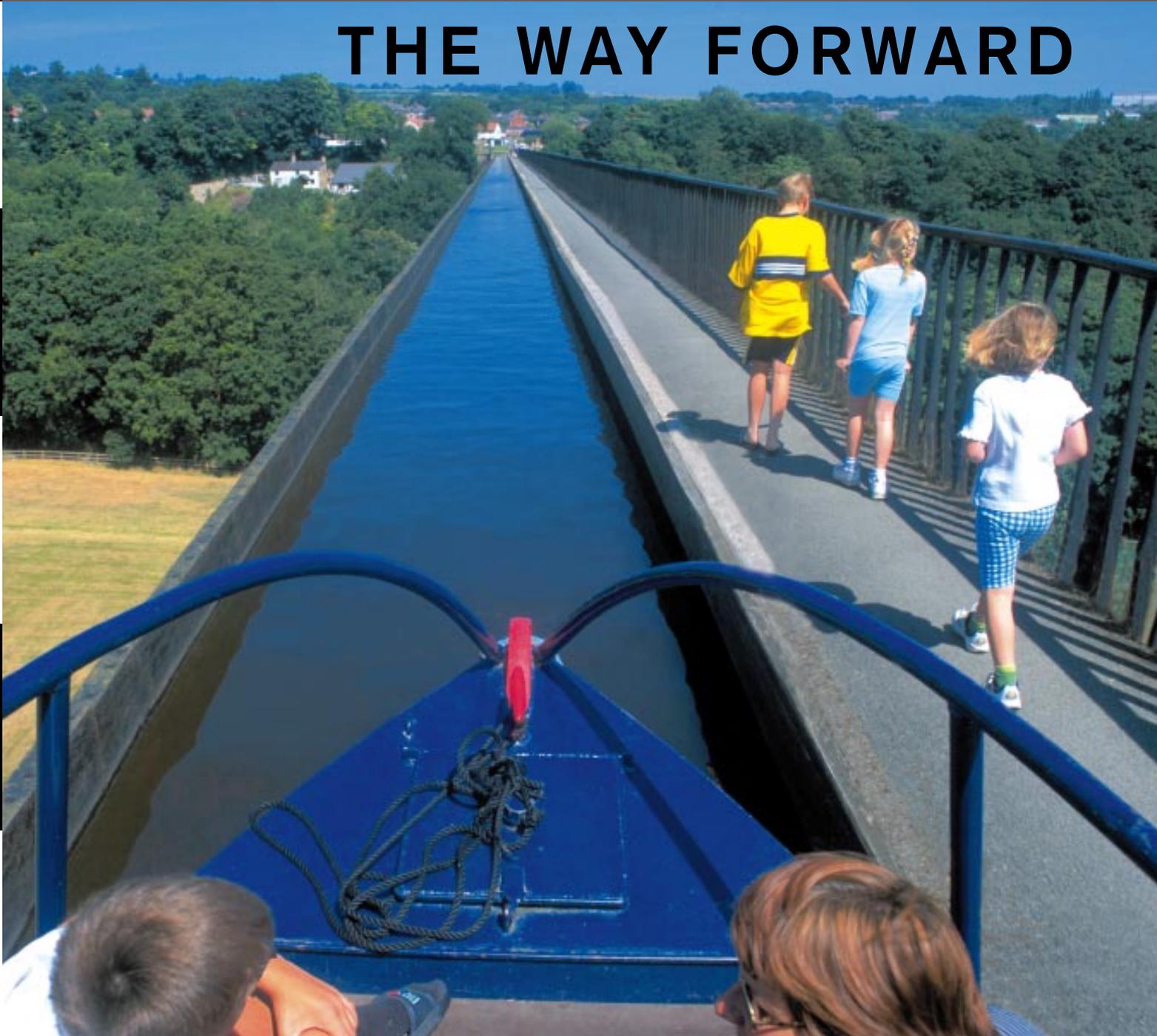




British
Waterways
Dyfrffyrdd
Prydain

WATERWAYS FOR WALES

THE WAY FORWARD



WATERWAYS FOR WALES



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FOREWORD

The 'Waterways for Wales' consultation in 2003 was a significant step forward in raising awareness of the opportunities and benefits offered by the waterways of Wales for better quality of life, environmental gain and economic development. It also provided a catalyst to bring partners together from all areas and sectors of Wales to consider the future in a more focussed way. The responses to the consultation are positive and encouraging.

Although responsibility for waterways has not been formally devolved to the Welsh Assembly Government our waterways are an important asset for us in Wales, with significance for many aspects of the Assembly's remit and for a wide range of bodies in Wales involved or interested in their care and development. Effective partnerships are already delivering world-leading restoration and environmental care projects in Wales that are also generating new economic activity.

The Welsh Assembly Government would like to see continued progress made by working together and I look forward to the Assembly Government playing its part in the delivery of British Waterways and their partners' plans for future developments in Wales.

