

13. Heritage Restoration Opportunities

The Canal and Towpath

The Trust's project involves the reinstatement and re-watering of 4.388 km of canal bed between Lubstree Wharf and the canal warehouse complex at Wappenshall Junction with the associated towpath, hedges, bridges, structures, buildings and interpretation.

The Buildings and Basins at Wappenshall (*Appendices 3 & 4*)

This complex of canal buildings, bridge and basins at Wappenshall in the north of Telford is probably as important a link with the economic and social development of the Telford area as the Ironbridge Gorge Museum developments in the south at Ironbridge.

The two main buildings are both listed as Grade II while the associated roving Canal Bridge is listed as a National Monument. The Sutherland Estate built both buildings in the 1830s to serve the Trench section of the Shrewsbury (tub boat) canal and new basins at the end of the Newport Branch of the Birmingham and Liverpool Junction (narrowboat) canal, where it joined the Shrewsbury Canal. When the Newport Canal was built, Thomas Telford also reconstructed the lock and bridge structures on the Shrewsbury Canal to allow narrow boats to navigate to Shrewsbury.

Although these two warehouses were listed by English Heritage as Grade II following an inspection on 23 February 1978, no subsequent review has ever been carried out. Discussions with English Heritage suggest that it may be possible to get these upgraded to Grade II* and the site listed as a Conservation Area.

Covered Canal Dock Warehouse (SJ 61 SE28/252) (Grade II) – built in the later half of the 1830s, this fine 3-storey warehouse is now extremely rare as it has a through canal dock which is still in water. It is believed that there is only one other example still in water in England and that is currently under threat. The upper floor, over the through canal is covered on arcades. Round-headed windows to the side on the upper floors have ganged brick arches with fixed iron glazing bars. Some windows are blocked on the first floor. The gable ended slate roof has stepped brick eaves and the ridgeline is extended out to cover a hoist in the northeast gable above the 2-storey central hatch opening with segmental arch. There is a cambered arch opening over the canal. A similar arch carries the towpath bridge at the southwest end. The internal dock has cambered arch side openings to the northwest. Internally the floors are cut by trap doors, allowing to be hoisted directly from the barges below.

Original Canal Warehouse (SJ 61 SE 28/253) (Grade II) – This is the smaller of the two main buildings and was the first of the two to be constructed. It is built of red brick in 2-storeys with a low-pitch slate roof and has identical elevations to the south-west and north-east with the centre bay in each case being deeply recessed between the narrow flanking bays, allowing for a shallow wharf on the canal side. Segmented arched windows to flanking bays with pointed brick cills. The southeast recess retains its cast iron, 10cwt jib hoist.

Canal Bridge (SJ 61 SE28/255) (National Monument) – Early 19th century canal bridge over the Newport Branch of the Birmingham & Liverpool Junction canal. Built of stone with round arch and ashlar parapets

Former Canal Toll Clerk's Office (SJ 61 SE28/254) (Grade II) – now known as The Villa [and a private house]. The Toll Clerk's Office was built by the Sutherland Estate in 1835 as part of the Wappenshall development. It is a well-proportioned building of 2-storeys, built in red brick. It has a broad, 3-bay north elevation with the centre breaking forward with canted 3-window front. A total of twenty, six-foot wood casement windows with slightly cambered ganged brick arches under a gable ended slate roof with flat eaves overhung to gable ends. The roof is hipped over a canted bay. There is a large central red brick chimneystack. The ground floor windows of the gable ends are set in large round arched recesses.

The Canal Trusts Proposals

The Trust's proposals seeks to create a waterside "hub", preserving the two warehouse buildings and bring the east basin of the canal back into water, whilst introducing uses that enhance the site and provide for heritage interpretation, education, training, tourism and leisure activities.

Artist's Impression of restored warehouses and basins



Full details of the restoration and conversion proposals for the warehouses at Wappenshall are contained in ***Appendix 5***.

Works to the *main warehouse* (the covered canal dock warehouse) will include:-

Lower Ground Floor – this will be restored to preserve and restore the canal channel which transverses the building at this level.

Ground Floor – restoration of the original features, trapdoors, hoists etc and conversion (with full disabled access) to provide a reception, canal based shop, small kitchen and cafeteria for visitors and volunteers.

First Floor – restoration of the original features and conversion (with full disabled access) to provide a large open exhibition and interpretation area for:-

- (i) the economic and social history of the canals in Telford and Shropshire, and
- (ii) the environmental issues of the waterway, towpaths and hedges

The *smaller second building* (the original canal warehouse) will include:-

Ground Floor – restoration of original features and conversion to provide Trust offices and a work base for the Trust volunteers.

