

AINA CASE STUDY

PLACE MAKING AND SHAPING

Liverpool Canal Link



The canal link provides an exciting new public amenity next to Liverpool's iconic waterfront

Vibrant waterspace created alongside Liverpool's iconic Pier Head

The Liverpool Canal Link was built as a contemporary £22 million project to extend the Leeds & Liverpool Canal across the famous Pier Head and into the South Docks where there are plans for improved use of the waterspace. The Canal Link now provides a further 2.2 km of navigable waterway, and its route includes two new locks, open channels and tunnels. At the Pier Head the development provides access to the water's edge with attractive public space adjacent to the River Mersey, famous buildings and museums – all forming part of Liverpool's World Heritage Site.

The aim was to develop an innovative new length of canal which would once again lead to a definite western terminus of the Leeds & Liverpool Canal. The scheme was several years in the planning and various ideas and proposals were put forward before the works were finally approved and funded. Constraints to be considered included new highway bridges, flow control structures and utility diversions.

The first length lay between the late-20th century terminus of the canal at the top of the Stanley Lock Flight and the in-filled section of Trafalgar Dock. This length was wholly within the Stanley Dock Conservation Area and also passes through the residential area known as Eldonian Village. This section was already in water and navigable following dredging in the 1990s, and the only works required were a fixed control structure between two docks.

Significant areas of Trafalgar and West Waterloo Docks had been in-filled and used for landfill following the decline in commercial shipping, and only a small open channel (unsuitable for navigation) existed along the eastern dock wall before construction of the canal link. Work on this second length comprised a new 6.5 metre channel and a new bridge crossing.

The third length was from the northern end of Prince's Dock through to the start of the Pier Head area, and work included a new fixed bridge and lock, work to an existing footbridge and a new canal tunnel leading through to the north of the famous Liver Building.

The fourth and final section crosses the Pier Head and creates an important waterway link between the Central Dock and the South Docks. This involved the construction of 500 metres of new open canal basins, two tunnels, a lock structure and extensive public realm work.

The Canal Link opened in April 2009 and will attract an estimated 200,000 extra visitors to Liverpool's waterfront each year, bringing expenditure of around £2 million. Over 4,500 annual boat movements are expected, 170 net additional local jobs will have been created and wider socio-economic benefits include improved civic pride, access to heritage interpretation and increased recreational amenity for the city.

Around the impressive Albert Dock, the Canal Link has effectively weaved together the largest group of Grade 1 listed buildings in the UK whilst also extending the longest canal in Britain.