

# CONTENTS

---

List of Acronyms .....	2
1 COMMUNITY CONSULTATION REPORT.....	3
1.1 Introduction.....	3
2 METHODOLOGY .....	4
2.1 Introduction .....	4
2.1.1 Review of literature.....	4
2.1.2 Local fairs and events.....	5
2.1.3 Public Meetings.....	6
2.1.4 Focus groups.....	6
2.1.5 Reactive visits .....	7
2.1.6 Street survey .....	7
2.1.7 Questionnaires.....	8
2.1.8 Interactive Tools.....	9
2.1.9 BW staff debriefing .....	12
3 RESULTS .....	13
3.1 Questionnaire Results.....	13
3.1.1 Standard Questionnaires.....	13
3.1.2 Newtown Questionnaire .....	17
3.1.3 Young People’s Questionnaire.....	18
3.2 Street Survey Results .....	18
3.3 Pinboard Results .....	20
3.4 Focus Groups.....	20
3.4.1 Navigation Focus Group.....	20
3.4.2 Wildlife & Conservation Focus Group .....	21
3.5 Town Meetings.....	21
3.5.1 Common Issues.....	21
3.6 Participant Comments.....	22
3.7 Pedestrian Counters .....	23
3.8 BW Staff De-briefing .....	23
3.8.1 CMS Project Manager.....	23
3.8.2 Economic & Social Regeneration Manager .....	24
3.9 Desktop Literature Review.....	27
3.9.1 Powys .....	27
3.9.2 West Midlands.....	28
3.9.3 Shropshire .....	28
3.9.4 Relevant Research.....	29
4 ANALYSIS .....	32
4.1 Methodology.....	32
4.2 The Valued Resources of the Canal.....	33
4.3 Canal Restoration.....	34
4.4 Ongoing Community Activity.....	35
5 A VISION FOR THE MONTGOMERY CANAL.....	37
6 CONCLUSIONS .....	38

---

## LIST OF ACRONYMS

---

AM	Assembly Minister (National Assembly for Wales)
APG	All Party Group (National Assembly for Wales)
ASPB	Assembly Sponsored Public Body
AWM	Advantage West Midlands
BW	British Waterways
CCW	Countryside Council for Wales
CMS	Conservation Management Strategy
CPRE	Council for the Protection of Rural England
CPRW	Council for the Protection of Rural Wales
EN	English Nature
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
FRCA	Farming and Rural Conservation Agency
GOWM	Government Office West Midlands
HLF	Heritage Lottery Fund
IWA	Inland Waterways Association
LMI	Land Management Initiative
MCN	Montgomery Canal News
MWRT	Montgomery Waterways Restoration Trust
MWT	Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust
PC	Parish Council
PDP	Pan Disability Partnership
RNIB	Royal National Institute for the Blind
RNID	Royal National Institute for the Deaf
RR	Rural Resources Ltd
RRZ	Rural Regeneration Zone
SUCS	Shropshire Union Canal Society
SWT	Shropshire Wildlife Trust
TIC	Tourist Information Centre
WDA	Welsh Development Agency
WoW	Wild Over Waterways
WTB	Wales Tourist Board

# 1 COMMUNITY CONSULTATION REPORT

---

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

This report forms one contributory element towards the overall Montgomery Canal Conservation Management Strategy (CMS). The CMS sets out to explore and identify a way forward for the reinstatement of the Montgomery Canal by providing a co-ordinated approach to restoration and conservation. It identifies the significance of built and natural heritage so as to enable the conservation, enhancement and promotion of the ecology and built landscape of the canal for the benefit of all. The HLF, European Objective 2 and others fund the CMS, and all studies within it.

The CMS report is the result of more than a year's work, led by the Project Manager. The first phase, between September 2002 and December 2003, will culminate in the production of a draft CMS for consideration by the MCP. The second phase begins with the production of a final draft in January 2004 with publication of the CMS in March 2004. The community consultation element ran from June to October 2003.

The role of the community consultation within the CMS is to provide a clear community-lead vision which will inform all aspects of the CMS' development. In more detail, this includes:

- How the canal is used and valued now, including local concerns and opportunities.
- How people feel that it may be improved.
- Public perceptions of the local landscape and the significance of the canal and its associated structures in this landscape.
- Existing and potential access arrangements and how these link to other local facilities.
- Potential economic and community impacts and benefits.
- A vision for the future.

The detailed structure of the Community Consultation process was designed by the Project Manager and rural and community development consultants, Rural Resources. The full proposal can be found in Appendix 1. The consultation was carried out by BW's CMS staff with ongoing technical support and advice from Rural Resources (RR), including the editing and production of this report. RR were separately contracted to carry out particular elements of the consultation implementation – design, facilitation and analysis of 3 public meetings and also basic street research in settlements along the length of the Canal.

The purpose of this report is to describe this consultation process, its results and the analysis and recommendations that can be drawn out.

## **2 METHODOLOGY**

---

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

The Consultation Study proposal proposed using a combination of techniques, both quantitative and qualitative. These included the following:

- Review of existing information and research.
- Attendance at local fairs and events.
- 3 public meetings – Oswestry, Welshpool, Newtown.
- 3 focus groups – navigation, wildlife & conservation, and business.
- Reactive visits based on letters to local Councils and other organisations.
- Use of a structured questionnaire – distributed at all consultation events and placed within Montgomery Canal News (MCN), which was available for public pick-up at key locations such as shops and TICs (see Appendix 2 for full list and Appendix 3 for copy of questionnaire). A pilot questionnaire used at the Newtown Festival was adapted to form the final version used during the rest of the consultation.
- Review of internal knowledge of BW staff.
- Pedestrian counters at key locations along the Canal (see Appendix 4 for full list).
- Random street interviews at towns and villages along the Canal (See Appendix 5 for copy of questionnaire).
- Young people's questionnaire (See Appendix 6 for copy of questionnaire).

At all opportunities, further qualitative data was obtained by recording informal discussions, making notes of any interviews and conversations with members of the public about the Canal.

There was a need to ensure that a wide cross-section of stakeholders were consulted, so the balance of information-seeking techniques remained flexible throughout, being informed by gaps identified in data as it was gathered. For example, a questionnaire targeted at young people was produced for the Ellesmere Festival when it became clear that most of our responses were from the older age groups. There was ongoing awareness of the need to reach out to non-users of the Canal, as organised public events, and, to a lesser extent, even stalls at local events, tend to attract those who already have an interest in the Canal. This is taken into account in the analysis of the research findings.

#### **2.1.1 REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

This review considered a variety of source material for relevant information, including:

- Local, regional and national strategy and planning documents
- Research documents relating to the Montgomery Canal and canals in general
- BW reports and documents

This enabled us to place our consultation findings into context and to explore learning through comparison with other, related work (e.g. D Wozencraft's study A public perception study on the Montgomery Canal).

(See Appendix 7 for full bibliography).

## **2.1.2 LOCAL FAIRS AND EVENTS**

Attendance at these events was designed to reach those who might not otherwise take part in consultation, especially non-boat users. The following local events and fairs were attended:

- Newtown Festival – 21 and 22 June 2003.
- Friends of Montgomery Canal, Welshpool – 5 July 2003.
- Cambrian Transport Festival – 12 and 13 July 2003.
- West Felton Carnival – 13 July 2003.
- Oswestry Show – 2 August 2003.
- Guilsfield Show – 14 August 2003.
- Berriew Show – 23 August 2003.
- Ellesmere Festival – 13 and 14 September 2003.

At each event a display stand was set up equipped with:

- Maps, both local to the event and of the whole canal.  
The 'whole canal' map gave participants a chance to see where their local area fitted into the entire length of the Canal, as well as showing the Canal as part of the wider environment. The local map was intended for use as an interactive consultation tool, where participants were encouraged to write and place post-its describing issues they had, or ideas for improvements.
- Photographs, both historical and of existing canal structures and wildlife.  
These were used primarily to attract people to the stand, but also acted as a good discussion point.
- Data pin boards.  
These were intended as a quick way for people to contribute to the consultation, by sticking pins in next to the points that they agreed with. The content of the boards was chosen to reflect local circumstances and to gather locally relevant feedback (See Appendix 8 for the pinboard layouts).
- Questionnaires.  
The standard questionnaire was available for all visitors to the stand to fill in at the time or to take away and complete at their leisure. The additional Young People's questionnaire was used pro-actively at the Ellesmere Festival.
- Interview records sheets.

Members of the public were also encouraged to talk to CMS staff about the canal, in particular about the way they used and valued it now and any

thoughts they had on its future. This information was recorded on comments sheets.

### **2.1.3 PUBLIC MEETINGS**

A series of three public meetings were held, at Welshpool on 1<sup>st</sup> September, Oswestry on 4<sup>th</sup> September and Newtown on 9<sup>th</sup> September, facilitated by Rural Resources. The purpose of these meetings was to gain feedback and ideas on:

- The expected advantages and disadvantages of canal restoration, both during and after restoration.
- Ways of increasing benefits to the local community.
- Ways of increasing benefits to the local economy.
- Links to other activities and facilities.

Advertising in the local media and Montgomery Canal News was designed to attract those who had not previously been involved in consultation related to the canal. Invitations were issued to all District and County Councillors and the Parish and Community Councils along the route of the canal.

