IWAAC 2001)¹⁸



ACCESSIBLE

THE ACCESSIBLE WATERWAY

Accessible Objective 1: Improving Access

THE STRATEGY AIMS TO:

Provide safe and improved access along the Waterway and enhance gateways to enable access to the Waterway by a range of transport modes.

The Waterway enjoys excellent transport connections by road, rail, and air and is a continuous navigable waterway through Leicestershire. However, access to and along the waterside is often fragmented, variable, and reliant on permissive rights of way in key areas.

The lack of a continuous accessible route is a significant constraint on the Waterway in realising its true potential. An ideal scenario is access to be available all along the 23 mile stretch of Waterway. However, there is a balance to be struck between greater accessibility, interpretation for the public, environmental enhancement, and reflecting upon what is appropriate for the distinctive character areas of the corridor. This means restricting public access in ecological sensitive areas, while promoting access in and around the destination points. In certain areas continuity should be maintained but away from the waterside ensuring the over-riding principle of a continuous route is upheld.

Opportunities to integrate the Waterway with other footpaths and cycleways, such as the Great Central Way and National Cycle Network, should be maximised to enable the links with a wider network, which can attract a greater number of visitors. Enhancing the connectivity of Hub points by a range of nodes will improve access and make the Waterway more visible.



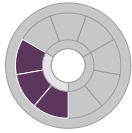
General principles for development:

- implement strong parking strategies to ensure that car parking and service areas are screened from the Waterway corridor, but with easily connected access
- include access routes which link along and (where desirable) across the Waterway, connecting to wider walking/cycling routes
- allow access provision to cater for all users, with integrated and attractive solutions to accommodate level changes
- promote water-based activity, including moorings, along with provision for land-based support facilities. Provide opportunities for appropriate waterside seating and picnic areas



“The future management and development of the waterways has the potential to play a useful role in promoting health and wellbeing and facilitating improved access to sport and recreation for all, including those sections of the community who are disadvantaged.”

(Planning a future for the inland waterways, IWAAC 2001)¹⁸



ACCESSIBLE

THE ACCESSIBLE WATERWAY

Accessible Objective 2: Optimising Waterway Activity

THE STRATEGY AIMS TO:

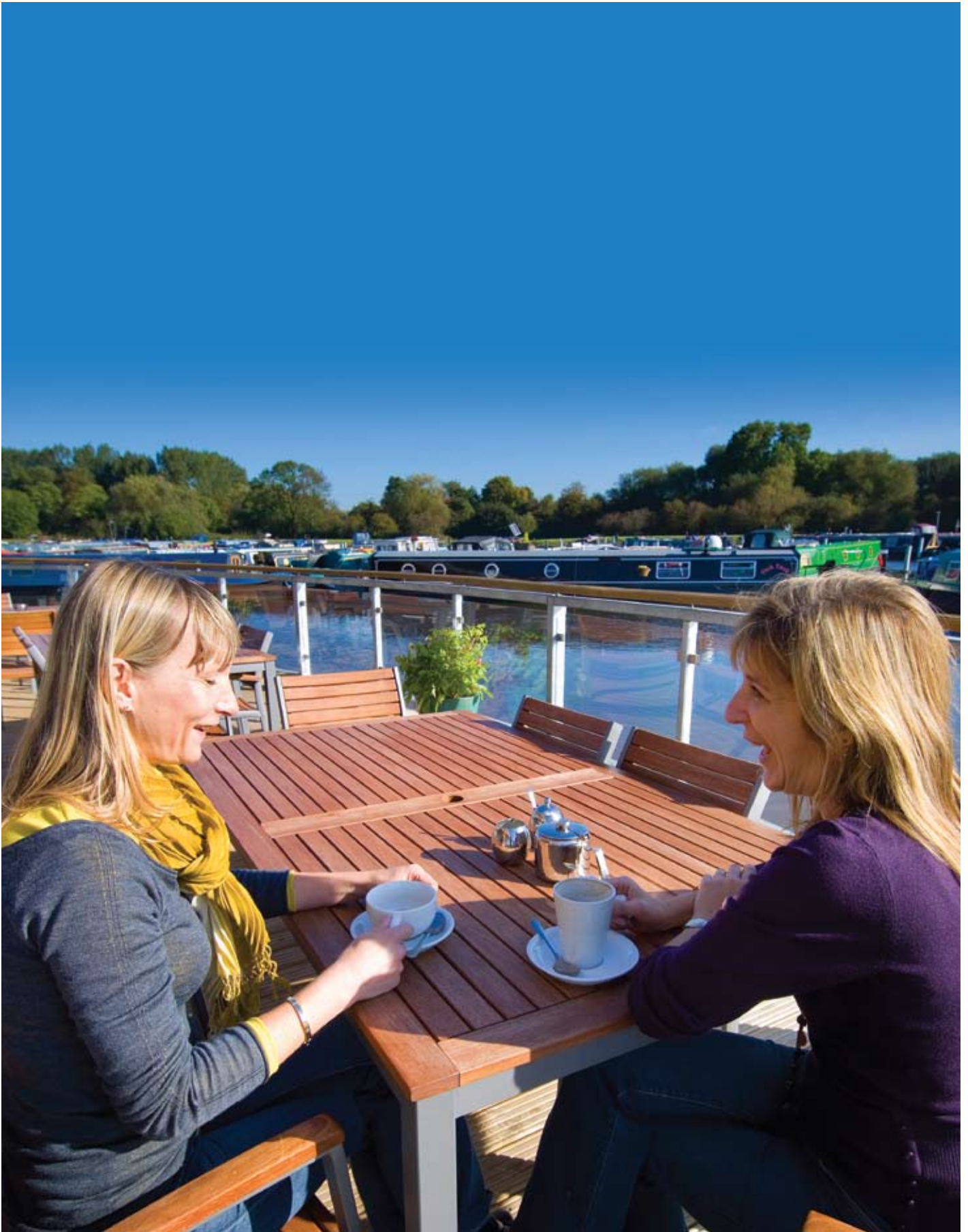
Optimise the use of the Waterway for leisure based short trip travel and the accommodation of business where compatible.

A clear indicator of a healthy Waterway is on-the-water activity. The benefit of animation within a corridor, in terms of boat movements, water-based events, and similar leisure activities, is the ambience created. This strategy seeks to ensure that the 'waterspace' is treated as an integral part of any proposals, recognising the opportunities to create a unique environment for living, working, and visiting. Pillings Lock Marina, which was completed and officially opened in 2008, is a good example of how quickly facilities can become focal points along this Waterway as it is already a successful and active marina.

In addition to the range of 'traditional' activities on the water including boating and angling, there may be scope to promote a number of other uses on the water. These could include floating restaurants/retail as well as events performance space on the water. Public art also has a role to play, providing valuable opportunities to engage the local community in a wide range of art based initiatives, all of which will help to raise the profile of the Waterway and instill a greater sense of ownership amongst local people.

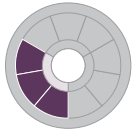


The potential to promote the Waterway as a means of travel by using water taxis and boat trips should also be considered. There are excellent examples of successful and innovative trip providers elsewhere in the country. The most famous is the L.S. Lowry which has transported fans to every Manchester United home game over the last 10 years. The Leeds Waterfront has similarly recently commenced restaurant-based trips along the River Aire.



“Leicestershire is a county of diverse communities and cultures and one steeped in history. Culture has an important place in the country’s industrial and rural heritage and Leicestershire is an emerging tourism destination of importance. Its visitor attractions, including Bosworth Battlefield, Charnwood Forest, the National Forest, Snibston and Foxton Locks show how tourism helps boost the local economy and generate prosperity.”

(Leicestershire Sustainable Community Strategy 2008)₂₅



ACCESSIBLE

THE ACCESSIBLE WATERWAY

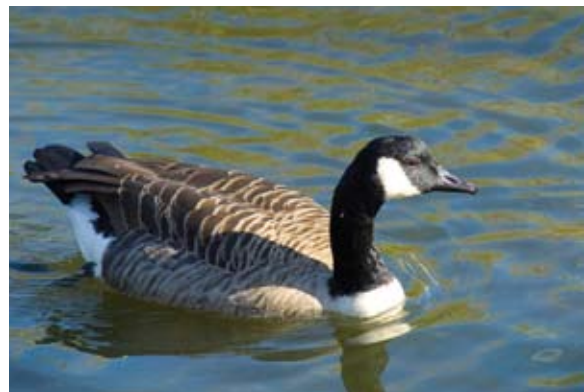
Accessible Objective 3: Enhancing the Visitor Experience

THE STRATEGY AIMS TO:

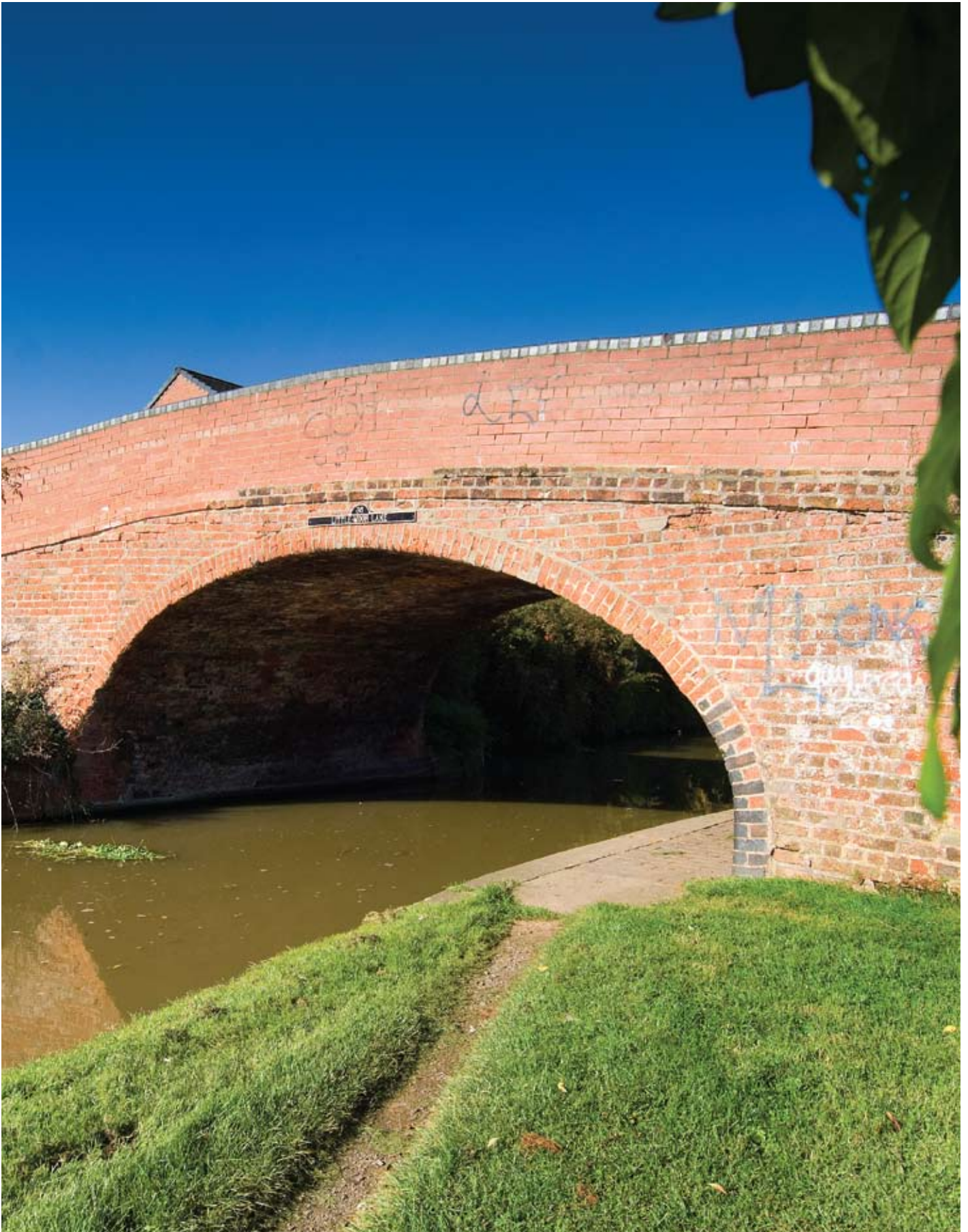
Raise the profile of the Waterway as a feature which connects together existing historic, natural and leisure assets, providing an overall enhanced experience for all users and visitors.

The Waterway is used for a wide range of recreational activities, including all types of boating, fishing, recreational walking and cycling, general sightseeing, and special waterside events such as the Leicester Waterside Festival. In addition, located adjacent to the Waterway are important local, regional, and national visitor attractions such as the Watermead Country Park, the Walkers Stadium, and National Space Centre. The Waterway provides access to the archaeology and historic origins and development of the settlements along its route and enables an appreciation of nature.

However, these assets are currently considered in isolation and are marketed as attractions in their own right. There is limited recognition that the Waterway provides the common connection between these assets, generating opportunities for greater links between these attractions.



Improving the profile of the Waterway should initially focus on improving local perceptions and increasing the use of the Waterway and its attractions. This baseline support for the Waterway can then be used as a foundation for wider profile building, including highlighting potential tourism hot-spots across the route.



“The region’s extensive wetland habitats, including rivers, streams, canals and river corridors, offer potential as visitor routes and destinations with scope to develop themed tourism experiences linking heritage and the natural environment.”

(Destination East Midlands, emda 2003)₃

7.0 THE ACTION PLAN

7.1 Introduction

The previous sections set out the vision and the objectives of the Waterway. This section defines the framework for intervention – the Action Plan. This action plan will provide a geographic focus for activity and investment. While there are a great many projects (listed in Appendix A), which could be implemented, the Action Plan consists of four core elements. These core elements are:

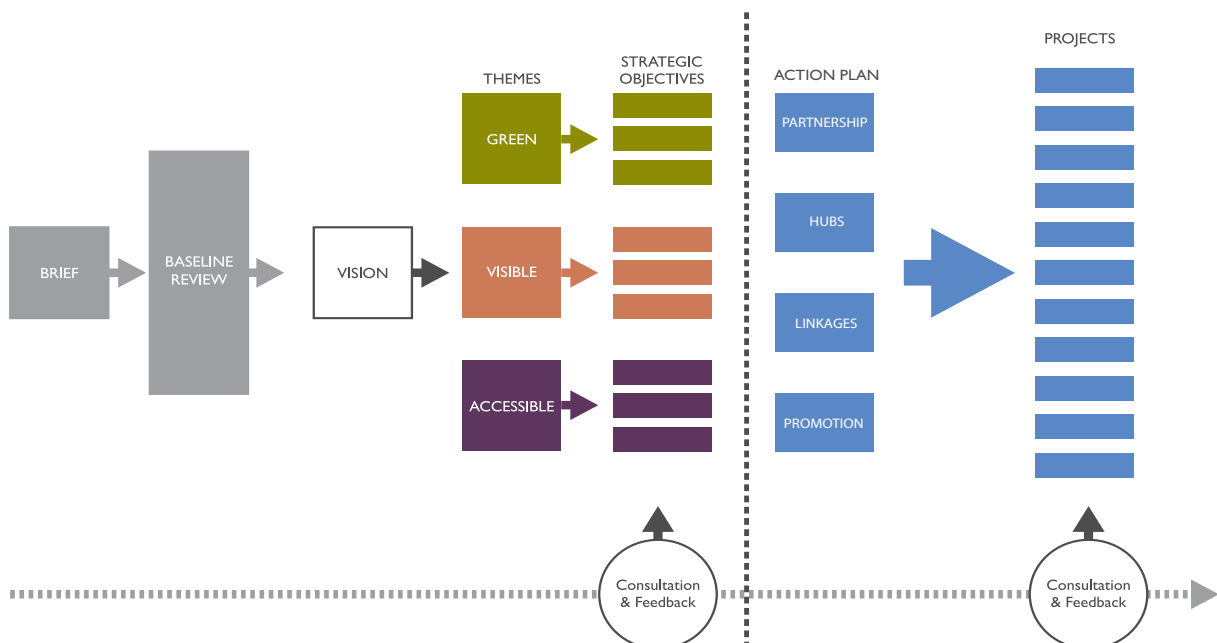
- Partnership
- Develop the Hubs
- Improve the linkages to and along the Waterway
- Promotion of the Waterway

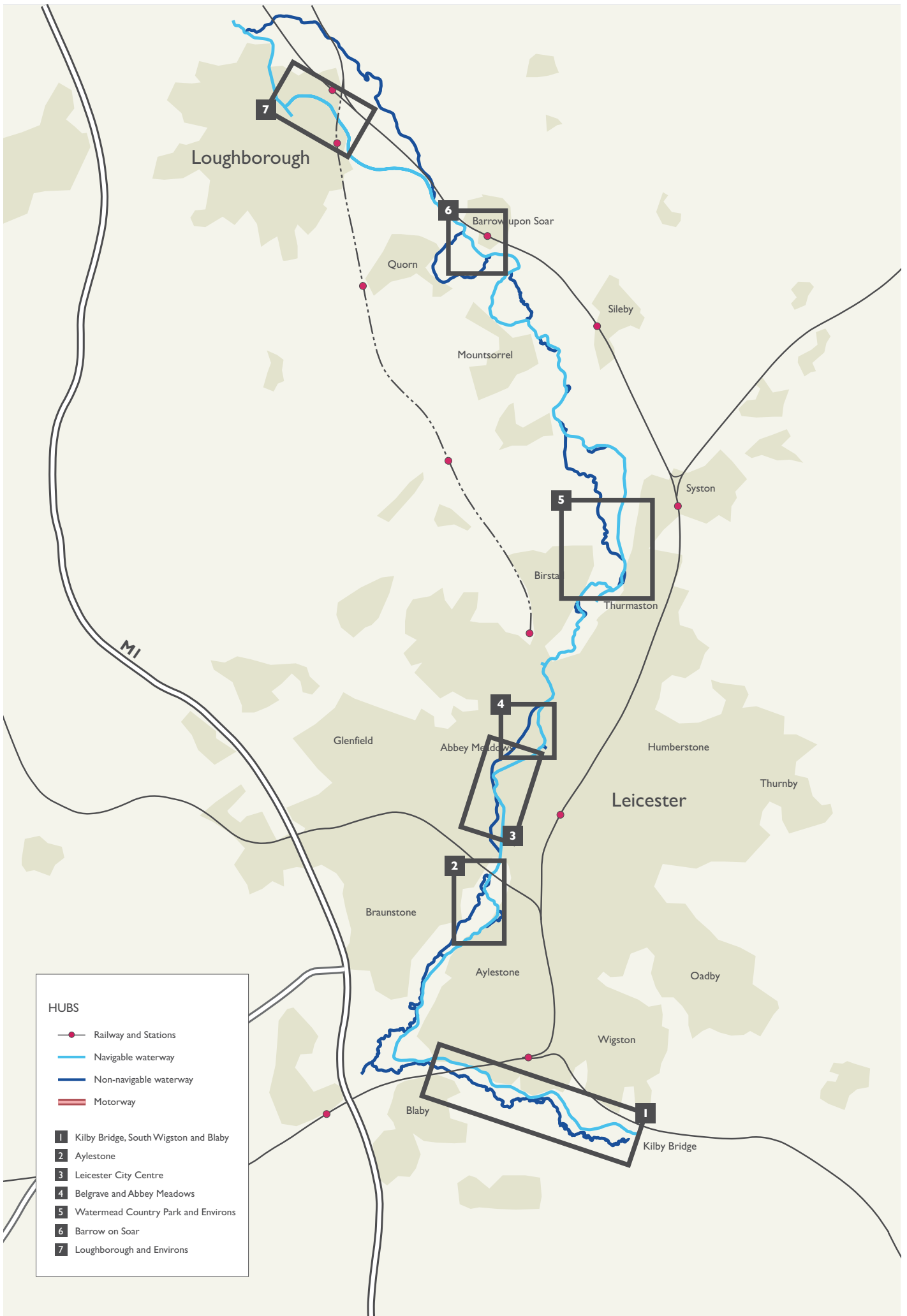
The first element, **Partnership**, sets out how the change will be driven. The second and third elements, **Hubs** and **Linkages**, define the content and quality of the product and the fourth element, **Promotion**, is about ensuring the benefits extend as wide as possible.

