

## 10. The Way Forward

- 10.1 The fundamental conclusion of this report is that the Shrewsbury and Newport Canals should be reopened from Norbury Junction to The Flax Mill in Shrewsbury, and that a link with the River Severn in Shrewsbury should be formed. At present we recommend that this link should be outside the urban area, but the option remains to develop a link as initially proposed by the trust. The project as a whole is worthwhile; it will link a significant tourist destination to the main canal system, open up a little visited corner of Shropshire to a wider audience, and provide a valuable amenity in the area of Telford New Town. The proposed canal restoration has strong links with other heritage assets in the area, from the world famous Iron Bridge to the smaller works of Thomas Telford which are spread around Shropshire, and of which the canals are a part.
- 10.2 However, achieving the restoration will take time, not least because of the scale of the capital; that must be raised to realise the proposals. There is also much to be done before any contracts can be let for restoration of sections of the canal. Canal restoration is a long process, most successful restorations involve many years of behind the scenes planning before making apparently rapid progress on the ground. The preparation of this report, and its recommendation that the canals be restored, is a major landmark on progressing the scheme, but much remains to be done:
- 10.3 Although this report contains recommendations on technical means to implement restoration of the canals, these are only to feasibility level and can not yet actually be implemented. The Shrewsbury and Newport Canal was listed as a long term project in the 1998 IWAAC restoration priorities review. This reflected the lack of development of the proposals at that time. Although another review is awaited, the Waterways Trust have not made a priority of the Shrewsbury and Newport Canal, and this again reflects the amount of development work required before restoration can begin in earnest.

### ENGINEERING

- 10.4 This report demonstrates that restoration of the canal is practicable. However there are a number of key stages to complete before the scheme could be passed to a Contractor for Construction. The list below is not exhaustive but give a useful checklist of the main aspects that will need attention:
- ◆ Appoint a Client project manager.
  - ◆ Detailed topographical survey of the canal corridor and diversion routes.
  - ◆ Ground Investigation of soils along the canal route.
  - ◆ Laboratory testing for soil properties and contamination.
  - ◆ Service investigations
  - ◆ Detailed structural assessment of all structures.
  - ◆ Consultation with English Heritage regarding renovation of historic structures
  - ◆ Consultation with the Environment Agency regarding discharge of canal water into watercourses.

- ◆ Consultation with the Highways Agency and the Councils regarding road diversions etc.
- ◆ Detailed surface water flood analysis.
- ◆ Investigation of the existing surface water network; especially Hurley Brook.
- ◆ Consultation with British Waterways regarding water abstraction and canal management.
- ◆ Agreement of the final route.
- ◆ Establishment of the canal construction easement strip.
- ◆ Division of canal route into manageable contract sections
- ◆ Setting aside land for contractors compound areas.
- ◆ Land purchase and access agreements.
- ◆ Appointment of Planning Supervisor (CDM Regulations).
- ◆ Detailed engineering design.
- ◆ Gain planning approvals and consents.
- ◆ Production of tender documents.
- ◆ Seek tenders.

10.5 By restoring the canal in stages, there will be a rolling programme allowing many of the activities to run concurrently. Gaining funding for the early stages of investigation will be important to continue the momentum that the scheme has already achieved.

#### **NON ENGINEERING ISSUES**

10.6 The first and most important issue is to confirm the preferred line of the restoration and to ensure that this is protected from invasive development by the various development plans along the route. This will then allow the canal to be incorporated into development briefs along the route, this will be especially helpful around Shrewsbury, where redevelopment in the urban area, and urban extensions around Ditherington are related to the canal line.

10.7 Other key items that should be moved forward are:

- ◆ Environmental Scoping Study
- ◆ Archaeological Assessment (especially of proposed diversions)
- ◆ Land assembly
- ◆ Development of funding packages

#### **POLITICAL PROGRESS**

10.8 The Trust have made great strides in terms of generating support from local politicians and local residents for the proposals; with the recommendations of this report (the funding of which indicates the level of political support among the local authorities) mobilising greater political support should now be a key objective. The first requirement is that all local planning authorities protect the line of the canal within their area from predatory development that obstructs the proposals. This is only a starting point however, ideally all the local authorities, down to the parish councils on

the route, should be encouraged to actively and visibly support the proposals. This need not be expensive; a willingness to participate in radio and TV interviews supporting the restoration will be significant. The primary objective is to persuade any funding agency or regulatory body that this scheme is felt to be desirable (rather than just acceptable by local authorities, parish councils, land owners and local residents, and that the proposals are popular with all these groups.

- 10.9 A further element that should be developed is the linkages with local training and educational establishments. The restoration process has much to offer in the training and development of the local workforce, as a range of skills are needed in the restoration, including less common skills such as stonemasonry, along with non-construction work such as field surveys for ecology. By bringing education and training establishments on board more support can be generated for the scheme and costs saved by “on the job” training.

#### **COMMENTARY**

- 10.10 The restoration is a major undertaking, and a realistic timescale of perhaps ten to fifteen years should be contemplated for its completion. There is much development work to be done, but as no funding is yet in place there is time for this to be undertaken. In particular, there are some complex and expensive arrangements between Wappenshall and Shrewsbury, and in many ways these divide the restoration into two natural segments, as the lead time for through navigation between Wappenshall and Shrewsbury is likely to be significantly greater than for Norbury to Wappenshall. The proposed Marina at Wappenshall may indeed be an interim terminus for the whole canal.
- 10.11 That said, assuming issues of water supply and drainage can be resolved there is no reason why isolated lengths should not proceed in advance of the rolling restoration from Norbury to Shrewsbury. This is especially true of Shrewsbury where much of the canal route is related to Development and Regeneration. There are many examples around the UK of isolated restored lengths of canal. At Moira, on the Ashby Canal, around one mile with a new lock has been reinstated well ahead of the main canal system reaching this point, while in Lisburn, Northern Ireland, a lock and canal section have been restored as part of the regeneration of the town and the completion of new civic buildings. Other isolated lengths of canal tend to be more rural, but can nevertheless play a useful role; one length of the Montgomery canal around Welshpool even supports a trip boat and a small hire fleet.

#### **MANAGEMENT**

- 10.12 Along with political progress, it is now time to encourage local authorities and others to take an active role in developing the restoration scheme. This really needs a full time officer to promote and develop the restoration from here on. As five local authorities are involved it seems desirable for these authorities (plus other bodies such as BW) to work on a coordinated single position and for this manager to be seconded to one of these authorities. Such a partnership arrangement is the key model used by the Rochdale and Huddersfield Canals, and currently operating on the Cotswold Canals (although in this case the officer is seconded to BW).

**RECOMMENDATION**

10.13 We recommend that:

- ◆ The full restoration of the canals be pursued
- ◆ The Local authorities (and BW) form a partnership, possibly informally, with the trust
- ◆ The Local authorities (and BW) between them provide a project manager
- ◆ That the works identified above are progressed to achieve full restoration

10.14 While not specifically a recommendation, we feel it likely that an interim terminus at Wappenshall will result from the phasing of restoration, and this should be considered in developing proposals.