The structure of each evening was the same:

- A short presentation by the CMS Project Manager explaining the CMS and outlining the proposals and problems of restoration;
- Group work by attendees to consider the issues listed above, guided by key questions and supported by the facilitators and CMS staff;
- Plenary discussion on the group work;
- Invitations to contribute to pinboards and 'vision tree' (this was more informal than the rest of the evening).

Map and photograph displays were also available for attendees to peruse. There was considerable informal discussion with CMS staff about various technical issues around the restoration.

Write up of all three events can be found in Appendix 9.

### **2.1.4 FOCUS GROUPS**

The original proposal included focus groups for navigation and business interests; a third was added for wildlife & conservation. They were organised and held as follows: for the boating community on 4<sup>th</sup> July at Ellesmere, conservation/wildlife interests on 11<sup>th</sup> September at Preston Montford Field Centre and the business community (still to be held, in November, at the time of completing this report).

The aim of the events was to enable detailed discussion on issues pertinent to that particular stakeholder group. These particular stakeholder groups were

identified during previous work as being of key importance to the CMS development process.

The structure of all the events was broadly similar:

- A short introductory presentation by the CMS Project Manager to explain the CMS and to outline the relevant issues;
- A guided plenary discussion, focussing on key issues identified by the focus group members, and facilitated and recorded by CMS staff.

A full write-up of these events can be found in Appendix 10.

### **2.1.5 REACTIVE VISITS**

The idea here was to be able to offer a visit and discussion to groups who requested more information or, alternatively, the opportunity to visit the CMS staff for discussions. This offer included Parish and Community Councils, all of whom along the length of the Canal were informed in writing about the CMS, the consultation and this opportunity open to them. At the time of writing, Carreghofa PC has been visited (the meeting being open to the public) and a visit to Llandrinio PC is booked for November. In addition, Councillors from West Felton, Oswestry, Guilsfield, Llanymynech, Welshpool and Newtown have held individual discussions on topics local to their communities. It is possible that more Parish and Community Councils would have responded had not the majority of the Consultation period fallen during the summer, when many councils do not hold their regular monthly meeting.

“It would be better value for money to have a terminus at Aberbechan and re-open the Guilsfield arm to provide economic benefits for the area.”

Guilsfield

Full reports of the feedback at these visits can be found in Appendix 11.

### **2.1.6 STREET SURVEY**

As the progress of the Consultation was monitored, it became evident that there was an apparent bias of responses in favour of the Canal's restoration, which did not match the results of previous surveys. This matched the Consultation team's perception that the vast majority of respondents had, to a greater or lesser degree, been self-selected and therefore likely to be particularly interested in the canal. To explore this possible bias, it was decided to undertake a number of random street surveys in the villages and towns along the Canal corridor.

The aim of this questionnaire-based work was to understand how aware local residents were of the Canal, what they thought of restoration and why. By simply stopping people in the streets, or knocking on doors, it was hoped to

reach out to local people who would otherwise not have taken part in the Consultation.

A copy of the Street Survey form can be seen in Appendix 5.

### **2.1.7 QUESTIONNAIRES**

A core element of the Consultation was the structured questionnaire (see Appendix 3). This was used as a stand-alone consultation tool e.g. as an insert in Montgomery Canal News, and as an additional tool at the numerous consultation events and meetings.

A first draft questionnaire was piloted at the Newtown Food Fair (the first event of the Consultation), which was subsequently adapted to the final format used throughout the Consultation.

The aim of the questionnaire was to get feedback from current and potential users - residents and visitors - about their feelings towards the Canal and the proposed restoration, as well as about how they used the Canal and what they wanted conserved and what improvements they would like to see.

The questionnaire was distributed as a 'stand alone' consultation tool through a number of pathways:

- As an insert to Montgomery Canal News (Issue 4, August 2003). This is distributed free of charge to a mailing list of about 500, was available to take away at all BW events during the consultation period, and could be picked up by anyone interested at key local focal points in towns and villages along the Canal corridor, such as shops, post offices and tourist information centres. (see Appendix 2);
- On "Pete's Montgomery Canal Website".

At the time of writing, 517 questionnaires had been returned, including 88 via Montgomery Canal News. None had been returned from Pete's Website. The analysis presented is based on these questionnaires, although late returns are still being added to the spreadsheet.

The analysis of the questionnaire was done using Microsoft Excel, which enabled simple quantification of the responses. No statistical analysis was carried out, as this was beyond the level of information required. Interpretation of the results was supported in two ways: firstly, separating out Montgomery Canal News returns, as it was felt that these were likely to be more self-selected and to include an unrepresentative interest in navigation (the latter appears to have been borne out by the results); and secondly, separating all responses into one of nine geographical zones, depending on where the respondent lived. The zones are listed below and shown in map format on page 11:

0. Visitor to the area
1. Frankton - Maesbury (navigable England).
2. Pant/Llanymynech (missing link).
3. Four Crosses (non-navigable Wales).
4. Arddleen/Pool Quay (rural, open, isolated).
5. Welshpool (urban, open, but isolated/underused).
6. Belan/Brithdir/Berriew (rural/open/underused).
7. Garthmyl/Abermule/Aberbechan (rural, closed).
8. Newtown (urban, non-BW, restoration problematic).

A separate questionnaire was designed, focussed at young people, which was used only at the Ellesmere Festival, where there was a particular effort to gather input from young people. This can be seen in Appendix 6.

One further questionnaire was designed, to be used in random street interviews, aimed at getting feedback from potential non-Canal users. This can be seen in Appendix 5.

## 2.1.8 INTERACTIVE TOOLS

### Pinboards

These were used at all local events and fairs, as well as the three town events. As well as providing a profile of respondents (age, gender, location in relation to the Canal), they were intended as a significant way to source particularly local opinion about matters specifically relevant to that area. So, for example, in Welshpool where BW has been undertaking towpath improvement works, the pinboards' sought respondents' opinions on the appearance and use of the immediate Canal area through the town centre. The pinboard blanks can be found in Appendix 8.

In reality, the pinboards were only partially successful, in that the level of response gained using this method was disappointing. This is probably due to insufficient understanding and training in use of the tool.

Simple analysis was undertaken using Microsoft Excel.

### Mapping

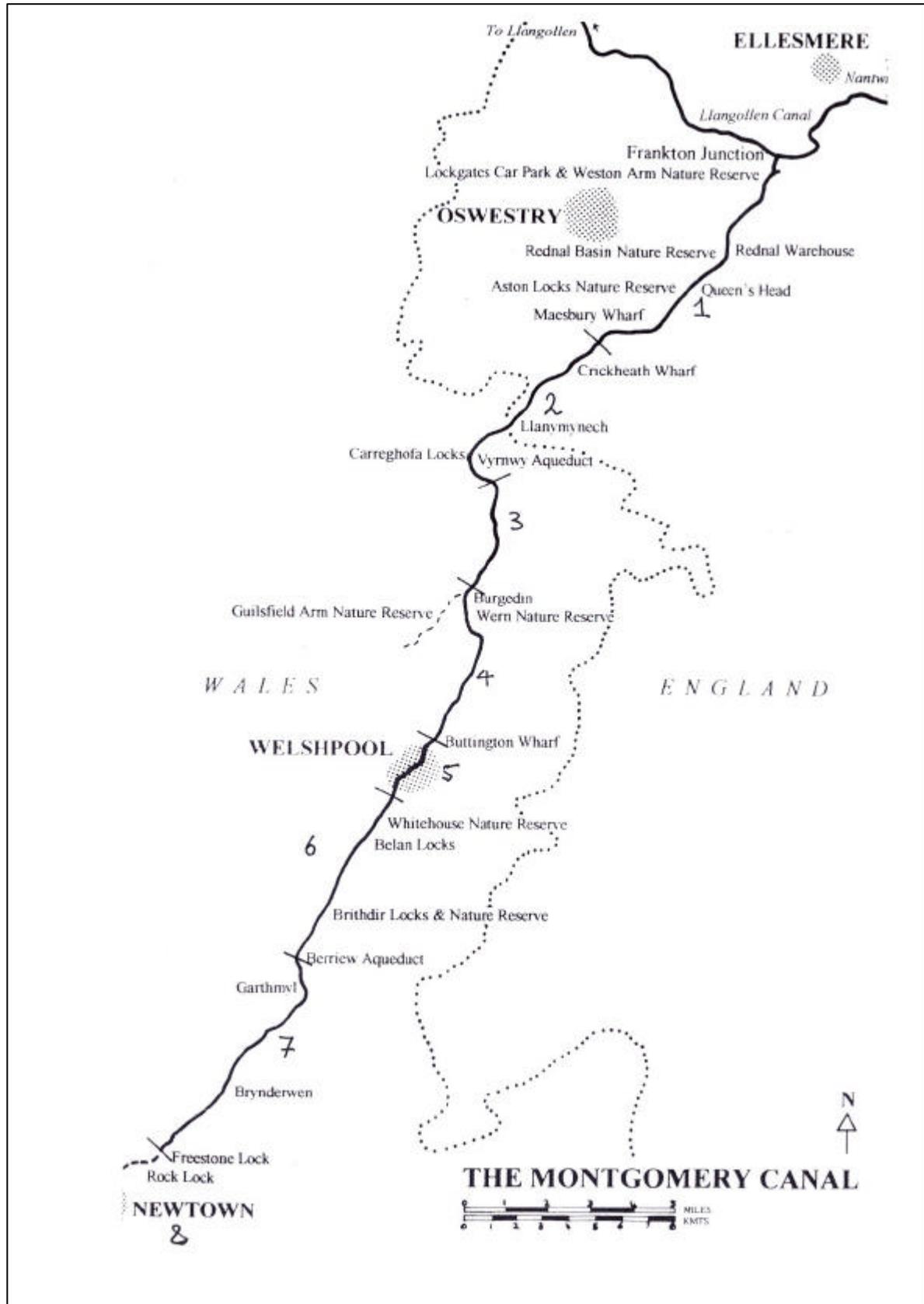
At all local events, a map was prepared and displayed, showing the local length of the Canal. The aim was for visitors to the stall to contribute by showing locations on the map where they currently experienced a problem, or suggested an improvement. The person would jot their comment on a 'Post-It' note and stick it on the relevant place.