*The Nottinghamshire Partnership is the local strategic partnership for Nottinghamshire comprising district councils, the voluntary, the business community, schools and many others.

7.2 Partnership

The full economic benefit potential of the Waterway will only be delivered through effective leadership and partnership. Cementing a formal partnership will ensure greater commitment from the partner organisations as well as reducing its vulnerability to changes in funding and other priorities. The partnership should be an evolution of the Steering Group. Other similar scale partnerships should be used as a model for the Waterway. The Nottinghamshire Partnership* provides a local example of a successful working group. This partnership brings together senior representatives of all the partner organisations ranging from health and education to housing and the environment. The Waterway Partnership will be responsible for the co-ordination and implementation of the remaining elements of the Action Plan as well as ensuring integration and alignment with the Waterway Strategy for other key sub-regional initiatives. The Waterway Partnership will be a focus for funding and will be better placed to engage funding bodies, the private sector, and other stakeholders. The Waterway Partnership will also be responsible for periodic evaluation and review to ensure quality standards are being met and that the planned actions are still applicable to satisfying the end Vision.





7.3 Develop the Hubs

In considering the economic potential of the Waterway as a whole, there is significant scope for enhancing the overall quality of the offer through a considered menu of development projects, including reinvigorated and new attractions, as well as comprehensive environmental enhancements. In seeking to unlock the full value of the Waterway as a leisure and tourism resource, the concept of clusters of activity, taking the form of seven destinations or 'Hubs', is to be promoted. These Hubs are also the gateways onto the Waterway, and the quality of the hubs will define the overall perception of the Waterway.

These 'Hubs' are:

- Kilby Bridge, South Wigston and Blaby
- Aylestone Park
- Leicester City
- Abbey Meadows
- Watermead
- Barrow upon Soar; and
- Loughborough

This approach has a number of benefits:

- It provides key gateways to the Waterway
- It introduces rhythm to the corridor by providing attractions and events at key intervals along the Waterway
- Each cluster or hub can develop its own character to add to the richness of the waterway experience
- It provides clearly identifiable focal points, to enable visitors to orientate themselves within the corridor
- Concentrations of activity will help to ensure that attractive and dynamic local centres are created/enhanced, which might otherwise be diluted if uses were uniformly spread along the canal

A destination strategy or "mini-masterplan" is required for each hub. However, the concept of the 'hub' is concerned with the provision of leisure facilities and amenities in strategic locations. Building on the underlying principle of 'joined up provision' the intention is to create a flexible model or template for development based on a number of minimum standards.

This would include the following core components:

- Adequate mooring and parking provision (good access by road and by water)
- Toilets (male, female, disabled)
- Information (both site-specific and referring to other hubs/destinations)
- Refreshments
- Outdoor amenity space
- Signage to and from the hub; and
- Design standards

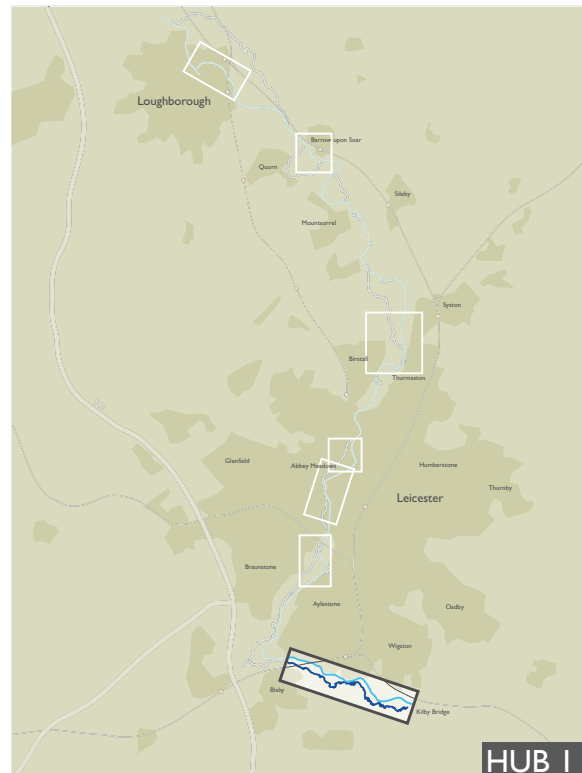
The intention is that each 'hub' will comprise these core components to ensure quality and consistency of the offer. Beyond that, a range of complementary facilities may then be added, with the mix of uses tailored to suit existing needs, potential demand and planning/environmental constraints in each location. Suggested facilities could include cycle hire, boat trips/hire, cafe/tea room, pub/restaurant, retail (eg. convenience, outdoor clothing, souvenirs), boaters' facilities, holiday accommodation and education/community facilities.

HUB I KILBY BRIDGE, SOUTH WIGSTON AND BLABY

CHARACTER/DISTINCTIVENESS



Kilby Bridge is a small settlement located 4 miles south of the centre of Leicester. Both Blaby and South Wigston are larger settlements hosting an extensive range of facilities and are popular commuter villages. Residential properties back onto the canal on both sides, notably with a number of high quality family housing developments. Typically, housing on the opposite side of the tow path actively engage the waterfront, often with private moorings, while those adjacent to the towpath are typified with high fences and hedgerows reflecting the need for security. The Waterway forms the southern boundary to the urban development which extends from the City. This stretch is almost entirely within the Sence and Soar Valley South. Green Wedge and beyond the development are open fields offering a rural, tranquil outlook. There are few crossings and opportunities to join the Waterway are remote. The existing canal yard at Kilby Bridge, features a mix of low key wharfside buildings with a public house (The Navigation) on the main road next to the canal bridge.



HUB I

EXISTING

Existing Assets

- The main asset is the tranquillity this stretch of canal offers
- Local Wildlife Sites
- Green Wedge and Green Space Designation
- Conservation Area
- Crow Mill Picnic site offers a low key recreational site whereby the canal can be accessed

Spatial Relationships

- The town centres of Blaby and South Wigston are within easy reach of the Waterway
- South Wigston has a railway station
- There are several key radial routes into Leicester but connectivity between the three settlements are poor
- Connection along the towpath is good, however, there are few opportunities to access the waterside

FUTURE

Opportunities/Function and Future

- This area is very much residential and is typical of the suburbs around Leicester
- There is the opportunity to develop a number of mini-hubs along this stretch of Waterway
- Opportunities exist for improvements to the existing visitor facilities at Crow Mill and Kilby Bridge
- The area could become a hub for on-the-water activity particularly centred around a regenerated Wharf at Glen Parva
- The towpath needs to be consistent and engage with the Waterfront

Priority Actions

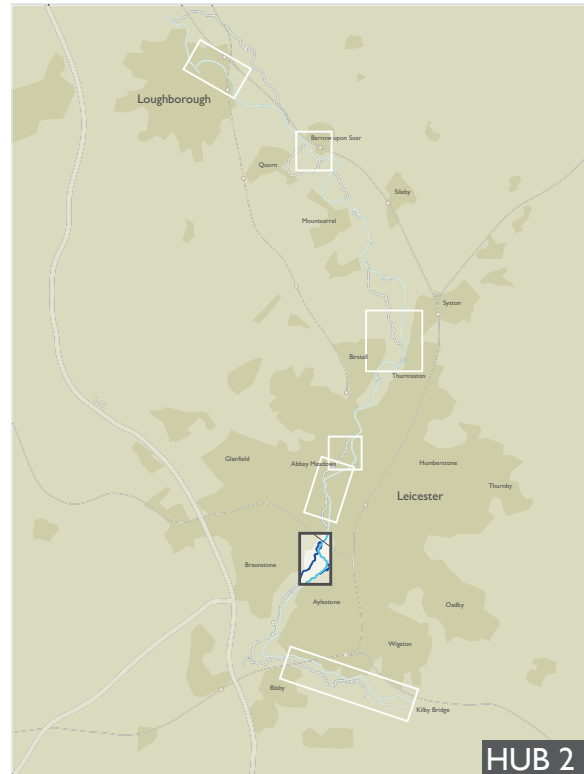
- Enhancement of key linkages into the neighbouring settlements through improved access arrangements
- Improve signage and picnic facilities at Crow Mill
- Develop Kilby Bridge as mini destination and boat hire
- Support initiative for new canoe club at Glen Parva Wharf

HUB 2 AYLESTONE

CHARACTER/DISTINCTIVENESS



Immediately south of Leicester, the canal and river diverge to form an island adjacent to the Walkers Stadium and St Mary's Mill. The canal corridor very quickly changes from green and open, to the industrialised City fringe. Sandwiched inbetween two of Leicester's main arterial populations is the Aylestone Riverside Park. The Park provides opportunities to walk and cycle adjacent to the waters edge or alternatively connect to the Great Central Way which continues all the way up to Loughborough. Low grade parking is provided at several locations within the park, however, these are poorly signposted and poorly maintained.