I commend this initiative which will bring considerable benefits to Wales.

Andrew Davies AM, Minister for Economic Development and Transport



Andrew Davies AM

FOREWORD

British Waterways is one of a number of organisations with responsibilities for waterways in Wales. We were therefore delighted when the former Minister for Environment Sue Essex AM, encouraged us to take steps to develop ideas for an overarching plan, to help realise the full potential waterspaces can play in improving the quality of life in Wales.

The response to the resulting consultation 'Waterways for Wales' far exceeded our expectations and clearly identified a pathway by which all those who share responsibilities for Wales diverse and vital waterways can work together. The Minister for Economic Development and Transport Andrew Davies AM, clearly shares his predecessor's enthusiasm for the real benefits improved waterways can bring to Wales and his decision to host a working group, taking forward the findings of the consultation process is very welcome. British Waterways is now working with the Assembly to establish the working group.

We are grateful for the guidance of the many organisations and individuals who responded to Waterways for Wales. We now look forward to working with them, the Assembly, its agencies and our partners, in order to produce a plan which interweaves with the policies and strategies of Wales, to produce significant social, economic, cultural and environmental benefits.

Robin Evans, Chief Executive, British Waterways



Robin Evans

OVERVIEW

'Waterways for Wales' is an ambitious partnership vision to include the nation's water spaces in the continuing economic, environmental and social regeneration of the nation.

An integral aspect of this vision is a dialogue embracing partners in the public, voluntary and commercial sectors, other supportive parties and the wider communities of Wales.

Last year, British Waterways undertook a comprehensive consultation exercise and the responses are now being presented as the basis for further progress.

The consultation addressed the key issues underpinning the principles of Waterways for Wales:

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

The 'Waterways for Wales' consultation document helped raise awareness of the opportunities and benefits offered by the waterways of Wales. It drew on British Waterways' extensive experience in waterways regeneration, sustainable development and conservation.

The aim of the projects given as examples in Waterways for Wales is that of regeneration through restoration and renewal. They are all underpinned by partnership working and will require a funding portfolio to ensure their delivery.

The major capital projects in particular aim to effectively transform the corridors of the inland waterways of Wales. As strategic initiatives they can provide a critical mass and maximise the 'multiplier effects' of individual local and regional schemes.

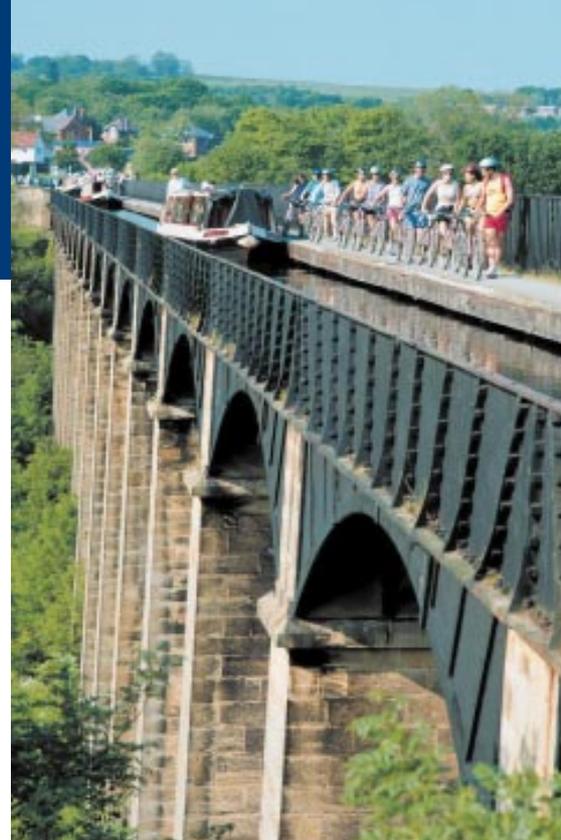
45 organisations and bodies throughout the country submitted substantive responses to the consultation document and nearly 800 members of the public made their views known in questionnaire format.

There was widespread endorsement in responses for the projects in the consultation document but also there was a call for alternative and innovative project ideas in other waterways and waterspaces, to widen the geographical spread and scope of future development.

In the light of the positive and encouraging responses received to the consultation, it is hoped this report will sustain that interest and act as a catalyst in bringing partners together to consider the next steps and proposals made in responses.

For instance, one such proposal, a joint-project for the implementation of a 'Waterways for Wales' web site, would provide information on recreation and access, education and cultural resources to the public in Wales, and marketing to visitors and tourists.

By continuing to work together, British Waterways hopes to contribute with its partners to establishing an effective 'made in Wales' approach to sustaining and developing Wales' waterways that enjoys the confidence and support of the public, private, community and voluntary sectors.