"My great grandfather used to work on the Montgomery Canal transporting coal by barge."

Ellesmere

In reality, use of the map for documenting comment was poor, probably due to facilitators' concentration on other consultation tools. There were a few historical anecdotes, some responses around local views and local access points, and the perennial problem of dog mess in settlement locations. Most local general comment was recorded on comments sheets instead.

Canal Zones used in Data Analysis



### **Vision tree**

This tool was used at the three town events, with the aim of encouraging participants to think about how they wanted to see the Canal in 10 years' time. An A0 size picture of a bare tree was provided, along with cut-outs of green leaves. Participants were asked to jot a phrase or word representing their vision for the Canal on a leaf, and then to place it on one of the tree branches.

“A local amenity which will be both practical and visually attractive.”

Oswestry

All of the 'leaves' were analysed to contribute to an overall community-based vision for the Canal, which is shown at the rear of this report. The full list of 'leaf' comments can be found in Appendix 12.

### **Pedestrian counters**

Pedestrian counters are used to measure the use of the towpath at various points along the Canal, both urban and rural; this will allow comparisons to be made, not only along the Montgomery Canal, but also with other canals in the BW network. Readings were taken from the counters every 2 weeks; it should be noted that this will be an ongoing process to allow an adequate dataset to be accumulated.

### **2.1.9 BW STAFF DEBRIEFING**

It was recognised that BW staff working on the Montgomery Canal had a significant amount of knowledge that could usefully feed into the Consultation. A half-day debriefing workshop was held with the CMS Project Manager, the CMS Project Assistant and the Economic and Social Regeneration Manager, facilitated by Rural Resources. At that meeting, it was agreed that these BW staff would in turn 'debrief' other BW staff, including the ecologist and Waterway Supervisor.

## 3 RESULTS

---

The information presented here is that gathered from all the different information collection methods used. This includes both quantitative and qualitative data. For the former (the bulk of which is from the standard questionnaire), some attempt at comparison has been made, although where there are different sample sizes, this has been corrected by conversion to percentages.

Full quantitative data, on which this analysis is based, is available in electronic format.

### 3.1 QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

#### 3.1.1 STANDARD QUESTIONNAIRES

A total of 517 responses were received, of which 88 were via Montgomery Canal News. The combined total is used in the data presentation here. The use in terminology of “local people” and “visitors” refers to respondents from zones 1 – 8 and zone 0 respectively.

Key points of the results are:

- 62% of respondents were male, nearly 40% over 60 and only 5% under 25.
- In terms of how people used the Canal, there was a very similar pattern between local people and visitors. The most important use was walking (including with the dog), fairly closely followed by peace & tranquillity, wildlife, industrial heritage and landscape. The least important uses were cycling, fishing and jobs/business/income.
- Respondents were very strongly in favour of the Canal’s restoration (94% agreeing strongly, and a further 3% agreeing slightly).

“Complete restoration and links to the national system”

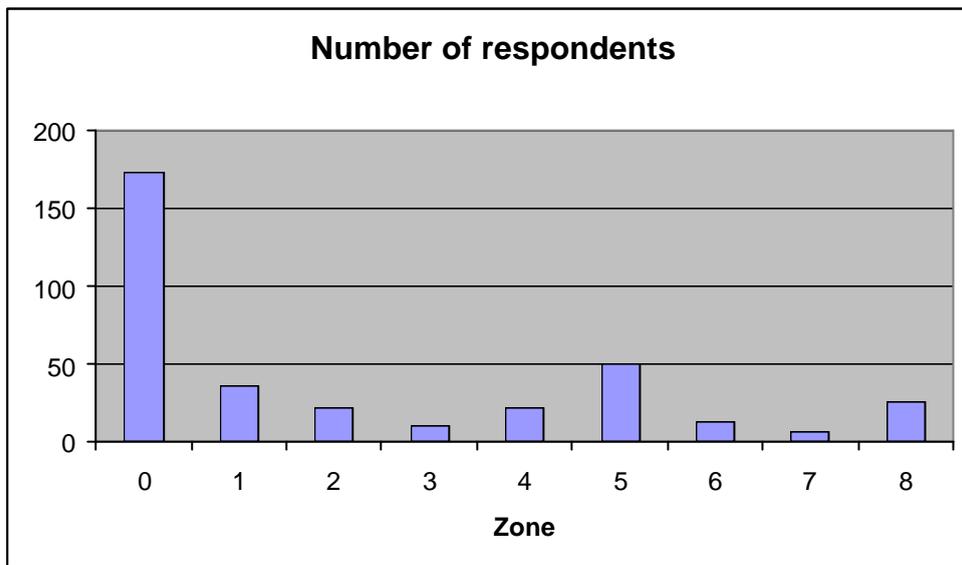
Welshpool

- The message in relation to what people wanted to see conserved was clear. The three most important elements, in descending order, were canal buildings and structures, canalside plants and animals, and the current navigable stretches.
- The most important things to improve were restoring the Canal to navigation, pedestrian access, the towpath surface and nature reserves.

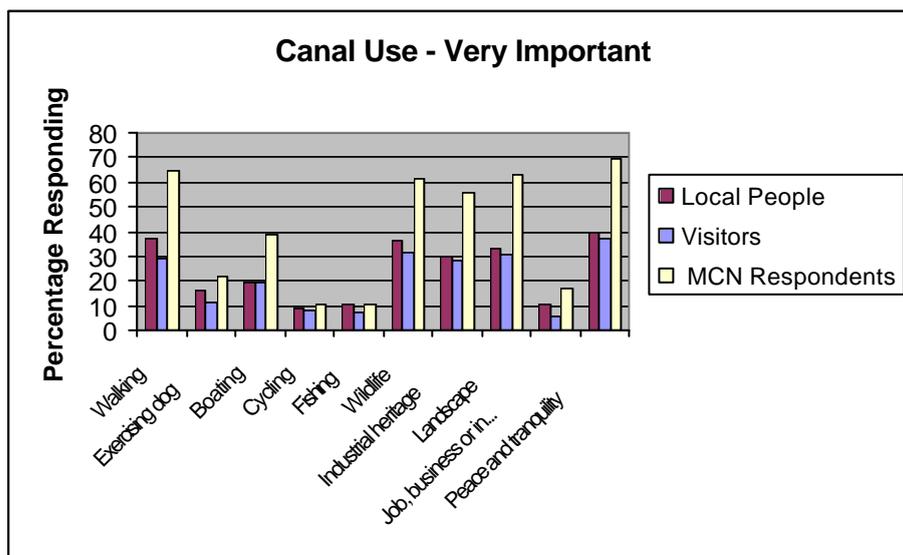
The results of the Montgomery Canal News respondents showed the following main differences to the questionnaires as a whole:

- In terms of uses of the Canal, nearly all the same most important uses were found, but with a higher proportion of respondents for each use.
- Boating was noted as a relatively more important use than for the questionnaire respondents as a whole.
- MCN respondents placed a higher value on conserving canal-related landscape, but slightly less on canalside plants & animals, plants and animals in the canal corridor and other historical features.

It was found that question 4 “How far from the canal do you live?” and question 5 “How often do you visit the canal?” gave invalid results as many respondents completed the questions to refer to a canal rather than the Montgomery Canal; they are not, therefore, analysed here.