EXISTING

Existing Assets

- Walkers Stadium
- St Mary's Weir
- Riverside Park (wildlife site)
- Green Wedge and Green Space Designation
- Aylestone Playing Fields and Recreational Sports facilities
- Aylestone Hall
- Fosse Park Retail Park
- Conservation Area
- Great Central Way

Spatial Relationships

- Less than 3km from M1 junction 21 (& M69)
- Great Central Way
- 3 to 4 km to Leicester Station

FUTURE

Opportunities/Function and Future

- The Park provides green open space adjacent to two densely populated and deprived areas of Leicester. The focus should be to provide access to "wildlife on your doorstep" in combination with increasing the offer for physical recreational activities around the weir
- There are a number of undeveloped sites along the waterfront

Priority Actions

- Introduce a series of robust public art features within park to stimulate interest
- Examine potential for white water canoe park and hydro electric generation at St Mary's Wharf
- Improve signage to car parking and improve facilities
- Undertake a feasibility study for Disraeli Street to identify appropriate water compatible development which accounts for flood risk
- Introduce boating and cycle hire opportunities

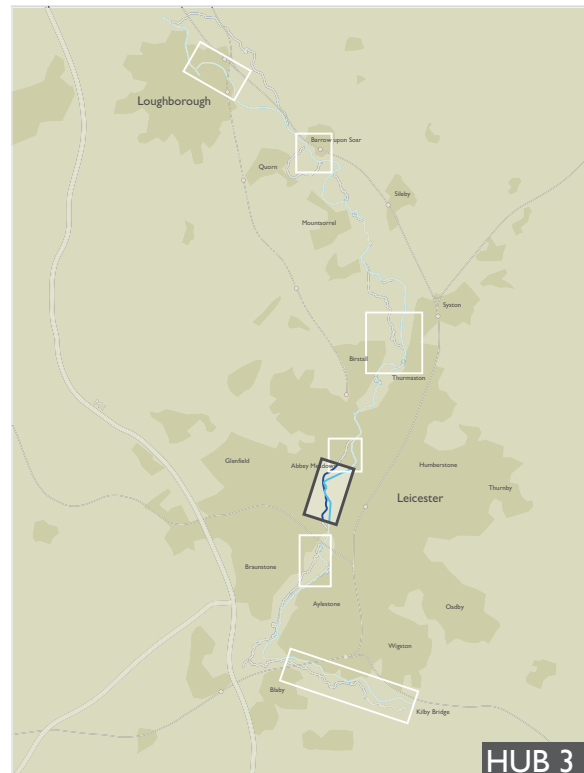
HUB 3 LEICESTER CITY CENTRE

CHARACTER/DISTINCTIVENESS



For a short spell the canal becomes a highly developed 'urban waterfront', with largescale buildings and areas of public realm. An increasing number of bridge crossings help to ensure the canal does not become a barrier to movement. Within the central urban area, there are attractive areas of 'wide water' (generally) associated with weirs, which provide characterful areas of waterspace, and opportunities for wildlife, in an otherwise highly developed urban environment.

Both the hospital and the university are located in close proximity and help add to the ambience and character of a very lively and well-used section of the Waterway.



EXISTING

Existing Assets

- City Centre facilities, retail, hospitality and business
- Leicester University and DeMontford University
- Existing Masterplan re-development
- Leicester Castle
- Castle Gardens – Conservation Area
- High Cross
- Excellent condition of the towpath and adjacent cycleway
- Riverside Festival
- The Leicester Riverside Mile “The Mile Straight”
- Cultural diversity of population
- Rowing Club
- Black Friars Community Park
- Bede Park
- Frog Island
- Jewry Wall and Museum

Spatial Relationships

- City Centre location

FUTURE

Opportunities/Function and Future

- Work has started on creating more than 3000 new homes with restaurants, workspace and leisure facilities
- The city centre waterfront includes selected areas of high quality public realm such as Castle Gardens
- Creating opportunities for waterside events and activities. However, there is scope for increased provision and much is promised by the existing masterplan and policy documents (Leicester Waterside)
- There is potential for several basin developments which could provide short term mooring provision close to the heart of the city
- The towpath needs to be consistent and engage with the Waterfront

Priority Actions

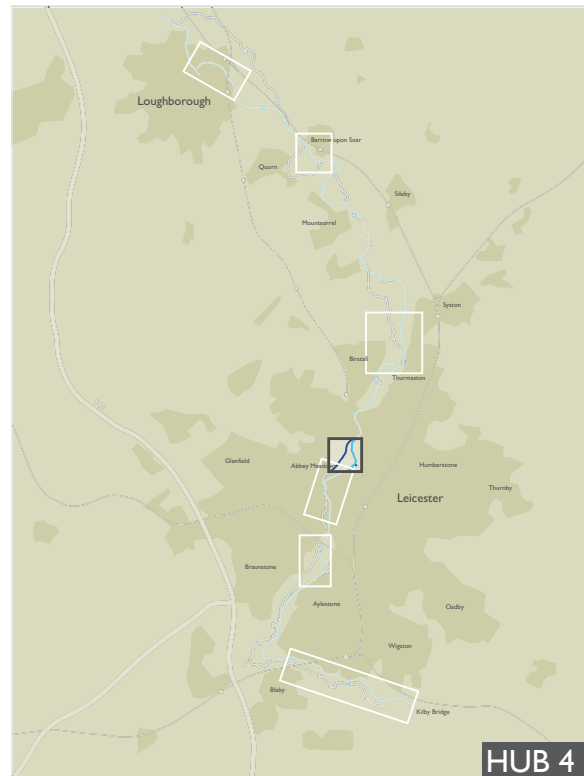
- Develop secure boating facilities within the City, including short stay ‘City Wharf’
- Examine potential for Waterbus
- Ensure development engages Waterways

HUB 4 BELGRAVE AND ABBEY MEADOWS

CHARACTER/DISTINCTIVENESS



To the north of Leicester City Centre, the canal and river act to create an “island”. The character changes from the derelict or degrading industrial works/buildings of Abbey Meadows to the ‘sub urban fringe’. The area is within the City Masterplan area and the clearance of the derelict buildings is slowly underway. This area is home to a number of key attractions: Abbey Park, housing the remains of a 12th Century Abbey as well as impressive and well-maintained gardens and boating lake; the National Space Centre (NSC) which can be seen from the canal but is difficult to access directly; and Belgrave outdoor activity centre, the focus of a number of on-the-water activities such as canoeing and kayaking. The quality of access provision along the water’s edge increases, remains good with the provision of a separate cycleway and pedestrian footpath.



HUB 4

EXISTING

Existing Assets

- Abbey Park
- National Space Centre
- Leicester Outdoor Pursuits Centre
- Redhill Marina – Angling Club
- Belgrave Hall
- The Abbey Pumping Station Museum
- Existing Masterplan Re-development (Abbey Meadows)
- Conservation Park

Spatial Relationships

- The Abbey Park and National Space Centre are disconnected from the canal
- The A6 runs close to the Waterway

FUTURE

Opportunities/Function and Future

- Within the Masterplan the area is identified as providing a 43,000 sq ft new technology park
- Up to 2000 new homes to be built
- Recent RIBA competition for the design of a new footbridge across the river opposite the NSC

Priority Actions

- Ensure development engages with the Waterway and the Waterway plays its part in the movement of new communities from home to work
- Improve linkages to NSC and remove barrier between Waterway and Abbey Park
- Examine micro-hydro electric generation of weirs
- Examine marina potential at Redhill Roundabout
- Expand existing trails

HUB 5 WATERMEAD COUNTRY PARK AND ENVIRONS

CHARACTER/DISTINCTIVENESS



Watermead Country Park is a key area of countryside and green wedge on the north of Leicester City. It is bounded by the large villages of Thurmaston to the east, Birstall to the west and Syston to the north. The area has been extensively worked for sand and gravel and now lakes, woods and wildlife replace the former industrial landscape.

The Park receives over 250,000 visitors annually with a network of attractive and popular countryside walks/cycle routes as well as boating facilities. Watermead enjoys good access by road, with plenty of car parking and picnicking opportunities. It features public toilets located close to the canal, although the building is not particularly prominent when moving through the Country Park.

Watermead lacks comprehensive visitor facilities in terms of refreshments, education and information, although there has long been an ambition by key agencies and stakeholders to provide better visitor facilities, befitting the status of the Country Park as a local/regional attraction.

To the east of Watermead is Thurmaston. Thurmaston benefits from two substantial marinas. However, access to the Country Park is difficult and is presently subject to improvements as part of the Sustrans Connect2 lottery funding.

The increasing provision of urban features provides a key marker to the edge of Leicester.



HUB 5



Proposed Visitors Centre, Watermead Country Park

EXISTING

Existing Assets

- The Country Park features walking, cycling and boating and hosts events throughout the year
- Low level attempts have been made at public art such as the King Lear sculpture in the lake
- Sailing Club
- The area is subject to Sustrans Connect2 Lottery money, improving links between the Park and Thurmaston, Birstall, Syston and Leicester
- There is a large population within easy reach of the Park
- Excellent connectivity
- New Watermead Business Park adjacent to the A607
- Birstall Golf Club
- Valuable wildlife habitats and nature reserves

Spatial Relationships

- Thurmaston, Birstall and Syston form a triangle of settlements around the Country Park
- Syston is the first railway station north of Leicester City and has branches north and east
- The area is bounded by major arterial routes providing connections in all directions
- The Park is immediately adjacent to the canal

FUTURE

Opportunities/Function and Future

- This location has the potential to offer something very different for the Waterway
- There are already over 250,000 visitors per annum to the Country Park and this could be increased
- As yet the Park has not developed a 'USP' (Unique Selling Point) and therefore there is still opportunity to craft its own niche
- A visitor centre is required to provide interpretation, education and refreshment facilities to serve the high levels of casual and school visitors along with clubs and organised groups
- Other opportunities exist outside the Park. There are plans for marina development and the expansion of the business park at Thurmaston

Priority Actions

- Develop the proposed visitor centre to serve the Country Park and wider Soar Valley
- Provide enhanced marketing, interpretation and facilities at this key site
- Expansion of the existing public art
- Exciting new marina development on the Raynesway Site with hotel and conferencing facilities' as well as other mixed use
- Introduction of new Waterway festival/event

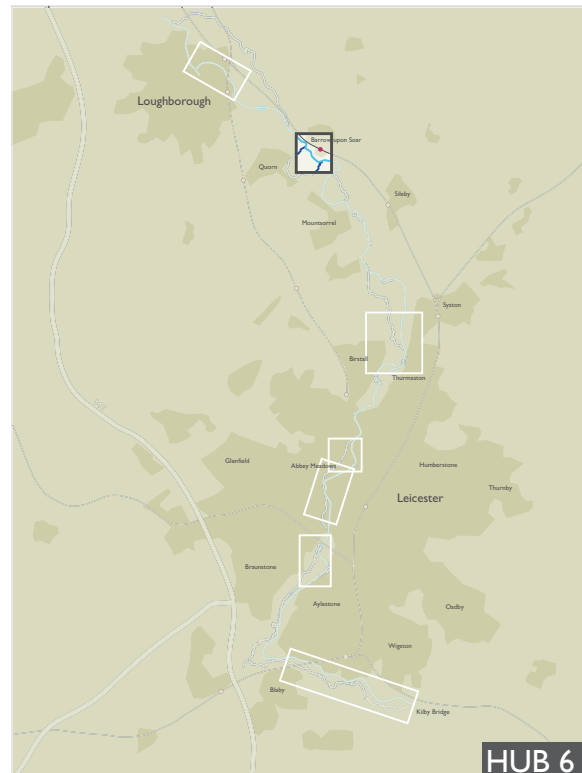
HUB 6 BARROW UPON SOAR

CHARACTER/DISTINCTIVENESS



Barrow upon Soar is a rural settlement, where the character and sense of the waterway as a river navigation becomes much more obvious. There are dramatic weirs and flood warning lights at key locks. Pilling's Lock Marina offers attractive new facilities for boaters to the south of the waterway, including café/retail. However, the facilities are for the exclusive use of boat owners and the development is largely inaccessible to visitors using the towpath.

