

Prosperous and Connected Places



Boating businesses and tourism on our network of canals, river navigations, docks and reservoirs are contributing £1.5 billion per year in added value to the UK economy and support 80,000 jobs.

The UK economy is lacking “economic dynamism” and experiencing high interest rates, continued economic uncertainty and low productivity which are holding back growth. The challenging economic outlook is a key societal concern facing the nation.

Our network of canals, other waterways and waterspaces delivers significant economic benefits and has a substantial contribution to make to UK, regional and local economies across different sectors, including supporting the UK Government’s ambition to provide high-quality broadband connections for all.

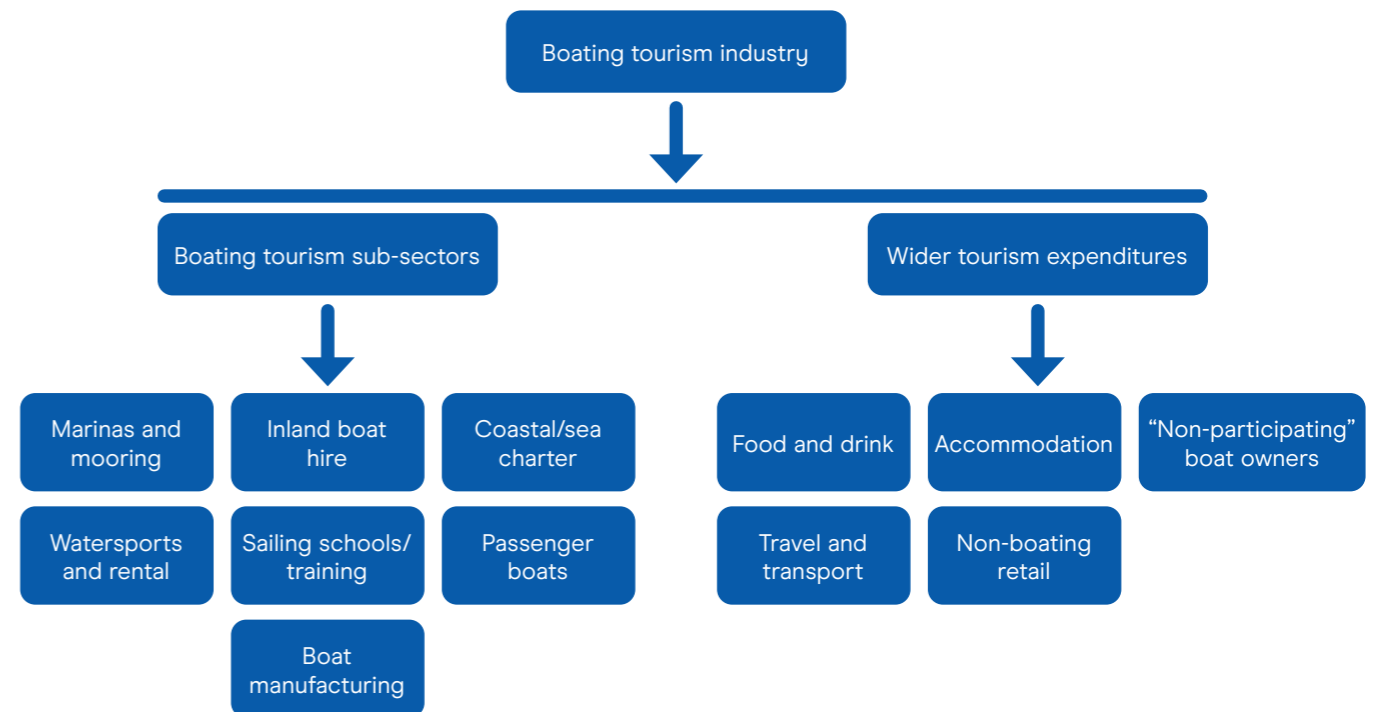
Our network is providing opportunities for waterside development and regeneration, supporting sustainable urban canalside living and levelling up, hosting telecommunications and utilities, as well as supporting boating related tourism and the wider marine economy.

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Boating & the visitor economy

Businesses deriving their income directly from our network include marinas and boat manufacturers, hire boat companies and watersports providers. In addition to this, our

network attracts significant tourist expenditure through the food and drink sector, accommodation, and the purchase of non-boating retail goods in canal-side museums or shops.



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Aqueduct Marina, located 10 miles from Crewe, opened in 2009 and has grown to operate over 150 full length serviced moorings and employs a 40+ strong team. The marina offers a 7 day a week, 'one stop shop', providing services from moorings to boat building, servicing and repairs, brokerage, storage and sales as well as an onsite chandlery and cafe.