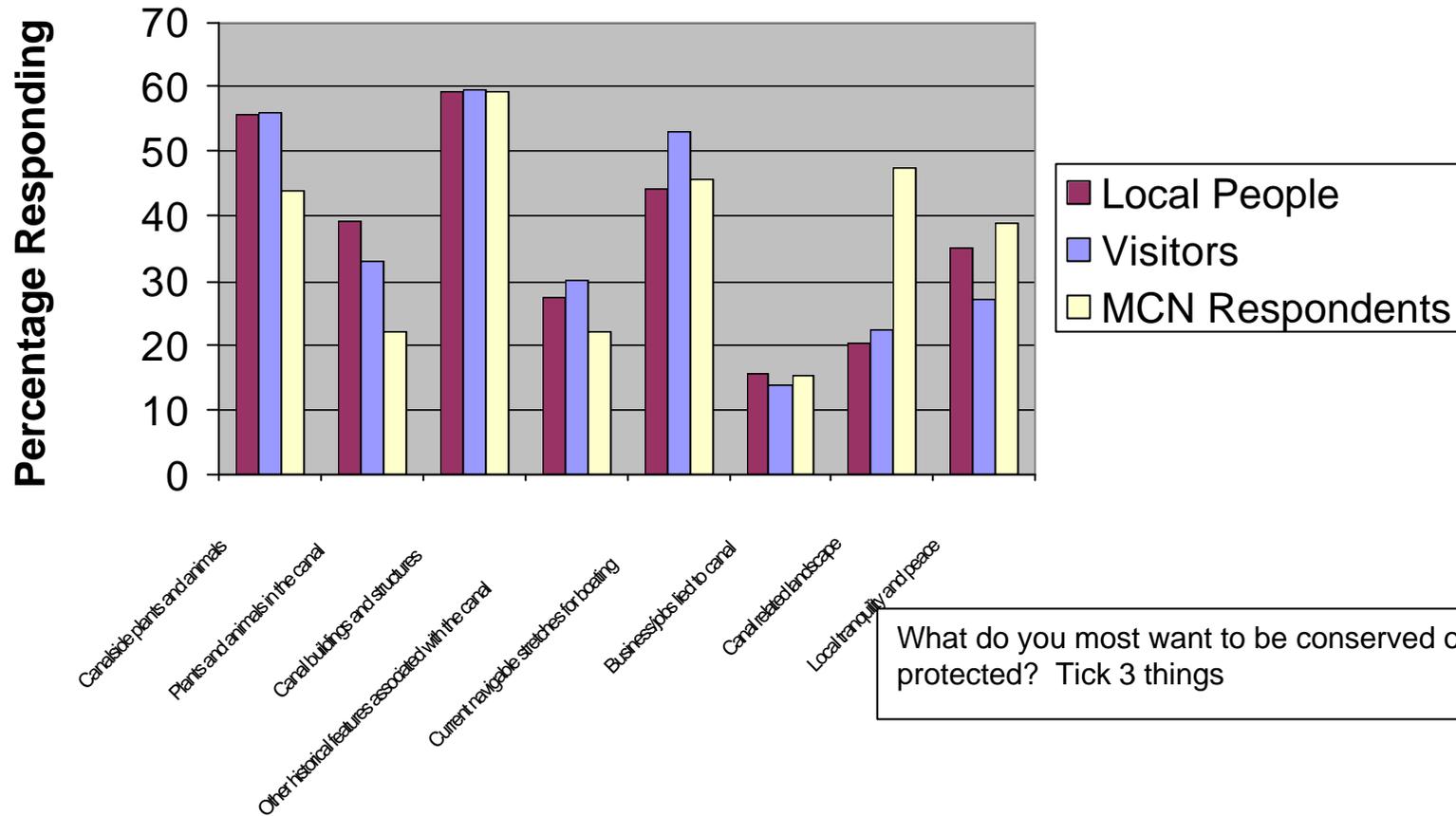


### Canal Corridor Zone



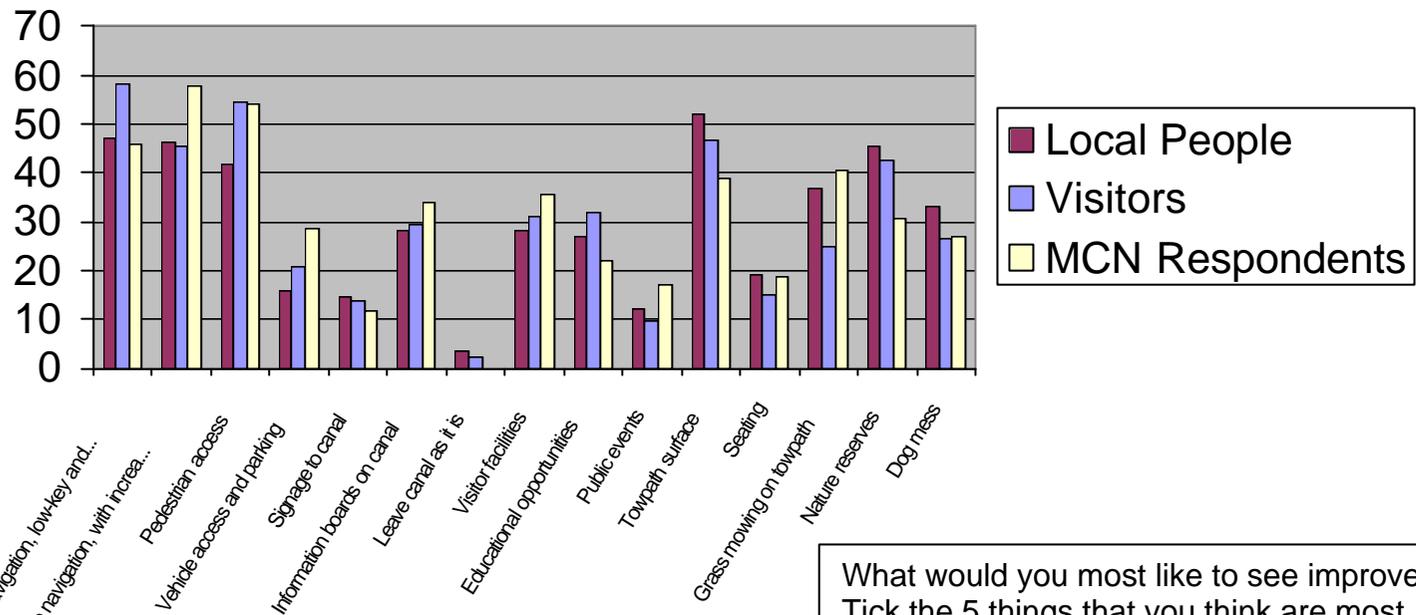
How important is the canal to you for the following things?

## What do you want conserved?



## What do you want improved?

Percentage Responding



What would you most like to see improved?  
Tick the 5 things that you think are most important

### 3.1.2 NEWTOWN QUESTIONNAIRE

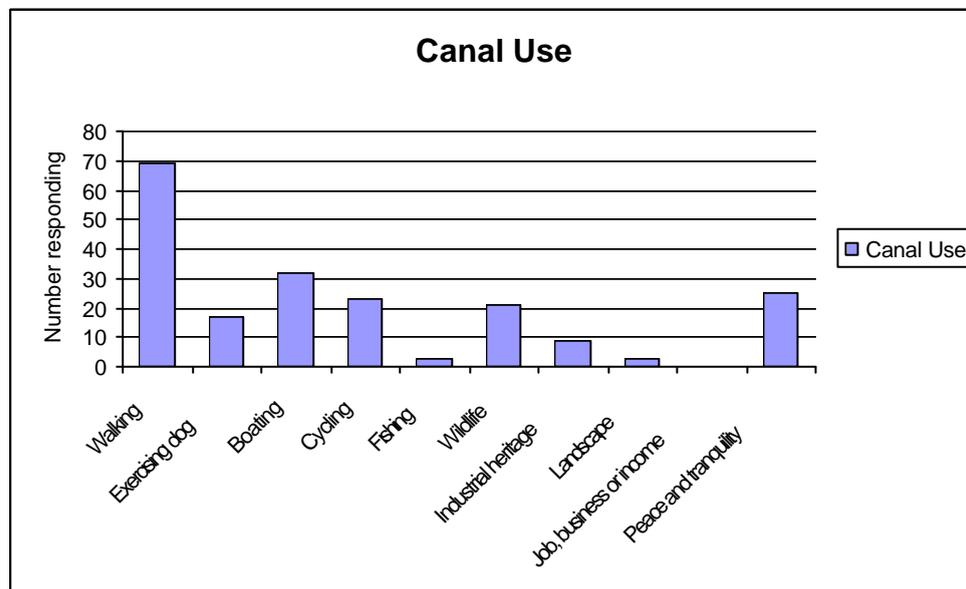
Although, as discussed earlier, this questionnaire differed from the standard questionnaire used, there were some useful results obtained.

- Of 87 respondents, 60% were male, just over a quarter were over 60 and just 3% under 25. Nearly 40% lived 1 – 5 miles from the Canal, and a third less than 1 mile away.
- The most frequent use (by a considerable margin) of the Canal was for walking (including dog walking), followed by boating, cycling, peace & tranquillity and wildlife. Use of the Canal for business was non-existent, and very low for fishing (this is not surprising, as the Canal is not in-water near Newtown).
- Respondents were overwhelmingly in favour of the Canal's restoration, with just 3% against and a further 3% who didn't know.