First Floor – restoration of original features and conversion to a canal based training and education centre for school parties, volunteers etc. with kitchen and toilets (full disabled access).

East Basin – restoration of the original features and bringing back into water. Mooring of canal boats etc.

The Buildings at Lubstree Wharf (*Appendix 2*)

These photographs show part of the canal wharf complex at Lubstree. The wharf itself sits at the end of the Humber Arm, an offshoot of the Newport Branch of the Shrewsbury Canal. The wharf complex was developed in 1870 to relieve some of the coal traffic using the Trench incline plain on its way to Shrewsbury. Instead, coal was brought to the wharf using the new train network built by the Lilleshall Company in the 1850's. Coal wagons entered through the large opening in the shed and their cargo was dropped onto narrow boats waiting on the canal to the right. The wharf closed in 1922 and traffic on the Humber arm ceased. The photographs were taken in the 1960's, but the wharf complex still survives in good condition today. The building is known as a "transshipment shed".



In addition there is Bridge HA-B1 and the remains of the engine house at the wharf .

The Canal Trusts Proposals

The Trusts is proposing to restore the wharf buildings and engine house as a focal point at this end of the restored length.

14. Leisure and Educational opportunities

The restoration of the 4.388 km section from Lubstree Wharf on the Humber Arm to Wappenshall Junction on the main canal into water with the adjoining towpath will create:-

- A major new amenity and leisure facility in north Telford providing for a wide range of leisure activities for all abilities – angling, walking, boating, cycling, painting, photography, wildlife studies etc.
- An opportunity for all to participate in volunteer projects
- A linear park providing additional opportunities for relaxation, enjoyment and interpretation of the countryside
- A new “green” footpath from Lubstree Wharf and the adjacent tourist attraction at Hoo Farm to the “hub” in the restored canal warehouses and heritage centre at Wappenshall.

The Wrekin Local Plan states in para 7.3.34 - *“There are a number of disused canals within the District and the Council will seek to bring these back into use for footpath and/or bridle/cycle routes”*.

The restoration of the canal, the buildings and structures at Lubstree Wharf and at Wappenshall and the development of a canal heritage centre at Wappenshall provide educational opportunities:-

- To interpret and exhibit the role played by these canals and buildings in the growth of Telford for as the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution. Providing opportunities for study and understanding by the public as well as a historical research base at the proposed development of the warehouses at Wappenshall.
- An environment that provides authentic local experiences and teaching and learning resources for all ages, regarding the development and use of alternative energy sources and modes of transport, the canal and its economic and social history, as well as the wildlife and plants that the new environment creates and encourages.
- Opportunities for training and education of volunteers and others in the skills involved in the restoration and maintenance of waterways.

15. Environmental Issues

Atkins carried out a walkover survey on the line of the canal between 23 – 25th July 2003.

The Humber Arm and the section of the main line from the junction of the Humber Arm to the warehouses at Wappenshall were not found to include any important plant species. However a full survey will need to be conducted to identify any constraints from badgers, bats, birds, newts, invertebrates, macrophytes, water voles and otters.

Although the restoration will have some negative impacts through temporary disturbance, it also provides the opportunity to enhance the local environment by creating a green corridor, enhanced by the use of careful design and construction i.e. incorporating a shallow area or shelf on the opposite bank to the towpath to create a marginal habitat, re-establishing hedgerows etc.

16. Linkage with other sections – a phased approach

The restoration of this section offers the opportunity for a phased approach to the restoration of the canal back to the national canal network at Norbury Junction.

The order of the phases could be:-

- (i) Restoration of 4.388 km from Lubstree Wharf to Wappenshall Junction (£8.246m) which provides significant economic, tourism, recreational, educational and heritage benefits. *(Within Phase 1 priority could be given to the acquisition, restoration and development of the warehouses and east basin at Wappenshall “the Hub”)*
- (ii) Restoration of 2.025 km from Forton Bridge to Newport Town Basin (£3.481m) which provides significant economic and regeneration benefits to Newport,

(The order of Phases 1 and 2 could be reversed)

- (iii) Restoration of 7.125 km between Newport Town Basin and the Humber Arm (£9.515m) which connects phases 1 and 2 and creates a continuous length of 13.54 km in navigable water, and finally,
- (iv) The 4.6 km section from Norbury Junction to Forton Bridge (£16.5m) which connects the restored sections of the Shrewsbury and Newport canals to the main network.