South of Barrow upon Soar, a key characteristic of the waterway corridor is that it becomes very rural and remote, with very few bridge crossings, save the odd pipe bridge (to enable public utilities to cross the canal). In addition, it does not feature a well defined towpath or waterside walking/cycling route which, combined with the limited number of cross valley links, means that the waterway feels a little fragmented, isolating the settlements and communities in the vicinity.



EXISTING

Existing Assets

- Quality pubs and restaurants
- Canal boat and other on-the-water activities
- Stonehurst Family Farm
- Attractive Pillings Lock Marina development
- A number of smaller boatyards
- Rural outlook
- 3 SSSI's
- 3 Conservation Areas

Spatial Relationships

- Barrow upon Soar has a railway station
- Although the A6 divides Barrow Upon Soar and Mountsorrel, it provides an excellent north south link
- The existing attractions are relatively dispersed within the area
- Much of the route is unsurfaced and ill-defined. Cycling is not promoted

FUTURE

Opportunities/Function and Future

- This area is some of the least deprived along the Waterway. Much of the area is within the flood plain and it is therefore predominantly agricultural. However, there is a need to improve the connectivity between the settlements
- There are opportunities for improvements to the facilities at the existing attractions
- This area is the main obstacle in the provision of a full cycle route adjacent to the Waterway from Loughborough to Leicester
- Barrow has a significant caravan park development which detracts from its pleasant appearance

Priority Actions

- Improve the signage to and along the Waterway
- Establish a cycleway on or adjacent to the waterside
- Consideration should be given to screening the caravan park to reduce its visual impact.
- Improve links between Barrow upon Soar and Mountsorrel
- Upgrade the quality of existing facilities

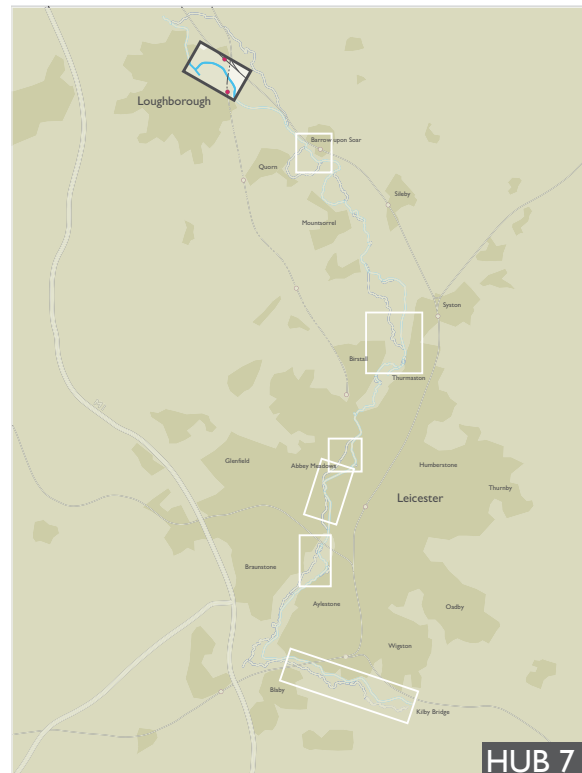
HUB 7 LOUGHBOROUGH AND ENVIRONS

CHARACTER/DISTINCTIVENESS



Loughborough is a thriving university town which has just reinvented its historic canal basin. A former coal wharf and once a magnet for heavy industrial use, Loughborough Canal Basin has recently undergone comprehensive redevelopment and regeneration, with a mix of café bars/restaurants and student housing focused around the reinvigorated canal terminus. The canal arm, which links the town with the main canal, and the basin itself, provides limited scope for visiting craft to moor (short term), encouraging increased use and activity on the water.

Beyond the Loughborough Arm, the Grand Union Canal threads its way through the town, sandwiched between the edge of the settlement and the railway. Within easy reach of the canal are the railway station, the Great Central Railway (historic railway) and the Bell Foundry, key regional visitor destinations. The canal skirts a mix of industry as it leaves the town in both directions, forming a natural edge between low grade industrial uses and open countryside.



HUB 7

EXISTING

Existing Assets

- Loughborough Railway Station
- The Great Central Railway
- Bell Foundry
- University
- Excellent Links both road and rail
- Basin Redevelopment
- Waterside residential development
- Loughborough Meadow SSSI
- Great Central Way
- Charnwood Water

Spatial Relationships

- The relationship between the Waterway and the town centre is somewhat separated as the A6 and the inner ringroad act as a physical barrier
- The University Campus is approximately 2 miles from the Waterway
- The nearest railway station is less than 0.5 mile from the Waterway
- The Canal and the River are separated by up to 1.0 mile
- There is little visitor parking adjacent to the Waterway

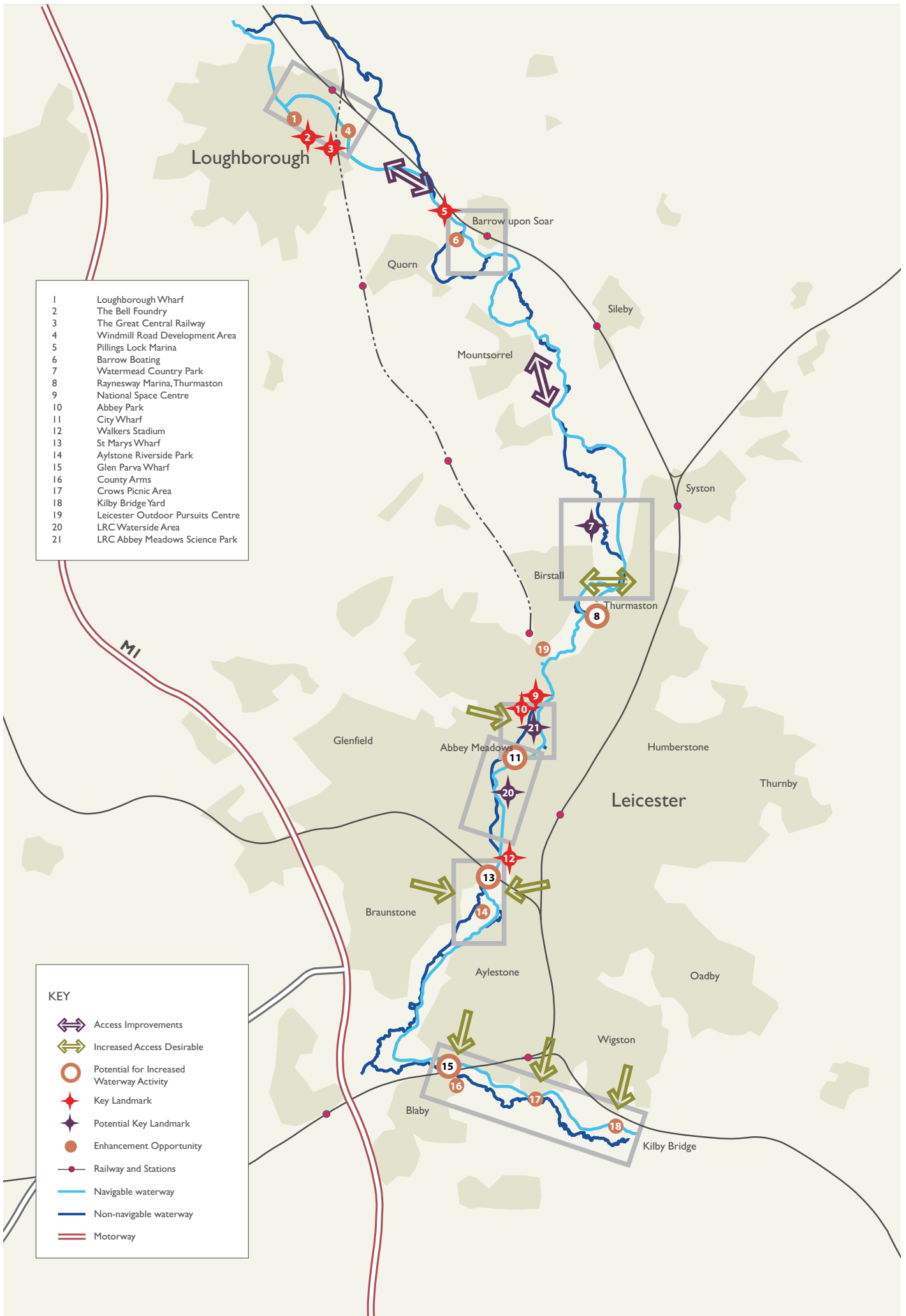
FUTURE

Opportunities/Function and Future

- The development of the Windmill Road Masterplan has set out a number of aspirations and there is a real opportunity to improve this area in terms of quality of housing and niche business development
- Further development to complete the regeneration of the wharf (to the south of the basin) has not yet commenced but is required to ensure the benefits of this waterside destination can spread to the town centre, a short walk away. Flood risk from the Wood Brook will need to be adequately mitigated in order for development to proceed
- There is a major opportunity for Waterside redevelopment in the Clarence Street area
- There are aspirations for expansion of the Great Central Railway
- In East Loughborough, there is a lack of community cohesion and over-reliance on low skill sector employment

Priority Actions

- Enhancement of key linkages from the Waterway to the town centre and to the university
- New Waterfront development at Windmill Road, subject to a satisfactory flood risk assessment
- Link towpath to its surroundings through improved signage
- Capitalise on the opportunities emerging from the 2012 Olympics



7.4 Improve the Linkages

The ability for people to access and move between the 'Hubs' using the Waterway is an important principle of this strategy. The Waterway is a key piece of Green Infrastructure and the emphasis of this Strategy is on non-car modes. In determining a route forward, a strategy for Access is required. The role of an Access Strategy will be to examine in detail the existing provision and then identify and prioritise improvements in terms of access to and along the Waterway. The Strategy should be considered in the following terms:

- Connectivity to the Waterway
- Access to and along the Waterway; and
- On-the-Water Activity

7.4.1 Connectivity to the Waterway

The 'hubs' will act as the main gateways to the Waterway. They will include links to public transport, both rail and bus, and should provide adequate car parking and link to other trails and adjacent attractions. This is to be achieved through a strategy of coherent, consistent signage and wayfinding information. This consistency will benefit the Waterway by further establishing it as a single, identifiable entity.