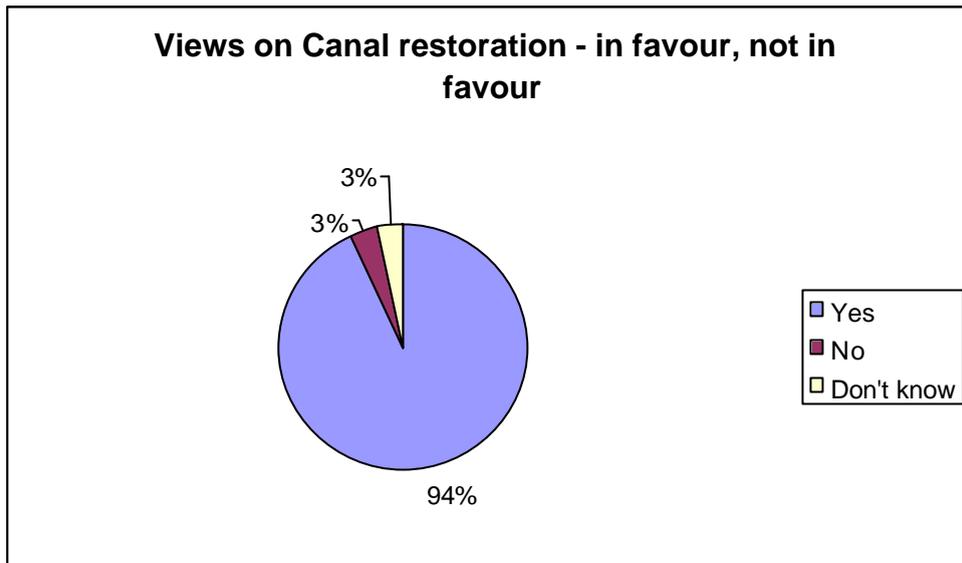
“Open to Newtown with lots of boats and moorings”

Newtown

#### Newtown results (graphs)



(Note: This data was extracted from both tick boxes and text so as to be able to compare it with the later version of the questionnaire).



### 3.1.3 YOUNG PEOPLE'S QUESTIONNAIRE

These were all completed at the Ellesmere Festival. 14 were completed by children under 10 and 18 by 10 – 15 year olds.

Although the respondent numbers were small, the following points can be drawn out:

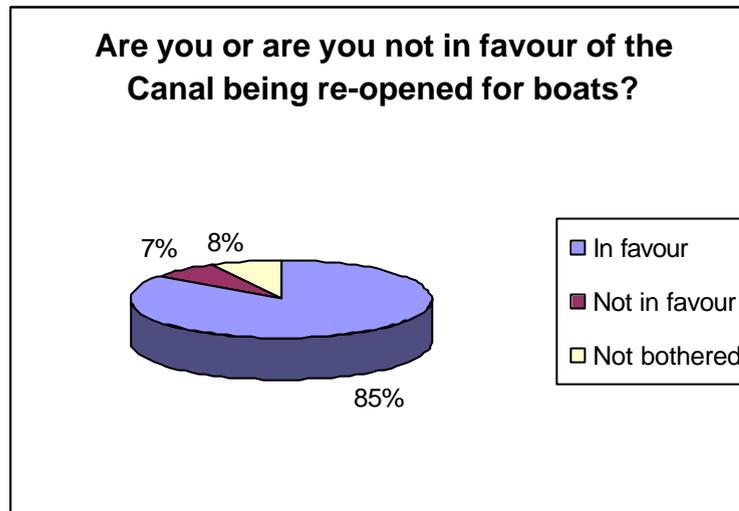
- 36% of under 10s did not use the Canal, a figure that fell to 11% in the older age group.
- For those who did use the Canal, walking was most popular (60% of respondents). Boating, cycling and fishing were also popular. Fishing was more popular with the older age group. Other activities included playing, visiting friends, looking at wildlife and swimming.
- The young people liked the Canal for peace and quiet, but also for boats, wildlife, fishing and the fact that it is free.
- They would like to see more activities for children on and around the Canal, including boat rides, rowing boats and picnic areas.

### 3.2 STREET SURVEY RESULTS

A total of 130 people were surveyed on the street and on their doorsteps in towns and villages along the length of the Canal from Queens Head to Newtown. Of these, 10% were 19 or under, 32% were aged 20-39, 37% were aged 40-59 and 21% were 60 and over. Of those surveyed, 76% lived within 1 mile of the Canal, 11% lived within 1-5 miles of the Canal and 13% lived over 5 miles from the Canal. Of those surveyed the highest percentage lived near Welshpool (25%), Llanymynech (15%), Newtown (9%) and Berriew (8%).

Awareness of the Canal was very high in those people surveyed, with 92% stating that they were aware that the Canal runs through or near their village/town. It should be noted that the surveys were carried out close to the Canal.

The survey found that there is a high level of support for the re-opening of the Canal for boats. 85% of those surveyed were in favour, 7% were not in favour and 8% were not bothered either way. Of those in favour, 44% wanted it to be restored to navigation, but low key and favouring conservation whilst 30% wanted it restored with increased visitor and tourist facilities. 26% of these respondents had or gave no preference in related to the level of development.



Of those in favour, the most popular reasons given for restoration were:

- More used like it was in the past – nice to see boats travelling up and down (23)
- Would be good if done without too much disturbance to wildlife (15)
- Would like to see it restored, but concerned about noise/commercialisation/ tourists (10)
- It will be an asset to the area – more life, more going on (10)

Other reasons included: more visitors/facilities, that it will ensure maintenance of the Canal, boat trips, it would just be nice/good, would be good for businesses/jobs/bring money in and that people and especially children would enjoy using it.

Of those not in favour, the main reasons given were:

- Like it nice & quiet as it is (3)
- Concern for privacy (2)
- Disturbance to wildlife (2)

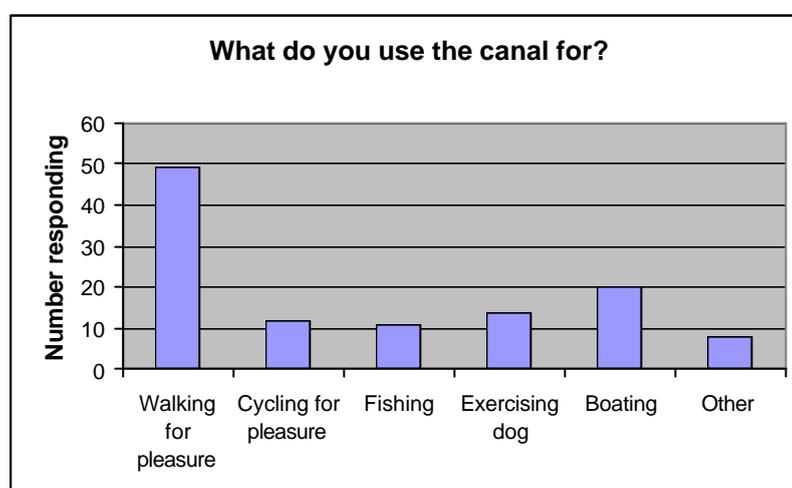
Other reasons included that increased people would bring rubbish and trouble, that it would not have a significant effect on the economy or be beneficial to the communities nearby and that money could be better spent on other things.

### 3.3 PINBOARD RESULTS

Due to the poor usage of the pinboards, only the results from the Ellesmere Festival (where responses were better) are shown here. Note that there are no new messages produced by the pinboards but they do reinforce the perception formed from other data.

The main points that emerge are:

- Nearly two-thirds of respondents were male; 36% of respondents were in the 26 – 60 group, 23% were aged over 60 and 41% under 25. Nearly a half lived within 1 mile of the Canal.
- By a considerable margin, walking (including dog walking) was the most frequent use of the Canal, followed by boating, and then a fairly even spread between cycling, fishing and other activities.



### 3.4 FOCUS GROUPS

At the time of writing only the Navigation and Wildlife & Conservation Focus Groups had been held. Perhaps not surprisingly they, in many ways, showed opposite opinions. The number of issues raised for discussion was relatively limited, reflecting the core concerns of the participants.

Full notes for the three focus groups can be found in Appendix 10.

#### 3.4.1 NAVIGATION FOCUS GROUP

The main points arising at the Navigation Focus Group were:

- A concern that conservation interests would impose undue constraints on navigation.
- A concern for how exactly “monitoring would inform management” and who would be responsible for decisions on boat numbers.
- There was a willingness to accept speed limits for ecological reasons.
- The proposed CMS looked OK provided that the conservation groups accept it as whole package.

### **3.4.2 WILDLIFE & CONSERVATION FOCUS GROUP**

The main points arising at the Wildlife & Conservation Focus Group were:

- A concern that insufficient was known about the efficacy of the proposed mitigation to protect wildlife from boating.
- A concern that navigation levels would be unduly influenced by boating and economic interests.
- A concern for how exactly “monitoring would inform management” and who would be responsible for decisions on boat numbers.

## **3.5 TOWN MEETINGS**

The results were analysed separately and then jointly. This enabled us to see if there were messages unique to a locality and if there were common issues.

### **3.5.1 COMMON ISSUES**

The results for this are based on the question-based group work, which focussed discussion according to the headings as written up here.

#### **Advantages DURING Restoration**

- Local economic advantage through jobs, local employment for local contractors, local sourcing of materials and equipment.
- Interest and publicity about the Canal.

#### **Advantages AFTER Restoration**

- More visitors and tourism to the area.
- New and improved employment & business opportunities in the area.
- Opportunities for nature conservation.
- Improved environment/amenity for locals available.
- Improved navigation.

#### **Disadvantages DURING Restoration**

- Local disruption to residents – traffic, noise, mess etc.