The Montgomery Canal Partnership is a strong local partnership which includes British Waterways, Montgomery Waterway Restoration Trust, Powys County Council, Shropshire County Council, Oswestry Borough Council, Shropshire Wildlife Trust, Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust, The Shropshire Union Canal Society, English Heritage, Cadw, Countryside Council for Wales, English Nature, The Inland Waterways Association and the Environment Agency.

Wales' waterways are home to some of the UK's rarest protected species, including water vole, floating water plantain and grass wrack pond weed.

Two thirds of Wales' population lives within ten miles of a waterway. Our canals and rivers link urban and rural communities, offering important environmental corridors and opportunities for leisure and tourism.

RESPONSES

'Waterways for Wales' posed a set of questions addressing the core issues and the responses to these are summarised here. The full report on the responses is available as a PDF document which can be accessed by visiting our website on www.britishwaterways.co.uk/wales

Q: Is the strategic approach outlined in this document the right one?

In particular, are all the right projects included and what would be the most appropriate timescale to deliver them?

A: There was a strong welcome for the way the consultation report set out the significant value of the waterways in Wales and their potential, and proposed a more coordinated and prioritised approach for their development within a framework that meshes with the policy aspirations of the Assembly and its bodies.

Q: How could the scope of the document be extended? For example, what other waterways and waterspaces should be included and what other plans and projects could be incorporated?

A: The scope of the vision should not be limited to man made waterways but could include rivers, lakes and coastal water spaces. The diversity of proposals in the responses illustrates the potential scope of the vision and the need for extensive developmental work to establish its parameters.

Q: How should we prioritise actions between the core themes of economic regeneration, rural recovery, sustainable living, cultural vitality and Wales in the wider world and selected projects?

A: Many gave the themes equal weight; while some stated that availability of funding will largely dictate the timetable, others argued the potential benefits of lower cost actions to improve access and promote sustainable development of Wales' waterways. Environmental aspects, including bio-diversity and wider 'quality of life' gains should be prominent in the evaluation process.

Q: Would the creation of a working group comprising the main navigation authorities, Assembly Sponsored Public Bodies, local authorities and representatives of the National Assembly for Wales create the necessary synergy between this vision and other plans and programmes and be an effective way to derive the maximum benefit from our work?

A: The vision would benefit from linking with existing public policy strategies and programmes, at local and national level. A working group was widely sought as the most beneficial next step in delivering the vision.



Regeneration schemes like the marina proposed at Crindau form the building blocks for initiatives such as the plan to make the Monmouthshire & Brecon Canal navigable from Brecon to the sea at Newport. Achieving this would increase the attraction of the canal as well as enable travel to and from other waterways, opening up significant new markets for tourism.

British Waterways Wales & Border Counties is committed to maintaining, improving and restoring 75 miles of waterway in Wales. Over the past decade, British Waterways has invested around £30m restoring and maintaining these waterways.

THE WAY FORWARD

Establish a working group to:

- Provide strategic insight in project identification and priority, partnership development and indicators of progress; it is envisaged that members of the working group will largely work to their own strategies and projects, but that new initiatives and collaborations will emerge
- Initiate liaison with regional or project partnerships that will focus on project delivery and report back to the national working group; new partnerships may emerge from the working group
- Consider how project proposals can best secure the appropriate blend of funding and resources within the partnership structures, recognising the unique input each partner organisation can contribute
- Ensure the voluntary sector is included in the working group at national level and that the working group and local partnerships should between them ensure community participation in the initiation and development of proposals and projects at the local level
- Address other relevant issues such as strategic problems in accessing funding; resolving issues of competing interests; benchmarks and measures of economic, environmental and quality of life impacts; bottlenecks in navigation restoration or marina development



The waterways of Wales can represent the best in our nation's green and cultural tourism assets, capable of safeguarding important habitats while also generating year round activity and income in a growing sector.

SUMMARY

The Waterways for Wales consultation began a process to create an effective 'made in Wales' approach to the sustainable development of Wales' waterways. This process as it continues will draw on existing policies and strategies but will attempt to bring a clearer focus to what is being done, what needs to be done and what can be done.

The proposed working group will offer a coordinated perspective to the many different bodies, organisations and communities with an interest in our waterways and seek to bring a strategic approach to delivery, the creation of new opportunities and the resolution of issues.

Outputs may include reports to the Minister for Economic Development; initiation of new partnership projects and joint working or funding arrangements; research and consultation; liaison with community groups, project partnerships and with sectoral and interest bodies.

Impacts may include increased effectiveness in obtaining or using investment, more work undertaken, better quality of work (including sustainability, community participation, access) and success in achieving measures and targets (increased bio-diversity, tourism growth, income generation, public participation, restoration of navigation).



Public bodies in Wales and the Welsh Assembly Government share a vision of achieving a higher quality of life through sustainable development. This means ensuring that we look after internationally significant assets such as Wales' waterways for the future. By investing in them wisely we can enhance both urban and rural environments, offer greater access for healthy leisure opportunities, attract more tourism and generate economic growth.