Access points to the Waterway will be fully accessible to all users including those with mobility problems.

It is unlikely that the majority of users will wish to travel the full length of the Waterway in a single visit. The link to public transport is therefore an important one, enabling shorter routes with convenient 'opt out' points or allowing one-way journeys to be made.

It is also preferable that the Waterway is connected to other routes such as the Great Central Way, in order to facilitate circular routes.

It is important than any new residential or mixed use developments such as those proposed at Abbey Meadows and East Loughborough, are fully connected to the Waterway, offering Green Methods of transport to work such as cycling and walking.

7.4.2 Access Along the Waterway

The aspiration for the Waterway is to create a continuous multi-user trail that responds to the individual character/distinctiveness of the surrounding environment. The trail will differentiate rural and urban sections; however, it is important that both satisfy minimum standards of quality including surface, signage and furniture. The working nature of the Waterway dictates that there may be locations where the route has to deviate from the immediate waterside to accommodate the needs of farmers. The route, should be clearly signed and the basic standards maintained throughout.

In the urban sections, the Waterway should be fully accessible to all users including those with mobility difficulties. In rural sections it may be more appropriate to provide lower grade access, however, the aim should always be to provide a fully accessible route.

The benefit of providing a continuous route is twofold. First, it will encourage increased footfall by different types of users along the Waterway. Secondly, as demonstrated elsewhere such as the Trans Pennine Trail, it assists in the creation of an identity from which other initiatives can be launched which can help position the Waterway (the Fourth key action).

Work is already underway on access improvements, particularly the Connect2 Lottery Project improving the linkages between Watermead and Thurmaston, Birstall Siston and Leicester. There should be no conflict here and the work of the Waterway Partnership in these areas is simply to ensure the minimum standards of provision are implemented.

The management and maintenance of the access links will be vital to securing the long term success of the Waterway. The Partnership will seek to secure long term funding agreements prior to committing to new enhancements. This is likely to require wider partnership working with voluntary groups and organisations.

7.4.3 On-the-Water Activity

A variety of different water activities can be developed along the Waterway and the present range on offer is reasonable. However, there is a significant amount of latent potential to be exploited. The Access Strategy will determine existing boating numbers and the extent of mooring provision along the Waterway. It will then set out how to accommodate and enhance this existing offer, working with existing providers of these services.

The linkages to water activity fall into three categories:

- Motorised Boat Users
- Non-motorised Boat Users; and
- Day Trips and Events

7.4.4 Motorised Boat Users

The shortage of offline mooring provision is a nationwide problem facing the waterways. This Waterway holds a key position, linking two major canal systems, the Grand Union Canal and the Trent and Mersey Canal as well as other short arms. As a result, there is potentially significant demand which could be tapped into. Pillings Lock is a model example of a private marina, attracting visitors and complementary commercial activities. The fast rate at which berths have been occupied is further strong supporting evidence of the demand for these facilities.

Several locations are identified within the Hubs where there is potential for further marina provision. The greatest opportunity for improved boating facilities appears to lie in and around Leicester. The provision of a City marina will help improve on the water animation through Leicester.



7.4.5 Non-Motorised Boat Users

The Waterway provides a variety of opportunities for non-motorised enjoyment, including canoeing, kayaking, rowing, and sailing (at Watermead). The Water Activity Strategy will identify where further improvements should be made to existing facilities and the introduction of new centres where appropriate. Particular consideration will be given to whether weirs should be exploited to provide new focus points for “white water activity”.

7.4.6 Day Trips and Events

The early work of this Strategy has demonstrated the appetite for novel uses of the Waterway, particularly the introduction of a “Match Day” water bus. The Water Activity Strategy will examine the economic potential of such a scheme as well as extending the provision of day trips in the southern half of the Waterway.

The Partnership will build on the success of the Leicester and Loughborough Waterside Festivals, raising an awareness and appreciation of the Waterway.

7.5 Promotion of the Waterway

Promotion is the fourth key element in delivering the full potential of the Waterway. Promotion has two key facets:

- Promote visitors - to ensure the Waterway is engaged by a wide range of users from across the region; and
- Promote investment - to encourage investment by promoting the economic benefits of locating business within the Waterway corridor

7.5.1 Promote Visitors

Promotion of the Waterway is vital to ensure visitor numbers are increased across a wide range of user groups. There are a number of means by which the Waterway could be promoted and they should include:

- Tourism information
- Online information
- Education; and
- Events

It is of principal importance to ensure that the information presented is attractive, interesting, up-to-date, and widely accessible. The information should have across-the-board appeal and reflect Leicestershire's own diverse population.

This information will indicate the quality of the offer and should be readily available online but also in hard format. The Waterway tourism initiatives should be reflected in the County's and British Waterway's own tourist information.

There are numerous good examples including those prepared by Waterscape and others readily available as a reference point. This information could, like the signage and street furniture, help establish the brand of the Waterway. The branding is essential in terms of defining the quality of the product.

There are opportunities to increase grass roots interest through schools and promoting activities whereby school children can interact with the Waterway. This should include on-the-water activity, as well as enjoyment of the heritage and nature located at the water's edge.

Both Leicester and Loughborough already have successful waterside festivals. However, this may be the only time that parts of the community engage with the Waterway. Hence, there is potential for further expansion of the waterside events calendar, in particular at Watermead.

7.5.2 Promote Investment

A key element of the vision is to attract investment in the Waterway, which will be used to improve the quality of place both in social and economic terms. This will in turn attract more investment, thereby creating a cycle of investment which leads to continual improvement in the overall fabric of the Waterway.

The Partners will have to be proactive in preparing the ground for future funding applications. Having a strategy in place and a list of priority projects will allow the Partnership to react promptly when opportunities arise.

Using the Hubs as a focus, the Partnership will have a responsibility to promote the Waterway as a great place to do business, thereby attracting high quality companies to the area.



The East Midlands will be recognised as a Region with a high quality of life and strong healthy sustainable communities that thrives because of its vibrant economy, rich cultural and environmental diversity and the way it creatively addresses social inequalities, manages its resources and contributes to a safer, more inclusive society.

(Regional Spatial Strategy 2009),

8.0 THE WAY FORWARD

8.1 Introduction

This Strategy and Action Plan seeks to deliver a long term vision for a physical and functional identity for the Waterway and a structure for implementing the necessary changes to achieve the vision.

The Strategy has identified key objectives which will enable the Waterway to move forward as a valuable corridor for nature and as an attractive place to live, work, and visit as well as help build public and investor confidence. This section identifies the priority projects to be delivered over the next five years and it has set out the need for a programme of incremental improvements and investments over the short to medium term as a pre-requisite for ensuring the future of the Waterway in the long term.



8.2 Taking Forward the Action Plan

The four key actions, Partnership, Hubs, Linkages and Promotion, are a mixture of Waterway-wide and location-specific actions. They are based on nine strategic objectives or guiding principles. These objectives are co-dependent so the successful delivery of one objective helping achieve another. This section outlines a route plan for the next 12 years and identifies 10 priority projects.

There is a balance of projects which are relatively modest, easier to achieve and can deliver results in the short term and those which require more significant resource investment. It is considered that by demonstrating the ability to deliver these more modest projects will build momentum and support for the more significant projects.

The strategy will require periodic evaluation to ensure that the delivery of the “Vision” is being progressed. The strategy has longevity, however, it is important it is reviewed at the start and end of each phase, to ensure the current needs are being met and social and economic changes are accounted for.

8.2.1 The Waterway 2009 to 2010

To give this strategy the best chance of success, initial delivery should focus on setting the foundation from which the vision can be delivered long term. However, organisational actions should be complemented with more visible projects. This will help to build a sense of momentum and confidence in the Waterway amongst existing and potential users, businesses and investors. This confidence will be vital to secure the substantial investment over the longer term to fundamentally, reinvigorate and reposition the Waterway.

It is recommended that the following set of actions should be delivered as a priority:

1) - Form a strong, Waterway Partnership consisting of the local authorities and key agencies. This Partnership should champion and take responsibility for ensuring the delivery of this Strategy.

Clear commitment, leadership and shared vision across the partner organisations to achieve the greater prioritisation and better co-ordination of activity, investment and strategic planning in relation to the Waterway Corridor. The Partnership should be complimented by a working group, which includes representation from the Public, Private and Voluntary Sector. This would more adequately reflect the need to engage wider interests.

2) - Develop a destination management plan for the Waterway.

There is a need to develop the Strategy into a series of operational plans, reviewed and updated on a regular basis to prioritise potential projects and inform the ongoing development. The destination management plan should identify opportunities for improvement along the Waterway and specific to the principal offer at each of the hubs. This destination management plan shall ensure there is a balance of destination types. It shall also consider where public interaction should be promoted and where areas should be protected from intrusion.

3) - Draft an Access strategy to identify which areas need to be improved, secure agreement / funding and commence access upgrades.