#### **Disadvantages AFTER Restoration**

The responses to this question did not show any similarities between the towns.

#### **Increasing the benefits to the local community**

- Get it finished! (*Very popular*)
- Improved recreation – cycling, fishing, walking, boating, and canoeing.
- Tourism & visitors – improve canalside facilities, information.
- Education for school pupils – biology, environment, history.

- Improved towpath maintenance – vegetation control, litter, dog mess control.

#### **Increasing the benefits to the local economy**

- Promotion - of Canal, of local attractions, of local facilities, of local events, for increased visitor numbers & spend.
- Improvement of economic & tourism infrastructure.
- Use old Canal buildings – museum, live/work units, commercial use.
- Local employment & contracts – maintenance, skilled & unskilled.

#### **Links to other facilities & activities**

- To named attractions – Powis Castle, Cambrian Railway, Welshpool & Llanfair Steam Railway, Llanymynech Rocks & golf course, Welshpool town, Welshpool Heritage Trail, nature reserves.
- To other activities – cycle paths, circular walks.
- To local facilities – public transport including Welshpool station, library, shops, post offices, pubs, parking, Welshpool airport.
- Information availability – schools and visitor information packs, guided walks, heritage signboards, maps showing other facilities & attractions, visitor leaflets.
- Welshpool attractions linkages – combined ticket for Railway, Castle & Canal boat ride, linking shuttle bus, town-Castle horse-drawn carriage, town-Castle water bus or horse drawn boat.

#### **Main canal uses in Welshpool**

- Walking for pleasure (*the clear leader*)
- Also, boating, fishing and walking the dog.

#### **Main canal uses in Oswestry**

- Walking for pleasure (*the clear leader*)
- Also, walking the dog.

#### **Changes or improvements wanted in Welshpool**

- Control dog mess (*a notable margin*)
- Tidy up or restore redundant buildings by Canal
- Reduce litter
- Improve signage & interpretation
- Provide more seating
- Increase number of places to get on to the towpath



*Decreasing priority*

### **3.6 PARTICIPANT COMMENTS**

Here, we are attempting to summarise the various comments that were collected during the course of the Consultation through drawing together approximate categorisations:

- There was broad general support for the CMS and its proposals.
- Where there was opposition to the Canal restoration, it was often on financial grounds, on the basis that the money could be put to better use, such as health care.
- There was also a small, but vocal, minority who considered that restoration should go only as far as Berriew/Garthmyl.
- Identification of opportunities for linkages and alternative use, e.g. by canoes.
- Identification of current maintenance issues, e.g. towpath mowing.
- Historical anecdote.

“I can remember canoeing on the canal in wood and canvas kayaks which we built in Ellesmere youth club.”

Ellesmere

### **3.7 PEDESTRIAN COUNTERS**

A full year’s readings will be needed to demonstrate a reliable trend, which makes detailed analysis at this stage premature, although the existing results can give useful indications for further work. Perhaps not surprisingly, the towpath at Welshpool has the most users and Schoolhouse Bridge, the most rural location, the least. One surprise is a high level of use at Sweeps Bridge, also a rural location; this will merit further study.

All the results to date show that the figures increase in a straight line, which indicates that the users are regular rather than seasonal.

### **3.8 BW STAFF DE-BRIEFING**

This exercise drew out a wealth of information gathered during the course of meetings and communication throughout the development of the CMS, and in some instances, prior to this. The CMS Project Manager and the Economic and Social Regeneration Manager both outlined key points arising from these on-going relationships.

#### **3.8.1 CMS PROJECT MANAGER**

The CMS Project Manager was able to highlight the following communication linkages:

- Local Parish and Community Councils.
- CPRW and CPRE.
- Recreation, Cycleway, Community Strategy and Conservation Officers in the local County and Borough Councils.
- The Environment Agency, English Nature and CCW.

- Local and national waterways groups, in particular MWRT, SUCS, IWA, Friends of Montgomery Canal, Heulwen Trust.
- Other local Groups, e.g. Arddleen Community Association, Duchess Countess Group, Newtown and Welshpool Rotaries.
- Local Schools at Arddleen, Carreghofa and Maesbury.
- Local Interest Groups – Montgomeryshire Angling Association, Shropshire Paddlesports, Ramblers, Cambrian Railway, SWT and MWT.

### **3.8.2 ECONOMIC & SOCIAL REGENERATION MANAGER**

Over the past few years, British Waterways have developed a number of relationships both at a local and strategic level on both sides of the border. Some of these were directly concerned with the Montgomery Canal, whilst others illustrated the more general relevance of canals in the economy of communities. It is the aspiration that BW can demonstrate wider working within the canal corridor ensuring sustainable long-term economic and social benefits. In particular, the following are of relevance to the CMS:

#### **WALES**

##### **Local Context**

- Welshpool Partnership

This is a representative group of local businesses and associated organisations in the town. BW has worked very closely with the Partnership to ensure that the Canal is recognised as a key project within the community. This has resulted in key funding from the WDA for the implementation of the Dragonfly Trail.

- Welshpool Town Council

Discussions have been held with the Town Council who again are very supportive of the Canal, and who realise that the waterway both restored and in its current level of navigation can bring long-term benefits to the town.

- Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust

Discussions have been held over a number of years with the Trust. Although they are 'conservative' towards the restoration of the waterway, on a local level they have been supportive of schemes in Welshpool, with discussions held in the past for a jointly funded post to manage the reserves. Unfortunately this particular project was unable to be taken forward.

- Powys County Council

This is a long-term relationship. BW has worked closely with both the Planning and Highways departments in respect to the Canal. Joint working has been actively demonstrated on a number of local and restoration projects with support either 'in kind' or with financial assistance.

## **National Context**

- **Waterways for Wales Consultation**

British Waterways has been working with the National Assembly over the past twelve months to promote waterways in Wales. These discussions have highlighted a number of strategic projects, of which the restoration of the Montgomery Canal is one. The consultation, which was sent to all ASPB's in Wales plus other organisations including a wide variety of individuals, came to a close at the end of August.

- **National Assembly for Wales**

Discussions have been held with a variety of interested AM's and respective Ministers to raise the profile both at a local level and a strategic national level for the Waterways in Wales. As a result of this, BW now formally consults on a variety of their strategic documents. This has also resulted in BW working with the Assembly to pass on good practice, for example with the European team and the dissemination of information on Interreg in Europe, a fund which has not had a good 'pick up' rate in Wales. BW sits on the group helping to steer Interreg forward in Wales.

- **Waterways All Party Group**

British Waterways sponsors this All Party Group at the Assembly, which looks at waterways at a strategic level.

- **CCW / WTB / WDA**

BW has good working relationships with these organisations both locally and at a national level, with funding support given for a number of on-the-ground projects. Strategic discussions held at a national level. BW sits on the steering group for the WTB's Watersports Tourism working group.

- **Pan Disability Partnership**

This is a Wales-wide group, which has representatives from a number of disability organisations in Wales such as SCOPE, RNIB, RNID etc. British Waterways are at present setting up a pilot project with the PDP to look how to involve disabled people in the waterways in Wales. This encompasses three main objectives: Access audit of BW waterways – working with local disability access groups to assess the accessibility of both honey pot sites and the towpaths; Promotion of the waterways to the disabled – through web site design, leaflets aimed at those with different abilities etc; Training of those with disabilities and active involvement in the restoration of our waterways. Looking to fund through a potential EQUAL programme to employ a project officer to co-ordinate the work.

## **SHROPSHIRE**

### **Local Context**

- **Severn Vyrnwy Land Management Initiative**

Initial relationship developed through the securing of Interreg IIb. This initially arose from discussions with FRCA in Wolverhampton, who identified the LMI as a potential partner in the wider working of the Canal. Resulted in the

employment of Lou Kellet. An initial scoping document has led to two major projects funded by ERDF and RRZ looking at joint marketing schemes; business support; refurbishment of redundant buildings within the corridor and a community tourism project linking the Canal with adjacent communities.

- Oswestry Borough Council

BW has developed effective relationships with departments within the authority, particularly Economic and Community Development. This has resulted in the Montgomery Canal being included in both the Economic Strategic Package and the Community Tourism Strategic Package for the Borough – these have been key in securing both ERDF and RRZ funding. BW sits on both Boards for each strategic package. Also invited to be involved in the development of the Community Plan (Environment and Transport Focus Groups).

- Northern Marches LEADER +

BW sits on the partnership board for the Northern Marches LEADER +, and helped to develop the key theme of 'waterways' within the business plan.

- Shropshire County Council

BW sits on the Tourism Forum Group for the County and works with the respective departments in the County to promote the Montgomery Canal. The canals within the County are identified within the Tourism Plan as a contributing factor to tourism in Shropshire. Canals highlighted in the motorway information points co-ordinated by the County. Work on a local level with Shropshire County Countryside Service – potential joint project at Llanymynech.

- Shropshire Partnership

Relationship has resulted in the Montgomery Canal being included in the RRZ and ZIP for the county. This is a strategic AWM document. Waterways are now identified as a key 'theme' group.

- Llanymynech Heritage Partnership

BW heavily involved in the initial formation of the group along with Oswestry Borough Council. Regularly attend the meetings held at Llanymynech.