Located in a rural community, the marina is an important local employer – supporting local young people through apprenticeships and T-Level schemes, helping to retain valuable skills in the local area.



Phil joined the Marina team, aged 18 and is now the Operations Director with day-to-day responsibility for the Marina.



ABC Leisure Group is a leading operator of canal boats on our network and has been building and operating canal boats for over 45 years. The company owns 18 marinas across the UK – offering boating holidays aboard their 300 narrowboats as well as day hire to both domestic and international visitors. In 2023, 25% of guests were from overseas and the proportion of overseas visitors is expected to rise further in 2024. ABC employs over 140 people, raising to 287 during peak boating season.

Zoe joined the team at Gayton Marina in 1994 when she was employed as a casual cleaner and, almost thirty years later, is the manager of Gayton Marina.

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ABC Leisure Group



Boating on our canals and navigable rivers is more popular than ever

Around 450,000 people holiday on Britain's canals each year. Our recent hire boat customer survey revealed that 86% of respondents would definitely recommend holidaying on a hire boat to others, 95% felt their holiday was value for money, and 80% were return visitors.

Heather Hewitt of Union Canal Carriers, based on the Grand Union Canal in Braunston, says:

"We've been running our family-owned narrowboat hire business for over 55 years. In that time we've introduced thousands of people to the delights of narrowboat holidays on the waterways. Many come back year after year and we've watched their children grow up. It's such a pleasure to see our customers returning all happy and relaxed after a holiday on one of our boats."

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Visiting our canals from abroad

Debbie and Brian from South Carolina have been cruising our canals for the past 25 years. Over the years they've introduced 44 fellow Americans – friends, family members and neighbours – to our network.



Debbie and Brian afloat on their hire boat on the Macclesfield canal.



“We can't wait to get back on a plane and meet up with some of the folks from Canal & River Trust at Ellesmere Port. We've obviously met an awful lot of volunteers and always had a great experience with lock keepers and others. I'd love to spend some time volunteering on the canals myself someday. We want to also say to the many folks that we've encountered during our cruises, thank you for helping make our holidays afloat so special.”

A Swedish perspective

In Summer 2023, Johan Friman and his family took two weeks to cruise the Four Counties Ring on a family hire-boat. For Johan, the appeal of canal boating is its 'wonderful mix of nature, culture, history and a little old-fashioned engineering'.

“When you're a hire-boater, you have very different conversations than you would as an ordinary tourist. You get inspired to look for local history and local stories to give you a better understanding of the whole country.

“It's an empowering feeling to be allowed to drive heavy narrowboats on 200-year-old canals. And just look at the old engineering solutions still working. Examining close hand, the wonders of aqueducts, cuttings, embankments and locks is a real thrill.”

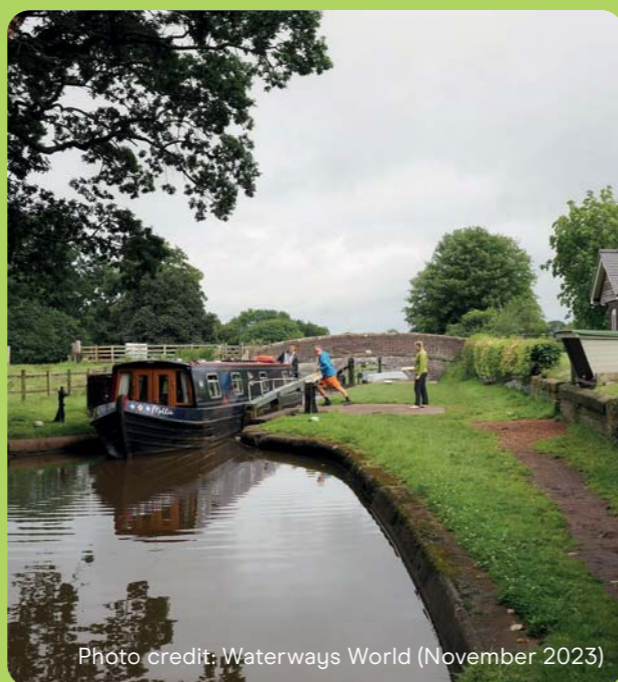


Photo credit: Waterways World (November 2023)

Prosperous and Connected Places

Our waterway destinations

Our canals represent the finest example of industrial heritage in the world and attract visitors from across the globe. Linking towns, cities, villages and countryside, these thousands of miles of canals and

other waterways tell the story of our nation – the evolution from agriculture to industry to leisure.

Our destinations and museums bring history to life, connecting visitors with the past and with the future.

