

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report has been prepared by Atkins in response to a commission from the Shrewsbury and Newport Canals Trust. Atkins was appointed by the Trust on the 17<sup>th</sup> April 2003 to produce a feasibility study into the proposed restoration of the Shrewsbury and Newport Canal and its branches.
- 1.2 The Trust has specifically sought an appraisal of reopening the Shrewsbury and Newport Canal from Norbury Junction to Shrewsbury, including the Trench Branch and Humber Arm.
- 1.3 The purpose of this study is to determine whether canal restoration is viable and worth embarking upon. It is within the consultant's remit to recommend various proposals to best suit the canal's circumstances and to attain greatest remunerations for the Shrewsbury and Newport Canal and the local and regional economy.
- 1.4 The aims of the study as defined in the brief are as follows:
- ◆ Propose feasible and costed engineering solutions for restoring the canals to navigation;
  - ◆ Identify and give an outline quantification of economic and other benefits arising from restoration;
  - ◆ Identify key sites of local, regional, national and international significance of importance to the restoration;
  - ◆ Identify the scope of the ecological impacts of restoration; and
  - ◆ Demonstrate that the proposed solution provides for optimum planning and environmental benefits.
- 1.5 The consultant has drawn together several key disciplines to examine the potential for re-opening the whole canal. These include:
- ◆ Ecology
  - ◆ Economics
  - ◆ Engineering
  - ◆ Planning & Environment
  - ◆ Water Supply
- 1.6 Each is an established and professional discipline in its own right and by assembling them together in a co-ordinated and integrated approach the consultant can gain a holistic picture to assist in identification issues and proposals.

### HISTORY OF THE SHREWSBURY & NEWPORT CANAL AND BRANCHES

- 1.7 The following is a brief summary of the history of the canal and its branches whereby information has been taken from a number of published sources.
- 1.8 This canal was one of many built in the mid to late 18th Century in order to move large quantities of raw materials and coal from one place to another. One Josiah

Clowes was appointed chief engineer, but when he died half way through the project he was replaced by his assistant - Thomas Telford. The Shrewsbury Canal was opened in 1797, although it operated in isolation from the rest of the British canal network. In 1835 the Newport Branch was completed connecting the Shrewsbury Canal at Wappenshall to the Birmingham and Liverpool Junction Canal at Norbury Junction. Thus Shrewsbury was connected to the national canal network.

- 1.9 In 1846 the Shrewsbury and the Newport branch came under the ownership of the Shropshire Union Railway & Canal Company, which later became part of the London Midlands and Scottish Railway (LMS). The company's canals traded reasonably successfully into the twentieth century but as trade declined with railway competition the canal was gradually maintained less and less. In 1921 the Trench inclined plane, the last to continue working in Britain, closed and trade on the tub-boat section of the network ceased. The last working boats reached Shrewsbury in 1936 and, Longdon-upon-Tern in 1939. In 1944, along with many other of the Shropshire Union's canals, the canal route from Norbury Junction to Shrewsbury was officially abandoned.

## REPORT STRUCTURE

- 1.10 The structure of the report is as follows:

**Section Two: What Remains Today** – identifies the route, features and current status of the canal

**Section Three: Proposed Works and Costs** – outlines the restoration and maintenance cost for each section of the canal;

**Section Four: Key Projects** – a commentary of key projects proposed at Newport, Wappenshall and Shrewsbury;

**Section Five: Policy Review** – encapsulates the local, regional and national policy context that applies to the canal;

**Section Six: Ecology** – provides an ecological appraisal of the proposed scheme;

**Section Seven: Heritage** – outlines features of historical importance that will be of consequence to the restoration;

**Section Eight: Economic Benefits** – outlines the economic benefits that may be expected as a result of restoration;

**Section Nine: Funding Sources** – identifies possible opportunities for funding to aid implementation of the proposed restoration scheme; and

**Section Ten: The Way Forward** – summarises the findings from the report and outlines further work required to take the project forward.