



TOWPATH AND ACCESS IMPROVEMENTS – BIRMINGHAM AND BLACK COUNTRY CANALS

BACKGROUND

Department for Transport grants

- Early 2013, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Transport, Norman Baker MP, announced £62m of investment in cycling, of which £30m was available through Cycle City Ambition Grants.
- Canal & River Trust and Birmingham City Council successfully bid for some of this funding via the “Birmingham Cycle Revolution” project.
- Since early 2014, Canal & River Trust have been delivering £6.05m of improvements to towpaths, signage and accesses, funded through Cycle City Ambition Grant. This phase of works will end in September 2015.
- As a result of underspends elsewhere in this programme, Canal & River Trust have been invited by the City Council to deliver additional works, to a value of around £1m, which are to complete in September 2015 also.
- December 2014, Birmingham City Council given additional grant funding from the Cycle City Ambition initiative. CRT identified other locations around the City canal network where further investment is needed. Birmingham’s bid was approved in March 2015. CRT will enter into contract with Birmingham City Council for a further £6m of funding in June 2015.

Local Enterprise Partnerships – Local Growth Fund grants

- During 2014, CRT worked with Birmingham City Council and Centro to develop bids to the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership and to the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership respectively.
- In Birmingham, the bid was for further investment in the “Birmingham Cycle Revolution”,
- Across the Black Country it was for investment in walking and cycling initiatives as part of a programme entitled “Managing Short Trips”.
- In Autumn 2014, both of these bids were announced as successful, resulting in-
 - Birmingham Cycle Revolution - £2m for canal improvements
 - Managing Short Trips - £2.28m for canal improvements



BIRMINGHAM WORKS

A) Towpath Improvements

- Improving towpaths to provide a durable, sealed surface suitable for most weathers.
- Many sections of these towpaths were improved during the late 1980's and 90's and have worn out broken gravel surfacing, which has led to significant issues with ponding, rutting and pot-holes, making towpath use during wet weather uncomfortable and in some locations potentially dangerous.

Phase 1 works January 2014 to September 2015

- Birmingham & Fazeley Canal from Summer Lane to Hansons Bridge Road
- Worcester Birmingham Canal from Granville Street to Lifford Lane
- Grand Union Canal from Fazeley Street to River Cole
- B'ham Main Line Canal from St Vincent Street to the Sandwell border (northern towpath)
- Birmingham & Warwick Junction Canal from Salford Junction to Bordesley Junction

Future Phases - May 2015 to March 2018 – subject to contract

- Grand Union Canal from Stockfield Road to Lincoln Road (Solihull border)
- Tame Valley Canal from Deykin Avenue to Old Walsall Road (Sandwell border) (one towpath only)
- Soho Loop Canal
- North Stratford Canal from Kings Norton Junction to Solihull Lodge (Solihull border)
- B&F Canal from Hansons Bridge Road to border with North Warwickshire
- Worcester Birmingham Canal from Kings Norton Junction to Washhill Tunnel

B) Other works

Phase 1 works – January 2014 to September 2015

- Creation of a stepped access to the canal at Islington Row Middleway on the Worcester Birmingham Canal, adjacent to Five Ways Railway Station
- Creation of a stepped access to the canal at Erdington Hall Bridge on the Birmingham and Fazeley Canal.
- New wayfinding signage
- Bridge underwalk surfacing
- Improved access to the canal at University Station on the Worcester Birmingham Canal
- Small scale access improvements

Future Phases - May 2015 to March 2018 – subject to contract

- Creation of a ramped access to the canal at Bristol Road, on the Worcester Birmingham Canal, close to Selly Oak Railway Station.
- Renewal and upgrading of the existing City Centre towpath, bridge and tunnel lighting, to a maximum cost of £250,000 (subject to agreements with Birmingham City Council)
- Improvements to Northbrook Street Access
- Construction of new build shared use bridge near Armoury Road, Grand Union Canal
- Widening of towpath through Edgbaston Tunnel – (subject to feasibility)
- Improvements to towpath through Ashted Tunnel
- Further improvements to towpath signage.



BLACK COUNTRY

A) Towpath Improvements – June 2015 to March 2018 – subject to contract

- As with the towpaths in Birmingham, those in the Black Country have been improved to varying standards over a number of years with a variety of materials, some which are now failing and no longer suitable for the purpose of active travel.
- Unlike Birmingham, the Black Country is multi-centred; made up of a number of urban cities and towns such as Stourbridge, Smethwick, Oldbury, Dudley, Walsall and Wolverhampton.
- Several sections of towpath and a number of access points have been identified based on local need in partnership with each local authority.
- These will provide safe, traffic free routes, linking employment with residential areas, town centres and other interconnecting transport hubs.
- This will not only benefit a wide range of existing users, but also encourage greater use by people to undertake shorter journeys by bicycle or on foot.

Six areas have been identified for improvement across the four Black Country boroughs;

Dudley

- Stourbridge Town Arm Canal
- Stourbridge Canal – Leys Junction to Seven Dwellings

Sandwell

- Birmingham Main Line Canal from Smethwick Galton Bridge to Soho Loop
(Birmingham/Sandwell Border)

Walsall

- Walsall Canal from Bridgeman St (just south of town centre) to Bentley Mill Way

Wolverhampton

- Birmingham Main Line Canal from Cannock Road to Aldersley Junction
- Birmingham Main Line Canal from Broad St to Lower Walsall St

In addition to these initial schemes, a number of others have been put forward for funding through the Local Growth Fund, Managing Shorter Trips Programme. Whilst funding for all of these additional projects is not guaranteed, if successful, will see significant further investment to improve towpaths and access points on canals in the Black Country.

Although there is no budget available within this project, the West Midlands Waterway Strategic Action Plan currently includes the introduction of the “Share the Space – Drop Your Pace” campaign in the West Midlands. This campaign is currently in running on London waterways to promote considerate towpath use.



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Spoke 5 Tame Valley Canal.



Spoke 5 Tame Valley Canal.



Spoke 4 The Ackers



Islington Row Access:



Canal de-watered using fabric dams.



Existing narrows underneath Islington Row Bridge to be extended to allow for new steps to be installed. No additional widening of the towpath required.



Canal cleared of debris (mainly street-works and lighting column components!). Concrete bed installed in readiness for new canal wall construction.



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Pre-cast concrete retaining units pinned into concrete base, and jointed together to form new canal wall.



New wall backfilled and coping stones & fender installed to edge of wall.



The works requiring a navigation stoppage are now complete. Towpath opened to the public in readiness for steps to be craned-in.