17. Capital funding

There are several funding opportunities for the restoration of the canal and the restoration and conversion of its associated buildings and structures. Funding of the section may be easier to achieve if it is broken down into identifiable separate projects that meet the criteria for individual funders.

Two key funding sources are:-

- Heritage Lottery Fund – the Trust should seek a Project Planning Grant to meet the further costs of development of the project, and
- Advantage West Midlands – the West Midlands regional development agency with specific interests in economic regeneration and tourism development who also have project development grants available.

In addition there are a number of smaller potential funders, such as the SITA or BIFFA environmental trusts who give grants of up to £50,000 and in certain “challenge” competitions (SITA) may give individual grants of up to £250,000 as well as a range of smaller heritage and environmental funders. The restoration of the “hub” at Wappenshall may be particularly attractive to a “challenge” competition.

18. Partnerships

Consultation and community involvement is a key factor in successful development. The successful implementation and delivery of the restoration from Lubstree Wharf to Wappenshall will require the establishment of a “project” partnership to oversee the development and delivery of the project. This should comprise all the potential stakeholders and would include:-

The Shrewsbury and Newport Canals Trust
Telford and Wrekin Borough Council (economic development and local planning)
Eyton on the Weald Moors Parish meeting
British Waterways
Advantage West Midlands
Harper Adams University College
Adjacent landowners
English Heritage
Environment Agency
Natural England
The local tourism partnerships

This partnership should be formed at an early stage in the development of the project.

19. Summary

Policy – The proposals fulfil the objectives of Government policy for the waterways and meet the policy objectives of the Local Plan and the emerging Core strategy.

Construction – Initial design work has established that this 4.388 km section of the canal can be constructed in 3 work packages at a total cost of £8.25m. Both contract and volunteer labour would be employed. The work could be further phased with initial priority being given to the acquisition, restoration and development of the warehouses and east basin at Wappenshall to form a very important canal “hub” at a cost of £1.9m.

Land Acquisition – It is expected that the land should be able to be acquired by negotiation although compulsory purchase may be necessary as a final resort.

Economic and Tourism Development Opportunities – The restoration of this section and the creation of the “hub” at Wappenshall will create a significant tourism opportunity on the north side of Telford as a “complimentary” development to the tourism developments at Ironbridge. The outputs are estimated to be:-

- 8 full time and 6 part time jobs
- 61.5 temporary construction jobs with an 80:20 split in favour of the local workforce
- Between £350,000 and £500,000 p.a. additional tourist spending in the local economy
- 4 new business created
- 35 – 50,000 visitors’ p.a.
- 180 new fishermen on the stretch
- 40 school and educational visits p.a.

In addition once the section is connected to the national canal network there will be further substantial benefits to the local economy from spending by visiting private and hire boats, chandlery, boat repairs, moorings etc. Canal side moorings on the Humber Arm alone are estimated to be worth over £120,000 p.a.

Heritage Restoration – This section has probably the highest heritage restoration, interpretation and educational opportunities on the whole canal. The proposals include the restoration of the east basin, the canal wharf and the Grade 2 warehouses at Wappenshall. This group of buildings is not only interesting in their own right but also occupies an almost unique place in canal history. The only comparable location in Britain is at Helebridge Wharf on the Bude Canal” and as such Wappenshall junction is of national importance, and its heritage value must be maximised. The redevelopment into a canal heritage interpretation centre will enable the role of the canals in the economic and social history of Telford to be exhibited and explained. There are also the restoration opportunities of the smaller complex of building at Lubstree.

Leisure Opportunities - A new “green” footpath from Lubstree Wharf and the adjacent tourist attraction at Hoo Farm to the “hub” in the restored canal warehouses

and heritage centre at Wappenshall as well as a major new amenity and leisure facility in north Telford providing for a wide range of leisure activities for all abilities – angling, walking, boating, cycling, painting, photography, wildlife studies etc.

Educational Opportunities - Interpretation and exhibition of the role played by these canals and buildings in the growth of Telford for as the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution. The creation of a teaching and learning resources for all ages, regarding the development and use of alternative energy sources and modes of transport, the canal and its economic and social history, as well as the wildlife and plants that the new environment creates and encourages. Opportunities for the training and education of volunteers and others in the skills involved in the restoration and maintenance of waterways.

Environmental Issues - Although the restoration will have some negative impacts through temporary disturbance, it also provides the opportunity to enhance the local environment by creating a green corridor, enhanced by the use of careful design and construction.