These short term actions should, subject to further consultation with Partners and Stakeholders, include towpath improvements and the provision of new mooring facilities where appropriate, establishing a continuous cycle route within the corridor. These improvements should be undertaken in parallel with a corridor-wide initiative to improve signage to and along the Waterway as well as common street furniture. Sustrans could play a key role in this development.

4) - Compile a funding strategy and promote the Waterway's potential to deliver other funding related objectives.

An increase in resources dedicated to or focused towards the Waterway Corridor, including greater officer time, increased regeneration funding and better targeting and co-ordination of mainstream investment.

5) - Undertake an area-wide desk study to define the significance of the environmental resource.

This would take full account of the ecology, flood plain, water quality, natural heritage, built heritage and the impact of enhanced public engagement and interaction. In order that the needs for greater access can be balanced with the needs of the natural environment, it is crucial that the full ecological quality of the Waterway corridor is understood. An environmental audit should be undertaken to establish the locations of existing BAP habitats, and potential improvements to habitats.

6) - Develop masterplans for the 'hubs'.

Having identified the key qualities and opportunities through the Destination and Access Strategies, develop mini-masterplans for each of the hubs. This should determine how improvements at separate locations dovetail together to create a single Waterway entity.

7) - Promote the Waterway with strong and attractive image through all literature and marketing material.

It is important that the Waterway corridor raises its profile and develops its identity. Separate tourism and investment guides should be developed, describing the true quality and potential of the area and identifying the key assets along the route.

8) - Support the development of a new visitor centre at Watermead focusing on USP – nature, eco-energy etc.

There should be a signature project such as a high quality visitor centre at Watermead Country Park. The theme of this centre should be aligned with eco-tourism and green energy with potential for sponsorship from local Power Generator. This should be undertaken in conjunction with establishing better links to the Waterway from Watermead Country Park to ensure the benefit is extended as far as possible.

9) - Establish a "Friends of the Waterway" volunteer group.

Community engagement should be fostered through a volunteer wardens scheme. This would include several functions ranging from co-ordinating interactive Waterway activities such as guided trails and education, to providing opportunities for up-skilling, through involvement in maintenance and development work. The Waterway should seek to use successful and innovative models used elsewhere such as the National Trust and other regional park organisations.

10) - Prepare a design aid for the Waterway as a source of inspiration for new waterside and public development.

This design aid should supplement rather than re-write existing design guidance such as that produced by the likes of CABE. Its purpose will be to set quality standards or benchmarks which should be maintained along the Waterway. This aid should encompass the provision of information and facilities and also draw attention to key design principles such as development engaging the Waterway rather than forming a barrier to it.

8.2.2 The Waterway 2011 to 2015:

Between 2011 and 2015 the Waterway Partnership should focus on building on the knowledge gained in the preceding period and delivering more ambitious interventions.

Corridor-wide waterway Initiatives:

- Deliver high quality architecture steered by the design aid
- Establish the Waterway as an exemplar for sustainable energy, an “eco-waterway” including a new Green Energy education hub based at Watermead
- Provision of high quality access along the route including linkages into the main cycle and footway networks. This should be reflected in increased participation and use of the towpath of 30% on all sections
- New signage and wayfinding material should be installed
- Explore all opportunities to strengthen the physical relationship between the open spaces and the Waterway
- Explore the potential for enhancing waterway activity via water bus to specific events
- Investigate locations for additional mooring and marina space; and
- Expand the programme of waterway events

Area-specific Initiatives:

- Develop a City Centre basin, re-introducing boating close to the heart of Leicester; and
- Provide a continuous footpath link from Loughborough to Leicester, with specific attention to the sections between Barrow upon Soar and Watermead Country Park.

8.2.3 The Waterway 2016 to 2020

It is envisaged that by 2020, the Waterway will be a nationally recognised example of how the waterside can be used to balance the needs of the environment in conjunction with high quality development and public realm which meets the needs of the communities through which it passes.

The Waterway will no longer be a hidden asset but considered integral to the lives of those who live, work, and visit the corridor. The Waterway, in combination with the excellent strategic transport links, will be an attractive place to invest and do business, attracting new businesses as well as retaining those already located within the corridor.

APPENDICES

AI APPENDIX - FUNDING SOURCES

Capital Funding

emda Waterways Regeneration Fund	Up to £500,000 per project which meet following criteria: 1) Waterways destination projects 2) Restoration projects 3) Land remediation projects 4) Large scale project development and 5) Waterway transport schemes.
Heritage Lottery Fund	There are a number of programmes for different values of grant. Ranging from £3,000 to £2,000,000 Used recently for interpretation and way finding at Foxton Locks.
Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund	Leicestershire as a main extraction county has a budget of £330,000 per annum used as a grant to support projects. Applicants can apply for up to £50,000 in any single year. Natural England ALSF - up to £350,000 per scheme.
British Waterways Waterside Pub Partnership with Scottish & Newcastle	An innovative joint venture between Scottish & Newcastle Pub Enterprises (S&NPE) and British Waterways with British Waterways' share of the profits reinvested into the upkeep of the nation's canals and rivers.
Natural England's 'Walking Away to Health' Fund	A modest fund to promote healthy lifestyles. Currently promoted in Charnwood and Oadby & Wigston. The Waterway could be a promoted route.
Green Infrastructure (GI) Fund	Includes an allocation for Green Infrastructure funding to serve new and existing communities.
Connect2 Proposals	Funding has recently been received via Sustrans/Big Lottery for local walking and cycling routes around Watermead.
Linking to Energy Opportunities	The Waterway could be utilised as a sustainable cooling/heat exchange mechanism reducing the need for energy. The weirs located along the Waterway could also be used to generate Energy. Potential to sell the energy generated back to the grid for re-investment in the Waterway or to partner with local power supplier E.ON should be investigated.
Landfill Tax Credit	There are numerous schemes from the distributing companies.

Revenue Funding

Local Authority Budgets	Represent one of the most important sources of revenue income; there is an increasing pressure on local authority budgets and the viability of this option is becoming more limited.
Section 106 agreements	Can be levied on new-build developments to fund the upkeep of spaces. However, when development is not viable or being supported by public funding it would be questionable to apply this mechanism. It is not suitable for existing development.
Local Authority Business Growth Initiative	Aimed at encouraging local authorities and businesses to work together to create an environment conducive for business. Enables local authorities to retain a proportion of the increase from business rates.
Business Improvement Districts (BIDs)	Can be used to encourage businesses that want to improve their trading environment to agree to pay for additional services beyond those provided by the local authority. They can be a means of funding green space/public realm management.
Endowments	Can provide a long-term income offering clear opportunities for longer-term sustainability. However, acquiring assets of sufficient value is often a challenge and management strategies are rarely built solely around endowments. For example: The Milton Keynes Park Trust manages 4,500 acres of the city's green spaces funded through an endowment of commercial property which is owned freehold by the Trust.
Income Generation Activities	Potential options include the payment for access or facilities such as sports facilities, a visitor centre, café, shop renting building space, or licensing activities such as angling or horseriding. Requires consideration during the planning and development phase of a project. Opportunities to earn income are often lost because assets are stripped off for development rather than being maintained within the green space.
Taxation Initiatives	Levies on property or tax credits which can be ring-fenced for the maintenance. This has clear advantages in terms of a secure and reliable source of income. The weakness is that in England, local authorities have limited autonomy to impose additional local taxes. Nevertheless, there may be opportunities through application of Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) and Neighbourhood Improvement Districts (NIDs).
Voluntary and community sector involvement	Not-for-profit organisations and voluntary and community groups can contribute time and labour, raise funds and encourage community development local ownership of urban green space. The tax-relief status of such organisations can be beneficial and they may be able to gain access to additional funding sources. A weakness of this approach, however, is defining the nature of the relationship with the local authority (in particular, in respect of accountability) and the reliance on groups which might not exist in the long-term.

A2 APPENDIX - ACTION PLAN

Sub-Theme	Ref	Recommendation	Lead Organisation	Other Partners	Links to other sub-themes	Timescale	Indicative Cost
Respecting the Landscape and Natural Environment (Nature)	1.1	Undertake an area-wide audit to identify existing BAP habitats, potential BAP and links between sites. This will enable a considered approach to siting appropriate levels on public interaction.	Partnership	EA, Wildlife Trust	Visitor	1 - 2 years	£50 - £100K
	1.2	Undertake an area-wide desk study to define the significance of the environmental resource.	Partnership Leics County Council	EA, Wildlife Trust, Stepping Stones		1 - 2 years	
	1.3	Work with local partners and interest groups to enhance and expand the existing nature parks where appropriate (as identified in the Conservation Management Plan).	Partnership	Stepping Stones, Local Parish Council Groups (eg Glen Parva)	Visitor	<4 years	
Development & Public Realm Quality and Valuing Heritage (Development)	2.1	Prepare a design aid for the Waterway as a source of inspiration for new waterside and public development.	Partnership	County and LA Planning Dept	Visitor	1 - 2 years	
	2.2	Strengthen the planning policy and development strategies in relation to the Waterway – ensure the nine Strategy objectives are reflected back in to local Masterplanning.	Partnership	County and LA Planning Dept		< 4 years	Nominal
	2.3	Develop links with heritage and restoration groups.	Partnership	Eg Melton and Oakham Waterway Society		4 - 8 years	Nominal
Securing Funding (Funding)	3.1	Form a strong, Waterway Partnership consisting of the local authorities and key agencies. This Partnership should be headed by a champion and take responsibility for ensuring the delivery of this Strategy.	Partnership	emda		1 - 2 years	Nominal
	3.2	Identify all complementary organisations and create wider interest group.	Partnership		Interest, Visitor, Animation	1 - 2 years	Nominal
	3.3	Compile a funding strategy and promote the Waterway's potential to deliver other funding related objectives.	Partnership			1 - 2 years	
	3.4	Investigate developing a business support programme aimed at Waterway tourism.	Partnership	emda	Development	< 4 years	£50K
	3.5	Develop a marketing strategy to encourage businesses to invest in the Waterway Corridor. This marketing has to be distinct from marketing aimed at visitors.	Partnership	LPL	Development	< 4 years	£100K – £200K

ACTION PLAN CONTINUED...

