

Fens Waterway Link: a strategic development in the East of England



Creating a leisure and tourism destination of national importance

The Fens Waterways Link (FWL) represents one of the most strategic developments of the inland navigation networks of the UK in two centuries. It complements other waterway projects, notably the Milton Keynes to Bedford Waterways Park and the connecting waterways being developed by the Lincolnshire Waterways Partnership. The new link will revitalise the region for the good of all and create a leisure and tourism destination of national and international importance. It is predicted the link will attract around 1 million additional visitors per year bringing in around £14m per year to the region's economy.

Ultimately the scheme will create an inland water link between the Fenland rivers – Witham, Welland, Glen and Nene. The first phase of construction for the link has already been implemented with the opening of the Boston Lock Link in 2009.

Boston's new Black Sluice Lock, a Lincolnshire Waterways Partnership (LWP) project, opens up routes inaccessible to boaters for 40 years. The Boston Lock project was funded by Lincolnshire County Council (£4 million), the European Regional Development Fund (£2.5 million) and the East Midlands Development Agency (£2 million).

The next exciting stage of the FWL project is to develop a business case to extend the navigation a further 27 km between Donnington Bridge on the South Forty Foot Drain and Surfleet Seas End on the River Glen. Although the scope of works has yet to be fully appraised, it is likely that it will involve major dredging work and the construction of new channel and several locks.

LWP has secured funding for the appraisal of the Donnington to Surfleet Link and has asked the Environment Agency to project manage the work. The funding is from Lincolnshire County Council, East Midlands Development Agency and Environment Agency.

Contacts for the project are www.environment-agency.gov.uk and www.visitlincolnshire.com