



British  
Waterways  
Dyfrffyrdd  
Prydain

# WATERWAYS FOR WALES

IMPROVED QUALITY OF LIFE THROUGH THE SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT OF THE WATERWAYS OF WALES



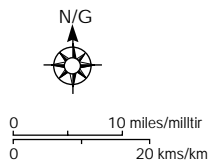
Strategic Project Navigations



Environment Agency Navigations



Other Rivers and Waterways



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## Foreword by British Waterways' Chief Executive

### Robin Evans

*Waterways for Wales* begins the consultation process that will bring interested parties together to develop a 'made in Wales' plan for the waterways. That plan will provide a strategic framework and set out the necessary actions to help improve the quality of life in Wales through:

- Stimulating economic regeneration
- Acting as a catalyst for rural recovery
- Developing sustainable living
- Promoting the vitality of Welsh cultural heritage
- Promoting Wales in the wider world.

We are grateful for the support and encouragement of Sue Essex AM, Minister for Environment who suggested that we undertake this task. We are also grateful for the active support of many Assembly members who have encouraged us and, in particular, the Members of the All Party Group on Waterways.

The care and development of waterways and water spaces spans the remit of many agencies in Wales. Their use and potential for development affects the interests of different communities. Development must be sensitive to their needs and to the environment. It has been clear to many of us that the potential of the waterways for good can only be unlocked if all those with a role to play work together to achieve a common vision.

The *Waterways for Wales* consultation provides an opportunity to develop that vision and to get waterways on the national agenda. I strongly urge everyone who owns, cares for or has an interest in Welsh waterways, or any interest in the development of Wales' economy, culture and communities to participate in the consultation process.



Robin Evans  
Chief Executive  
British Waterways

## 1.1 Introduction

Wherever they run, navigable canals and rivers are a catalyst for the economic evolution of Wales. They are an intrinsic part of Wales' past and future success and they lie at the heart of Welsh cultural heritage. In addition, Wales has significant assets represented by its extensive inshore waters, ports, harbours and marinas and natural and man-made lakes.

Our waterways and waterspaces (referred to collectively as 'waterways' for brevity after this) are a haven for wildlife, an important landscape feature, a legacy from the industrial revolution and a significant national tourism asset. They have a modern relevance as a resource for local communities for recreation, education and health.

Waterways can help improve the quality of life in Wales. They provide a focus for activity. They link other assets and form corridors of opportunity throughout Wales.

Waterways can help improve the quality of life in Wales in many ways. Where partners work together, waterways can make a significant contribution in the following areas of relevance to Wales:

- Economic regeneration
- Rural recovery
- Sustainable living
- Vitality of Welsh cultural heritage
- Wales in the wider world.

To see the full benefits of the plan realised, partnership working is essential involving the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG), Assembly Sponsored Public Bodies (ASPBs), other public bodies such as Local Authorities and British Waterways and the private and voluntary sectors.

## 1.2 Purpose

This document has been produced by British Waterways at the suggestion of the Welsh Assembly Minister for Environment, Sue Essex AM.

*Waterways for Wales* sets out a strategic approach to the revitalisation of the waterways of Wales aiming to contribute to the improvement of the quality of life.

The purpose of *Waterways for Wales* is to invite views on this strategic approach and, in particular, to the consultation questions set out in Section 6. The next step will be to use these contributions to develop a made in Wales plan for the waterways which has wide support across the public, private, community and voluntary sectors.

## 1.3 Main themes

### 1.3.1 Economic regeneration

Our waterways were the arteries of industrialisation and the route to trade and prosperity in the 19th century. The power of waterways to act as a catalyst and focus for regeneration and create lasting jobs and wealth has been demonstrated throughout Britain and internationally. Economic regeneration focused the waterways is the engine for radical and sustainable change – enabling many of the other projects that produce social and environmental improvements.

Waterways can help economic regeneration through strategic schemes to restore, renew and develop our canals and other waterspaces. This generates jobs and creates better places to live and work – so attracting people and business. Economic activity around our docks and other waterspaces can be enhanced by skilled management to make them alive and attractive for work and play.

### 1.3.2 Rural recovery

Our canals and rivers link urban and rural communities. The waterway is a part of a rural community's past having served industry and agriculture. It now offers a modern role as focus for leisure and tourism.

Waterways can contribute to rural revival by being a focus for economic activity through regeneration, development and tourism. They can help play a part in achieving sustainable development through:

- the new use of old canal and agricultural buildings
- land management initiatives
- new tourism facilities and promotion
- providing new training opportunities for work
- providing long term jobs
- being a reservoir to help keep alive some key rural skills such as hedge laying.

### 1.3.3 Sustainable living

Our activities should not prejudice our children's future or that of the places where they live and work. Waterways are biodiversity and history corridors. They are a place to visit, to relax, to recreate, to improve your mental and physical health, to learn and to play. They do not just help create better places to live; they also create a more attractive environment for work and business.

We can help people live in a more sustainable way by using waterways to give to everyone, regardless of age or ability, greater access to the countryside or green open spaces in cities. Our waterways have a significant part to play in increasing and enhancing biodiversity. They also are vehicle free routes for walking and cycling and have good links with other modes of transport.