- Shropshire Wildlife Trust

Sit with the Wildlife Trust on a number of partnerships throughout the County. Have looked at joint schemes in the past including the development of the Countryside Stewardship Scheme along the canal and the involvement of adjacent landowners.

## **National Context**

- Waterways For Tomorrow

Although is now a couple of years old – this is still a key strategic document in the development and promotion of waterways – wide consultation.

- Advantage West Midlands

Working has largely been through the RRZ. However, BW has had a variety of strategic discussions with AWM to promote waterways within the West Midlands area. AWM Economic Strategy identifies the innovators of the canals adding to the character of the region providing a unique offer in the West Midlands.

- Government Office West Midlands

With the development of the ERDF programme within the West Midlands, British Waterways have worked with GOWM in the evolution of the programme. BW has hosted visits by GOWM to the Canal to demonstrate the type of work BW is doing to help regenerate the rural economy.

### **3.9 DESKTOP LITERATURE REVIEW**

The review of regional and local strategic, development and tourism plans builds on the summary information presented in the Consultation proposal. The main points are shown below. This exercise overlaps significantly with the ongoing “Economic Strategy” review which will be a companion to the CMS and is therefore not covered in detail within this report.

#### **3.9.1 POWYS**

The Powys tourism strategy produced by Powys County Council, A Sustainable Tourism Strategy for Powys: Making Quality Count, is still in draft form. There is no mention of individual visitor attractions such as the Montgomery Canal, but the report does note “unique heritage and cultural resources” as a strength in Powys, and talks about “the need to consider environmental/green issues” within future tourism development projects.

At a community level, key strategy documents for the areas through which the Canal passes are the Community Strategies. Whilst Powys Community Strategy is still in development, it is expected to refer to the community, economic and environmental benefits offered by the Canal.

The Welshpool Partnership’s 3 Year Action Plan for the Development of Welshpool (April 2002 – 2005) describes a vision for Welshpool as “a truly thriving, modern market town”. Within the Plan, the “attractive canal” and Canal Cruises are described as a Strength in a SWOT analysis of the town. Linking the Canal to the national network is described as an Opportunity. One project within the Plan is specifically about the Canal – the Dragonfly Trail, which aims to regenerate the waterside of the Canal in Welshpool and increase its use by locals and visitors and to contribute to the economic development of the town by creating links with the town centre. This Plan follows earlier regeneration reports, including the Welshpool Strategic Overview (1998) and A Future for Welshpool (1998), both of which identify the potential of the canal to contribute to tourism, quality of the local environment

and local heritage. The latter report is sufficiently enthusiastic to note that “If the canal development does go ahead, Welshpool is set to become a major tourist destination in Mid Wales”.

### **3.9.2 WEST MIDLANDS**

Advantage West Midlands Corporate Plan entitled Committed to Succeed identifies three delivery priorities, via six regeneration zones, three high-tech corridors, and the promotion of investment and growth in ten business clusters.

The Montgomery Canal is within the Rural Regeneration Zone where priorities are to help farming, tourism and hospitality businesses. A Zone Partnership has been established to co-ordinate funding and priorities across Shropshire, Herefordshire and Worcestershire.

Advantage West Midlands aim to act as a catalyst, co-ordinator and champion, looking to link regeneration and business support. Tourism is one of the identified priorities, with the aim of promoting business support, a centre for tourism excellence, enhanced marketing and branding, and innovation and skills development. An ICT network is to be developed for visitor bookings and information.

### **3.9.3 SHROPSHIRE**

The Shropshire Community Strategy refers to the Montgomery Canal in relation to the Community Strategy for the Oswestry area, within which there is mention of the potential community and economic benefits of the Canal, looking at possible project developments over a similar timescale to the Canal, through to 2007.

A key recommendation in the draft of the Shropshire Tourism Strategy is to build a stronger identity and sense of place, around a theme of ‘landscape’. Within this, there are clear links to the Montgomery Canal through the sub-theme of ‘Landscapes of waterways and gardens’ which has been geographically linked to the Oswestry area. Less directly, the Strategy also refers to the “wealth of opportunities for stimulating touring and discovery”, which has the potential to fit well with the Canal restoration.

On a more local level, Oswestry’s Healthcheck, a comprehensive research exercise undertaken in preparation for the Market Towns Initiative, describes the Canal as a valuable resource in terms of the local environment and heritage, as well as being a key linear feature in the area’s landscape. Information presented within the Healthcheck originating in the Oswestry Tourist Development Strategy 1999-2006 assesses the potential of the Montgomery Canal (together with 6 other current or possible visitor attractions in the area). It identifies potential in terms of the environment, sustainability, being an all year attraction, having educational value and appeal to all ages, as well as potential for job creation.

A recent development in the Oswestry area is the successful Oswestry Economic and Community Tourism Strategic Package for Objective 2 and Rural Regeneration Zone funding, of which developments on the Montgomery Canal form a part.

The Montgomery Canal is referred to in the Severn Vyrnwy Land Management Initiative Business Plan (1998), and since then has been a part of key elements of the LMI's work through the Severn Vyrnwy 'Sustainable Canal Restoration' Project. This work has been important in building links into the local communities and in particular with landowners and businesses along the Canal corridor.

Various consultation exercises and reports about the Llanymynech Heritage Area and its possible development, dating back as far as 1987 make reference to the Montgomery Canal, demonstrating the very important physical, historical and environmental linkages between the two. The most recent of these, Llanymynech Heritage Area Development Study (2002), includes a suggestion to "make links to other areas of interest including the Montgomery Canal". Llanymynech's Village Appraisal, undertaken in 1998, does not refer directly to the Canal, but reports on the value placed locally on the industrial heritage, including the Canal. Most recently, plans have been formulated for the area as an open-air ecology and industrial heritage museum, at the centre of a wider local attraction, including a restored Montgomery Canal.

#### **3.9.4 RELEVANT RESEARCH**

A significant research project taken into account during the CMS was Wozencraft's BSc Dissertation. She obtained some useful information during a survey of local residents, chosen at random from the electoral register, and undertaken in 2000. Some of the more interesting results of that study are shown in the table overleaf.

## Key results from the Wozencraft 2000 survey.

<b>1. How important are the Montgomery Canal and its associated landscape?</b>			
Very Important: 39%		Important: 39%	
Not important: 22%			
<b>2. What are your specific interests in the canal?</b>			
Walking	46%	Cycling	2%
Boating	14%	Fishing	2%
Exercising dog	5%	Live by it	6%
Wildlife observation	13%	None	27%
Industrial heritage	6%	Other	7%
<b>3. Why is it special to you?</b>			
Know you're allowed to be there	4%	Peaceful and unspoilt	30%
Industrial heritage	11%	Live nearby	17%
Safe	30%	Familiar landscape	11%
Nature and wildlife	12%	Other	8%
<b>4. What would you most like to be conserved or protected along the Montgomery Canal?</b>			
Waterway itself	27%	Waterside trees and hedgerows	14%
Flora and fauna	58%	It's OK	12%
Industrial heritage	22%		
Other	1%		
<b>5. What would you like to be improved or changed along the Montgomery Canal?</b>			
Towpath surface	27%	More restoration works to canal	37%
Hedges trimmed	3%	Left as it is	31%
Stop dog fouling	9%		
Other	8%		

A comparison (insofar as is possible) between Wozencraft's results and those of the Consultation highlights the following differences and similarities in results:

Differences	Similarities
Wozencraft shows a much higher proportion wanting the Canal left as it is.	Walking is the most popular use of the Canal
Wozencraft shows a priority to conserving flora & fauna; this consultation shows an albeit small priority to conserving industrial heritage and the existing navigable stretches.	Peace & tranquillity is very highly valued
	Besides navigation, towpath improvements are the most wanted improvement.

In a PhD thesis not related to the Montgomery Canal, Sustainable Nature Conservation in Canals (2000), Hatcher also examines categories of canal use by members of the public. Of a sample of 758 people, some 244 claimed that they made some use of canals – their use was broken down as follows:

<b>Category of Use</b>	<b>Percentage of Users</b>
Angling	6.5
Sightseeing	26
Just somewhere to go	6
Walking	29
Dog walking	14
Holiday hire boating	2.5
Private power boating	1.3
Trip/restaurant boat	2.5
Canoeing	1
Other boating	0.5
Cycling	1
Other	9

This pattern of use is not dissimilar from the pattern found by our study, in particular bankside use far exceeds boating activities.

## 4 ANALYSIS

---

Having now described the results, this section of the report seeks to pull out analysis of this information. Where appropriate, recommendations for action by either BW or the Montgomery Canal Partnership have also been drawn out.

### 4.1 METHODOLOGY

**A significant proportion of questionnaire respondents were classed as “visitors”,** i.e. from outside the 8 zones delineated along the Canal corridor. This shows the level of interest in the Canal from outside its immediate area.