Pontcysyllte Aqueduct, North Wales

Opened in 1805, Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and the 11 miles of the Llangollen Canal is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, described as 'a masterpiece of creative genius' by UNESCO and is one of the 'Seven Wonders of the Waterways', regularly featured on TV.

This iconic engineering structure is central to the visitor economy in North Wales, attracting 500,000 UK and international visitors from 52 different countries as well as "close to home and a nice place to come for a cup of tea and a stroll" by the local community.



Watch the film here:
https://youtu.be/8YtWK1e_hcg

Foxton Locks, Leicestershire

Foxton Locks, a Grade II* listed structure, constructed between 1810-1814, are the longest and steepest staircase locks in the UK and considered to be an exceptionally rare and complete example of late Victorian canal engineering.

Over 4,000 boats pass through the locks each year, making it one of the most visited places on our network. The Top Lock Cottage Café, restaurant-pub and the historic canal museum that is home to a series of artefacts and exhibitions all located on the site

make it “a great day out looking at the boats” and “great cycle route. Lots to look at and good places to stop”.



Sustainable urban canalside living

Our network is a catalyst for development and regeneration in many urban and rural areas, with 78% of those surveyed believing that canals help make our cities, towns and countryside better places to live. (April 2022 – March 2023)

Research conducted by the London School of Economics (Gibbons et al, 2019), on behalf of the Trust, reveals that canalside locations are attractive for developers, making previously vacant or underused waterside sites more viable for redevelopment.

Working in partnership, we have delivered area-based mixed use and housing-led regeneration schemes with over 1,800 new homes delivered from the Trust's surplus land portfolio in 2022/23, making a positive contribution to the Government's housing supply targets and levelling up agenda.

Case study: Port Loop, a new sustainable canalside neighbourhood in the heart of Birmingham

We have been working with our partners, Birmingham City Council, Urban Splash and Places for People to redevelop a 22-hectare brownfield site into new canalside community in the Ladywood area of Birmingham – located adjacent to the Birmingham Mainline Canal and Edgbaston Reservoir.

The masterplan is based on a vision to create 'a family orientated, sustainable and mixed-use waterside neighbourhood' for up to 1,150 homes where everyone feels a connection to the canal. The site now boasts a community of over 100 homes, a canalside park, leisure centre, art house and floating café and good links to the wider towpath network. Further phases of the development will include moorings and access to the water for paddle sports.

The scheme has won national and regional awards, including the RIBA National Award 2023 and RIBA West Midlands Award 2023, the Housing Design Awards 2021 – 'Healthy Homes' award, and the Placemaking Project of the Year at the Midlands Business Insider Residential Awards 2020.





Case study: award-winning canalside living at Brent Lock West

Through our Waterside Places joint venture with Muse Developments, we are transforming an area at Brentford Lock West.

Previously dominated by low-grade and vacant commercial buildings with no canalside access or engagement, the striking new waterside neighbourhood will feature improved connectivity with the water.

Historic features, such as the Art-Deco factory frontages have been retained and the framework of the increasingly rare transshipment warehouses have been restored.

The first two phases of this RIBA award-winning development have delivered 307 new homes, across a range of housing types and tenures, as well as providing commercial office space and high-quality public realm. The much-improved towpath has been widened and now includes seating, planting, lighting and a pontoon for launching canoes and paddleboards. This has been instrumental in encouraging greater use of the waterside space, and new service bollards have been installed to ensure visitor moorings are cleaner, quieter and more sustainable. New landscaped 'water gates' provide generous pedestrian links between

the development and the towpath, including one that contains a community orchard and garden. The recently installed pedestrian footbridge will improve links between the development and the wider area, providing new connections to the canal towpath, Robin Grove Park and the train station.

Rooftop allotments, established with the help of health and wellbeing enterprise Cultivate London, community gardens and a double height all-weather community space overlooking the canal are all helping to connect residents. Engagement with the wider community has been improved through links with local sports groups and charities such as Brentford Football Club's Community Sports Trust and local watersports providers, Edge and Active 360.

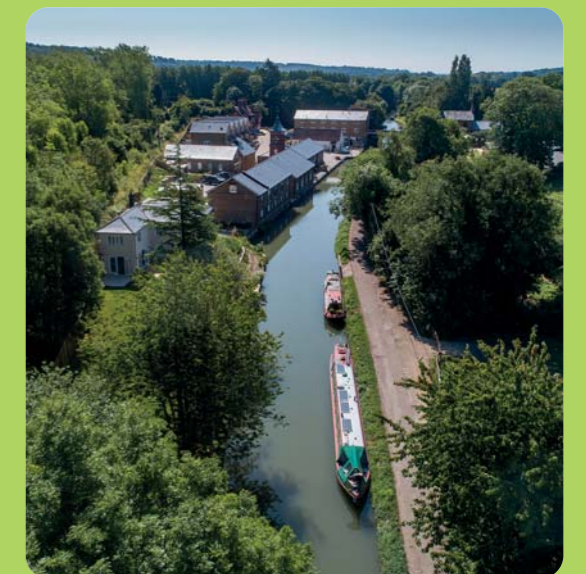
The final phase of the development will provide an additional 452 residential units, as well as food & retail space and a new canoe club looking onto a terraced waterside square.