Sub-Theme	Ref	Recommendation	Lead Organisation	Other Partners	Links to other sub-themes	Timescale	Indicative Cost
Raising the Profile of the Waterway (Profile)	4.1	Consider how the brand identity of the Waterway could be linked more clearly to the County, British Waterways and the wider Soar Valley brands.	Partnership	LPL, BW	Visitor	1 - 2 years	Nominal
	4.2	Market the Waterway as an eco-leisure destination.	Partnership		Visitor, Animation	1 - 2 years	£100K - £200K
	4.3	Promote the Waterway with a strong and attractive image through all literature and marketing material.	Partnership	LPL		1 - 2 years	
	4.4	Locally promote the importance of the Waterway as a source of Green Infrastructure, linking villages to towns and rural to urban.	LA	LCC	Visitor, Access, Funding, Health	1 - 2 years	Nominal
Enhancing the Visitor Experience (Visitor)	5.1	Develop a destination management plan for the Waterways.	Partnership	LPL		1 - 2 years	
	5.2	Define key gateways to the Waterway more clearly.	Partnership		Visitor		
	5.3	Work with adjacent attractions to ensure engagement with the Waterway.	Partnership	National Space Centre			
	5.4	Re-develop/enhance existing Outdoor Activity Centres.	Partnership	User Groups	Animation, Interest, Health	< 4 years	To be determined
	5.5	Support the development of a new visitor centre at Watermead focusing on the unique selling point – nature, eco-energy etc.	Leicestershire County Council	Leics City Council, Charnwood BC	Interest	1 - 2 years	>£1M
	5.6	Better enforcement to tackle eyesore sights.	Partnership	Volunteer Groups	Development, Visitor	Ongoing	
	5.7	Enhanced and more legible pedestrian/cyclist links to the Waterway and surrounding residential and visitor sites.	Partnership	Sustrans	Access, Interest, Health, Visitor	1 - 2 years	
	5.8	Explore all opportunities to strengthen the physical relationship between parks/open spaces and existing visitor attractions.	Partnership		Access, Visitor	1 to 4 years	To be determined
Inspiring Interest and Involvement in the Waterway (Interest)	6.1	Investment in better signage and on the route information in and around the Waterway.	Partnership	Sustrans	Access, Visitor	< 4 years	
	6.2	Establish a "Friends of the Waterway" volunteer group.	Partnership	User Groups, IWA		1 - 2 years	nominal
	6.3	Develop an all embracing arts strategy for the Waterway which will identify arts-based interventions. These could include the introduction of public art trails along the Waterway that are appropriate to the location. The development of a "living history" event for schools and community groups to develop their own understanding and interpretation of life along the canal and river could be featured. This should involve local artists, schools and community groups.	Partnership	Arts Council	Visitor	< 4 years	

Sub-Theme	Ref	Recommendation	Lead Organisation	Other Partners	Links to other sub-themes	Timescale	Indicative Cost
Promote Green Transport	7.1	Develop an Interaction Management Plan.	Partnership		Health, Access, Visitor	1 - 2 years	
	7.2	Investment in better lighting and other measures to improve Waterside security and make users feel safer.	Partnership	LA and County	Visitor, Health, Access	< 4 years	
	7.3	Develop an ecology, heritage and interaction education pack to be circulated to local schools.	Partnership	Natural England	Visitor, Nature, Interest	< 4 years	<£50K
	7.4	Develop "Cycle the Waterway", "Paddle the Waterway", and "Walk the Waterway" routes and complimentary information – linked into improved signage. Managed through an overarching interaction management plan.	Partnership	Sustrans, Paddle Groups, IWA	Interest, Animation	1 - 2 years	£75K
Providing Continuous Access along the Waterway (Access)	8.1	Develop a clear and coherent programme of access for pedestrians, cyclists, paddlers, boaters and public realm improvements.	Partnership		Health, Interest, Visitor	2 - 6 years	>£500K
	8.2	Draft an Access strategy to identify which areas need to be improved. Secure agreement/ funding and commence access upgrades.	Partnership		Transport	1 - 2 years	£50K - £100K
Optimising Waterway Activity (Animation)	9.1	Investigate the potential for a Waterway taxi service for sports-related and seasonal trips.	Partnership		Visitor, Animation	<4 years	To be determined
	9.2	Develop a Waterway guide to on-the-Water Activity incorporating existing motorised and non-motorised users.	Partnership	User Groups, IWA	Interest, Visitor, Access, Health	<4 years	£50K
	9.3	Develop an "Interaction Plan" for non-motorised boat users, identifying potential improvements to weirs and portage points.	Partnership	User Groups	Development, Interest, Visitor	1 - 2 years	£50K
	9.4	Carry out an audit of existing mooring provision and seek to promote high quality mooring and improved welfare facilities close to the Leicester City Centre. Investigate all potential sites (including Lime Kiln and potential for offline moorings at the basin adjacent to Red Hill roundabout, Belgrave) and carry out market testing in conjunction with British Waterways.	British Waterways		Development, Acces, Visitor	< 4 years	£100K
	9.5	Consider and commence a programme of Waterway-related events which draw-in the surrounding communities, including promoting active lifestyles.	Partnership	LCC	Interest	2 - 4 years	

A3 APPENDIX - BIBLIOGRAPHY

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A4 APPENDIX - PHOTOGRAPH LISTINGS

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A5 CONSULTATION



A consultation process based around an emerging strategy was launched 5th December and ran to 31st January. The consultation consisted of a launch event at Loughborough Basin followed by an online based and local office based consultation questionnaire. Also workshops were held with the local officers from the County, District and City Councils to gain feedback and test ideas raised in the emerging strategy.

The Online Consultation Questionnaire

The online consultation received close to 1000 legitimate hits* and generated over 130 responses to the questionnaire and a further 30 direct email responses.

This survey produced the following consensus:

The greatest strength of the Waterway, ranked in order of significance was:

- A green space where one can interact with the rural environment
- Providing leisure opportunities
- A breakout space for quiet contemplation
- A means of access between points along the towpath
- Providing opportunities for waterside development

And the greatest weaknesses of the Waterway are:

- Anti-social behaviour – e.g. graffiti
- Lack of continuous towpath
- Lack of clear signage
- Lack of information on route
- It is hidden and inaccessible

*this excludes viral emails etc

The Council Officer Consultation

Detailed responses to the draft Strategy was received from 12 local officer groups, including all the councils. Responses were received from those with connection to the following departments:

- Planning Policy & Design
- EA- External funding and Partnerships
- BW – Planning
- Economic Regeneration
- Highway Department
- Environment and Heritage
- Nature Conservation

The key responses related to the following issues:

- The careful consideration of the flood plain
- Appropriate location of 'hubs', inclusion of Thurmaston, East Loughborough
- Improvements to access should be area-specific – deviate away from waterside where appropriate
- Availability of resources/funding for further work/ involvement
- The need to protect and enhance wildlife corridors
- Reference to the policy review including Growth Point funding, the 6Cs growth area ; Green Infrastructure strategy; Green Wedges
- Linking to the wider valley
- One view was that the ecology shouldn't dominate totally over the needs of people and requirement further development of sites
- Reference to the environment/heritage in the vision
- Should consider environmental management plan
- Need to identify priorities for corridor in advance of funding strategy
- Rebranding should take place after routes are established
- Identify lead organisation
- Identify potential for increased biodiversity
- Need for a full appraisal/audit of habitats and protected species prior to identification of 'hubs'

River Soar & Grand Union Canal EMERGING STRATEGY

This emerging strategy focuses on the section of the River Soar and Grand Union Canal which flows between Kilby Bridge, through the centre of Leicester and northwards to Loughborough Meadows.

The emerging strategy provides an assessment of the current position, issues and future opportunities for River Soar and Grand Union Canal, "the Waterway", recommending a series of short to medium term actions to secure a successful long-term future for the Waterway. There is significant potential to reposition the Waterway by strengthening its attractiveness and competitiveness as a place to live, work and invest, and enhancing its role as a valuable greenspace for the surrounding communities to enjoy. However for a number of reasons, the Waterway is not currently fulfilling its potential. This strategy recommends a series of actions to improve the physical fabric of the Waterway and more crucially how the Waterway is engaged. The emphasis is on outlining a route-map of short to medium term interventions that are realistic and affordable, and can help put in place the conditions to secure long term change.

This strategy complements the emerging Local Development Frameworks and the Masterplans guiding development in central Leicester, Charnwood, Blaby and Oadby and Wigston, providing a unified strategy for the Waterway as it passes through this part of Leicestershire. For further details please visit: www.riversoarsstrategy.com

River Soar & Grand Union Canal EMERGING STRATEGY

The Study group is keen to get a diverse range of opinions and therefore would welcome your input. Below are a number of questions aimed at determining your perceptions and aspirations for the Waterway. This is an opportunity to influence the direction of this important asset for Leicestershire.

The study group also welcomes any other comments with regards the strategy and the interventions you would like to see happen.

- Please enter your post code
- How would you describe your relationship with the Waterway and town/parish?
 - Daily user
 - Weekly user
 - Occasional user
 - Rarely use
- What is your main usage of the Waterway?
 - Commuter to work
 - Leisure on foot
 - Leisure on bicycle
 - Angling
 - Boating
- Please rank in order, what you perceive are the greatest strengths of the Waterway (1 Highest, 5 Lowest)
 - A green space where one can interact with the rural environment
 - A means of access between parts along the towpath
 - Providing opportunities for waterside development
 - Providing leisure opportunities
 - A breakout space for quiet contemplation
- Please rank in order, what you perceive are the greatest weaknesses of the Waterway (1 Highest, 5 Lowest)
 - It is hidden and inaccessible
 - Lack of a continuous towpath
 - Lack of clear signage
 - Lack of information on route
 - Antisocial behaviour – eg graffiti
- In order to raise the profile of the canal, both as a tourist attraction and also within the community, should:
 - The name left as R.U.C.
 - The canal be renamed the Leicestershire Waterway Park
 - Renamed something else
- Please provide us with any of your comments either on the Waterway or the Strategy

ARUP

Lathams

Produced by Arup and Lathams

On behalf of the River Soar Steering Group

