

AINA CASE STUDY

CULTURAL HERITAGE

Hatton Locks: working heritage at Warwick



Hatton Locks are a well maintained waterway landmark and a wide range of improvements, including this dragonfly sculpture, help to enhance the visitor experience

A series of improvements have created a popular visitor destination which helps tell the story of our historic canals

Hatton Locks are located on the Grand Union Canal just west of Warwick. The two mile flight of 21 locks is also known as the 'Stairway to Heaven', and has long been a popular day out. British Waterways recognised that the full recreational potential of the site was not being fulfilled, and recent improvements have enhanced the visitor experience.

A number of improvements have been developed following a substantial grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund. The old wharf and maintenance yard, where carpenters and blacksmiths made heavy oak lock gates, have been restored to create offices and a heritage skills training centre. The old stable block, where canal horses bedded down for the night, is now a highly commended café. Facilities include two tactile maps and audio trails for the blind or visually impaired, nature and interpretation trails, artworks, restored working boats, moorings and boat facilities, parking and picnic area. In addition the flight is promoted for educational activities with a fact file available for schools use. Privately run facilities include a pub, plus day boat hire available at the bottom of the flight.

A well maintained surfaced towpath runs alongside the locks. To the north this becomes a more typical rural route, whilst to the south a combination of surfaces carries it towards and around Warwick town centre. The towpath attracts cyclists from Warwick and the nearby Hatton Park residential estate, though they are encouraged to follow the Waterway Code of Conduct, and signs remind users that pedestrians have priority.

The flight benefits from its connections with the Grand Union Canal Walk and Shakespeare's Avon Way. Three circular walks take in both the towpath and rights of way through adjacent countryside, and some permissive access has also been negotiated. These link to a park and ride station, a woodland area and the popular family attraction at Hatton Country World.

Increasing levels of public use prove that the improvements and investments have been worthwhile, and the flight is now a showcase for all aspects of our canal heritage.