### 1.3.4 Cultural heritage vitality

Waterways are an intrinsic part of Wales' past and future success. They are a part of its landscape, its social, industrial and agricultural history. Waterways link into wider corridors and the communities that surround them. Waterways are as relevant to Welsh cultural heritage now as in the past.

Our waterways contain some of Wales' great national icons such as the Pontcysyllte and Chirk Aqueducts and are linked to the World Heritage Site at Blaenavon. These are world-class assets.

Our waterways can provide a focus for the people of Wales and those outside to learn and appreciate more of the cultural vitality of Wales.

Securing the future of our ancient and historical monuments and interpreting them in context helps us and visitors to Wales understand their significance and better appreciate our history. Using the waterways as a whole as an educational resource starts a virtuous circle of awareness and future care.

### 1.3.5 Wales in the wider world

Our waterways are international quality assets. They can help raise the profile of Wales across the world by enhancing our reputation and attracting international tourism. They have the potential to represent the best of Wales' green and cultural tourism assets and could generate year-round income.

The work and resources needed to renew Wales' waterways is significant. However, the proposed projects are models of sustainable development that elsewhere have been shown to have the potential to attract international funding. *Waterways for Wales* offers a vision that Wales could be an exemplar for others, by showing what it is possible to do with imagination, partnership and hard work.

The waterways in Wales do not exist in a policy vacuum. They need to be developed to respond to the needs of Wales as the main themes in Section 1.3 set out. The model projects in this document are geared to assist with the delivery of the *Plan for Wales* and the other strategies and plans of the Welsh Assembly Government and Assembly Sponsored Public Bodies.

This section lists some of the important policies and plans relevant to the waterways at the time of writing. It is not comprehensive and consultees are encouraged to describe other relevant policies and plans in their responses.

Appendix 1 contains a description of the more detailed provisions with cross-references to waterway related projects that could help to deliver the policy aims or plan actions.

## 2.1 National Assembly for Wales

### 2.1.1 Plan for Wales and Learning to Live Differently

*Waterways for Wales* applies the principles contained within these two publications of:

- Sustainable development – acting now for the future
- Social Inclusion – attacking poverty
- Equal opportunities – achieving equality in all we do.

### 2.1.2 A Winning Wales

*Waterways for Wales* will help towards the achievement of targets in the National Economic Development Strategy – *A Winning Wales*. The strategic projects in particular will assist in catalysing the areas around them to get more people into jobs and reduce levels of economic inactivity. Rural projects will help to develop the green economy and bring growth and opportunity to smaller communities.

### 2.1.3 Rural Development Plan

As noted above, our waterways link Wales' urban and rural areas. The Montgomery Canal is a rural canal; other canals link urban and rural areas. The waterways are well placed to play a part in the sustainable development of rural areas. In particular, they can help meet some key priorities in the Rural Development Plan.

### 2.1.4 Creative future

Appropriately, the *Culture and the economy* section of *Creative Future* was illustrated with a picture of the Llangollen Canal. Wales' waterways are significant cultural assets in their own right and the Llangollen Canal is adjacent to the site of the *Llangollen International Music Eisteddfod*. They can also be used to generate economic advantage to help sustain them. The Cultural Strategy observes that Wales needs to extract cultural value from wide range of public and private expenditure. Waterways can help achieve the objectives in the strategy.

## 2.2 Assembly Sponsored Public Bodies

### 2.2.1 Wales Tourist Board

Our waterways are undoubted tourism assets already. However, the contribution they can make can be enhanced by developing new and existing tourism products and services, discovering new synergies between waterways, tourism and rural development initiatives and by strategic marketing of the sector and its tourism products.

As cultural assets, waterways have the ability to contribute to the achievement of the WTB's Cultural Tourism Strategy aims.

### 2.2.2 Welsh Development Agency

The case for waterways as agents for economic regeneration is well known and well made. Waterways can contribute to the WDA's sustainable development strategy and corporate plan targets.

### 2.2.3 Countryside Council for Wales

Waterways have a key role in assisting The Countryside Council for Wales and partners (such as the Environment Agency Wales) achieve a better environment in Wales, better known, valued and visited. In particular the projects can contribute to the achievement of the strategic objectives set out in *A Better Wales – The Natural Environment of Wales in 2010*.

#### **2.2.4 Environment Agency**

Waterways have a key role in assisting the Environment Agency Wales achieve a better environment in Wales. They have specific contributions to make in assisting the Agency in the following areas:

- Promotion of sustainable development
- Water quality and conservation
- Catchment flood management
- Promotion of recreation
- Water management strategy

#### **2.2.5 Cadw Welsh Historic Monuments**

It is in the nature of waterways that were at the heart of the industrial revolution that they should have associated with them buildings of historic interest. British Waterways alone manages 169 scheduled ancient monuments and listed buildings within Wales. A proactive approach to Wales' waterways can ensure a sustainable future for these buildings and ensure the people of Wales and tourists have access to them and can appreciate them. In addition there are synergistic tourism and economic benefits to be gained by linking these buildings and sites in the care of other bodies.