

AINA CASE STUDY

PLACE MAKING AND SHAPING

Market Harborough: revitalising a canal terminus



Regeneration of an historic canal basin brings benefits for locals and visitors

Market Harborough canal basin is located one kilometre to the north of the town centre, and forms the terminus of an eight kilometre branch of the Grand Union Canal, which begins at Foxton. The basin has a long, proud history and was host to one of the first narrowboat rallies, but over many years the attractive brick warehouses surrounding the water had become disused and vacant.

Plans to improve the area came and went, but in 1996 a new masterplan, supported by public consultation, was jointly prepared by British Waterways and Harborough District Council. This aimed to create a mixed-use development to capitalise on the potential of the basin as a tourist attraction, with new mooring facilities acting as a further catalyst for regeneration that could extend as far as Foxton Locks. Developer interest was then secured which enabled the work to fully commence.

The project cost £4 million, largely funded by British Waterways, but a £150,000 donation from a local charity was made to help open the site up for community use. Work included the conversion of an old stable block into contemporary offices, the restoration of an old pub and 12 room hotel and the adaption of the listed terminal building for restaurant use. The residential development was privately funded. High quality hard landscape work accompanied the scheme, and a modern facilities block for boaters was built on the north side of the basin. A commemorative sculpture with sundial welcomes visitors.

The footpath link to Foxton Locks has been improved and upgraded, and both British Waterways and the District Council now promote the canal basin as a tourist attraction. Economic benefits have been generated, with good use of the water frontage, waterspace and restored buildings. A determined and sustained approach from the project partners has successfully turned a redundant and loss-making site into a popular self-sustaining canal destination.

Market Harborough canal basin is now an excellent example of waterside regeneration in a medium sized market town.