

AINA CASE STUDY

TOURISM AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Montgomery Canal: green tourism and rural regeneration



The Montgomery Canal is a nationally important waterway habitat and restoration work aims to conserve this unique natural heritage

One of the UK's most rural waterways is now a focus for restoration and sustainable recreational activity

The Montgomery Canal is the name now given to the 55 kilometre trans-border canal that connects the Llangollen Canal at Welsh Frankton to Newtown in mid Wales. The canal was effectively abandoned in 1936 following a breach and was legally abandoned in 1944. Restoration work has since taken place towards the northern end at at Welshpool, but other parts remain dry, blocked or overgrown. However, the towpath remains walkable throughout.

The canal is recognised for its beauty and rolling landscapes, and a number of attractions and nature reserves lie on or close to the waterway. As a result, there is much low key leisure use of the towpath, which is also available to cyclists on two sections at Newton and around Frankton Locks. Canadian style canoes can be hired too and there are efforts, supported by Powys Tourism and others, to promote the canal as a corridor for green tourism. Wildlife and industrial archaeology are additional attractions.

Access for all is a key aim, and the Friends of the Montgomery Canal have prepared a schedule of access points suitable for disabled visitors, prams and buggies. Many sections of towpath have been resurfaced to improve the route for longer distance walking, and some sections have been constructed to cater for wheelchair access. Links with Offa's Dyke National Trail and the Severn Way are promoted, and an Explorer's Trail has been developed which links circular walks to the canalside and nearby attractions. This is marketed as suitable 'for casual ramblers, the cycling family or individuals on a weekend canoeing adventure'. Part of the canal is also promoted by Shropshire Council as a Towpath Trail as an off road route for cyclists.

A Rural Development Plan was produced by consultants working for British Waterways in 2004 and a Conservation Management Strategy, produced in 2005, now provides an agreed plan for future work and aims to seek a balance between further use of the canal and towpath and the needs of natural and built heritage. Future restoration and towpath work will develop sustainable projects with a focus on rural regeneration.