

AINA CASE STUDY

THE WAY FORWARD

Kennet & Avon Canal Partnership: a spirit of consensus



Partnership working oversaw canal restoration and now steers the way forward

The restoration and further development of the Kennet and Avon Canal would never have happened without the robust and active partnerships which were formed to meet longer term objectives.

The Kennet and Avon Canal Partnership Steering Group was established many years ago and has been the key driver behind the move to restoration. In the 1980s this was known as the Advisory Group and the Leisure and Amenity Director of British Waterways acted as chairman. Representatives come from local government, the Kennet and Avon Canal Trust, the Association of Canal Enterprises and British Waterways. The Environment Agency is to be invited to join, and the Canal trust now acts as chair.

After the Royal reopening in 1990, the Partnership's main task was to guide ongoing maintenance and steer the major works which still needed to be costed, funded and undertaken. The substantial grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund was awarded to the Partnership - not British Waterways or the Canal Trust – and it was the Partnership which oversaw the five year programme as it progressed towards a fully functioning canal.

Working under a Memorandum of Agreement, the Partnership now agrees maintenance agreements, with a regular reporting regime, and ensures policies are followed in the canal's Conservation Plan (prepared as part of the Heritage Lottery works). A major success has been the recent reclassification of the canal from remainder status to cruiseway.

The Partnership aims to work in a spirit of consensus to address issues and deal with solutions, communicate and champion the waterway and its purposes, and work from good and rigorous information. Outputs may have been varied but all have been greater than the sum of the parts.