Award-winning housing scheme at Bulbourne

Through our joint venture company, H2O Urban in partnership with Bloc we have converted four redundant Grade II listed Victorian canalside warehouses and other

historic buildings at the former lock gate manufacturing yard at Bulbourne on the Grand Union Canal in Buckinghamshire, creating 21 unique new homes.



Supporting Levelling Up

Regenerating forgotten or under-utilised areas and restoring historic local features helps to reinvigorate local communities and secure better outcomes by providing high-quality and beautiful buildings, restoring a sense of pride in where they live.

These schemes are helping to realise the potential of place, building on its strengths and celebrating what is unique about the local area.

Alongside boosting local productivity, our regeneration and restoration

projects are spreading opportunities through job creation and involving local residents in shaping their surroundings and the future use of these buildings and structures.

Case study: Montgomery Canal Restoration

The Montgomery Canal is important for its wildlife and heritage. It includes a Special Area of Conservation and a number of Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

It is particularly important for its aquatic plants, but also has nationally scarce insects and many of the birds and mammals that our visitors enjoy seeing on the waterways. There are 128 listed structures on the canal and its rural character is unique and relatively unspoilt.

The once-closed canal now has a new lease of life as a cruiseway through the picturesque Welsh Marches.

With £2.52 million funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, we have re-opened a 14-kilometre stretch of the canal from the junction with the busy Llangollen Canal, increasing demand for boating along this newly restored section.

Thanks to £14 million from the Levelling Up Fund, we are now working on the canal near Llanymynech in Powys. This will



see two lowered bridges over the canal replaced with ones that allow navigation, dredging works, aqueduct repairs and the creation of a nature reserve.



Forge before



Forge after

Case study: Finsley Gate on the Leeds & Liverpool Canal

After 20 years of dereliction, we've transformed the historic buildings at Finsley Gate into a special canalside place for the local community.

The £3.4 million project was funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, European Regional Development Fund, Burnley Borough Council and Canal & River Trust. Working with local not-for-profit Finsley Gate Wharf Ltd we have restored and the Grade II listed main warehouse, converting it into a restaurant and café bar. The restored forge provides a community function room, guest house, garden, outdoor classroom space and nature trail. A team of our apprentices also restored a further outbuilding.

Alongside the building works, a community group has been established and the site offers school visits, heritage tours, gardening activities, boat trips, watersports and demonstrations of traditional skills including willow weaving and blacksmithing.



Outbuilding before



Outbuilding after



The event was fabulous for supporting the children to collaborate and work as a team. They enjoyed the challenge of creating a boat that could hold cargo. The children demonstrated teamwork and resilience to overcome challenges the task presented.”

Teacher at Cherry Fold Community Primary School

Connecting & servicing communities

The presence and resilience of our network is important to the UK's energy, telecommunications and water supply networks servicing 13.4 million people and 370k businesses, as well as the banking system and supplying enough water for approximately five million people.

Beneath our towpaths lies a national network of fibre-optic cables carrying vital communications across the country – with over 700km of telecommunication routes / ducting.

Delivering new communication installations within dense urban areas can cause significant disruption to road users. Installing cables deep inside towpaths can mitigate against this impact, and as most works can be undertaken using floating pontoons, towpath routes can remain open during construction and installation.



HOSTING

Public Road bridges	Towpaths	Public Road bridges	Towpaths
1,136 electricity cables	1,576km electricity cables	374 gas mains	1,302km gas mains
422 water mains and 106 sewers		1,806 telecom cables	659km telecom cables

Being part of the Fibre Optic Network

In London we have worked with a Code telecommunications operator to install three long-distance data connections, spanning 82km. A further extension along the Grand Union Canal (Paddington Arm) has been designed and is planned for completion in 2024. The latest installation will run for approximately 8km within the towpath from Greenford to Old Oak Common.



Cooling Data Centres in the Financial Hub, London Docklands

In London PlatformDIGITAL is using our dock water to cool its data centre. Situated in London's Digital Docklands, Cloud House and Cloud House West data centres are powered entirely by renewable and carbon-free energy from Millwall Docks. The water source heat pump takes water from the Dock, transfers the heat and returns the water to the dock.