**The age sample of participants in the Consultation** was heavily biased towards older age groups. Whilst this may reflect to some extent the true profile of users, it is likely that in fact it reflects more strongly older people’s willingness and ability to take time to contribute to a consultation. ***If further consultation is undertaken, a positive element would be pro-active work to include younger participants.***

The poor attendance at the Newtown public event means that this analysis to some extent overlooks Newtown-orientated considerations and input. However, **the impression is that Newtown residents feel ‘on hold’** as they await the outcome of the currently ongoing feasibility study. ***The MCP should consider revisiting Newtown for community consultation after the results of the feasibility study have been made available. The MCP should capitalise on BW’s linkages with the Powys County Council Planning Department, with reference to the recently publicised design brief for part of Newtown including the Canal.***

**There was overwhelmingly positive opinion to restoring the Canal.** It is likely that this is in some part due to the Consultation’s methodology, which in large part relied on participants taking positive action to take part – either in filling in a questionnaire, coming out to a meeting, or stopping at a stall. However, attempts to combat this through street interviews with individuals in villages and towns along the Canal showed that a large majority were in favour of restoration, albeit with a higher percentage wanting a low key restoration which favours conservation.

Although there was on-going monitoring of stakeholder involvement, **CMS staff noted that there were some weaknesses in reaching out to ‘communities of location’.** This was due to time and budget limitations, however a full database of contacts has been prepared for use in any future consultations (Appendix 13).

## 4.2 THE VALUED RESOURCES OF THE CANAL

The Canal is very highly valued as a place for peace and tranquillity. This fits other known research, relating to feedback from both local people and visitors. ***BW needs to ensure that restoration is sensitive to this element.***

**There was a clear message about the importance of the Canal's built heritage.** There are opportunities for the Montgomery Canal Partnership to capitalise on this through building on linkages with other heritage initiatives planned and underway in the Canal corridor. The most high profile potential development is the Llanymynech Heritage Area; there was strong support for creating visitor linkages in and around heritage attractions in and around Welshpool with Powis Castle and the Llanfair steam railway. There are other options in terms of commercial opportunities, the most immediate of which would be building on the current work with the Severn Vyrnwy Project. ***BW could explore commercial opportunities with individuals along the immediate Canal corridor that would simultaneously develop local business activities and restore and maintain canal buildings.***

**The Canal, in its current condition, is highly valued for activities other than boating.** In particular, the towpath is a key asset in providing walking routes for local people and visitors (this latter is shown by a recent BW visitor survey). However, ***BW needs to take account of the clear message that there is room for improvement in relation to the towpath.*** Elements to improve include:

- ⇒ Making it possible for users to enjoy the view, onto the Canal and outwards to the surrounding area;
- ⇒ Controlling the vegetation alongside the towpath, partly to create views, partly to make walking easier;
- ⇒ Improving access to the towpath – in part through signage, in part through physical links including circular walks;
- ⇒ Ensuring that the towpath is clean – of dog mess and litter.

BW has an opportunity here to demonstrate publicly its commitment to the Canal by improving towpath maintenance, which is seen as so important. ***BW should monitor contractor performance and insist on remedial action where appropriate. BW should also consider extending the remit of the monthly length inspections to include issues related to maintenance, such as overhanging branches or rampant bramble.***

"I am keen on cycling – the towpath is safe for children".

Oswestry

It should also be noted that **there is some degree of interest in other towpath-based activities, in particular fishing and cycling, especially from young people.** Various respondents commented that these activities are not always easily accommodated with either boating or walking, so would need to be carefully managed in conjunction with these other activities.

**The wildlife value of the Canal was a constantly recurring theme.** There were concerns about the negative effects of reinstatement to wildlife, but also appreciation of the current and potential positive role that the Canal could play in environmental terms. It is likely that the respondents' information gained through these events adds little to BW's current knowledge on the topic. The focus groups highlighted that there is clearly some work still needed, both to convince boating and conservation groups of the others' legitimate concerns and to build confidence in the proposed CMS monitoring and management regimes. ***BW and the Montgomery Canal Partnership should continue to invest in the increasingly confident relationship between the wildlife interests and BW, through on-going dialogue, frank exchange of information and meeting mutually agreed actions.***

"It's a pity to have to move wildlife to reserves to allow boating"

Welshpool

**The value of the Canal for boating was relatively less than for several other activities.** This could hardly be otherwise, bearing in mind that the Canal is currently only partly in water. There was constructive input from the navigation community, which was the result on on-going consultative work. ***The important thing for BW and the Montgomery Canal Partnership is to continue to exchange information openly and to meet mutually agreed actions. There is also a need to ensure that any further consultation with the navigation community reaches out to grass-roots level.***

### **4.3 CANAL RESTORATION**

**There was a clear majority in favour of opening the Canal to navigation,** shown through the questionnaires, pinboards, vision trees, informal discussions, street surveys and town meeting group exercises. However, face-to-face chats between RR facilitators and respondents at the Oswestry and Welshpool town meetings, and during the street surveys, suggested that not all respondents had clear-cut feelings. Reservations about privacy and too many people were expressed informally. ***These views were not expressed to the BW staff present and there may be a need to explore this in more depth if further consultation work is undertaken.***

**Conservationist opposition is small** but, because it is well informed, ***should not be underestimated.***

**There is evidently concern about the level and distribution of disruption that would be caused by the physical works to reinstate the Canal,** in particular to the local road network and wildlife, but also in relation to noise, mess and local communities. ***BW need to draw up a strategy to manage the likely impact to local communities and other people affected, which would need to include an element of publicity and information updates, and a mechanism for on-going community communication with BW. One method for this would be residents' liaison meetings, which are a normal BW activity during major civil engineering works.***

**There was seen to be considerable potential benefit to the area's economy** both during and after restoration through the creation of local jobs and work for local contractors. ***BW needs to consider seriously how this can be made a reality.*** For example, encouraging restoration contractors to source a proportion of labour, equipment and materials locally, or supporting local contractors to form consortia to bid on restoration work.

**It was clear that respondents saw the Canal as one element within their broader local environment and community, in a geographic and cultural sense.** The responses showed some clear opportunities, as well as some more 'far out' ideas. ***Ideas that BW could explore for commercial potential include:***

- ⇒ Joint tourism tickets in Welshpool for Powis Castle, Powysland Museum and a Canal trip.
- ⇒ Some form of transport linkage between Welshpool town, Powis Castle and the Canal.
- ⇒ Signage or information boards in key locations to signpost Canal users (boat or other) to local facilities and services, including pubs, shops, accommodation, public transport and other attractions.
- ⇒ Increasing the national availability of tourist and visitor publicity.
- ⇒ Making use of canalside buildings for business ventures e.g. visitor facilities (café, shop, museum etc), office and/or domestic accommodation. *(There are overlaps here with the work of the Severn Vyrnwy Project)*

"There is probably money to be made from angling clubs on canal-side lakes stocked with carp and tench."

Guilfield

**There was a clear message from participants that it was time to get on with actually doing the restoration work.** Whilst BW and the Montgomery Canal Partnership face obvious funding obstacles that may take some years to overcome, ***BW and the Partnership would benefit from identifying 'quick win', smaller, related projects that would demonstrate commitment to the Montgomery Canal and at the same time, achieve useful work for the Canal's current users.*** Ideas raised include simple signage linking the Canal with the settlements through which it passes, basic towpath improvements, or even a competitive community grants package to encourage community linkages with the Canal.

#### **4.4 ONGOING COMMUNITY ACTIVITY**

**BW's most frequent point of contact with Canal users is through its Canal Operatives.** However, it proved difficult to draw out information from them about their impressions of users. These, and other frontline staff, are an under-utilised resource for connecting with the Canal's user community. Methods are available to undertake on-going consultation through in-house

staff, at minimal extra investment of time or money. ***BW should review the role of Operatives, to consider including an element of user interaction within their job descriptions. It is expected that this would require additional training for these staff, but this could be included as an element in induction or on-going training provision.***

**The education potential of the Canal was identified**, both at a school level and for other users. In terms of school education, the Canal was seen as a resource to teach pupils about local heritage and environment. For other users, there was a desire for more interpretative information to be available. Thus, there seem to be opportunities for more formal education, fitting the learning resource of the Canal to meet National Curriculum needs, as well as more informal learning opportunities for the wider public. Suggestions included guided walks and interpretation boards. ***BW should explore the opportunities for linkages and educational service provision by other local organisations and businesses, as a means of bringing about mutual benefits*** e.g. the BW schools programme, WoW, archaeological heritage interpretation from Clwyd Powys Archaeological Trust, or guided story telling walks by local story tellers.

Linked to this, **there is considerable active volunteer involvement in the Montgomery Canal**, which includes a small number of people interested in educational activities for children. ***BW would benefit from nurturing this interest and continuing to provide active support to them to visit schools or lead school visits to the Canal, building on the work already completed.***

**Other participants in the Consultation showed an interest in further involvement, which should continue to be fostered.** This includes local Ramblers Association groups, who have offered help in identifying suitable local circular walks, and Shropshire Paddlesports, who are developing a facility at Queen's Head.

**The work carried out for this Consultation raised the agenda of community consultation, participation and involvement within BW. There is scope to build on this throughout future work towards, during and after restoration.** This could be achieved through:

- ⇒ On-going consultation (in whatever format that may be).
- ⇒ Building on the existing 'customer focus' to make community input an integral element of BW's work.
- ⇒ Training up Operatives to be the 'face of BW', confident in communicating with the public and acting as one route of information flow into and out of the organisation.

# 5 A VISION FOR THE MONTGOMERY CANAL

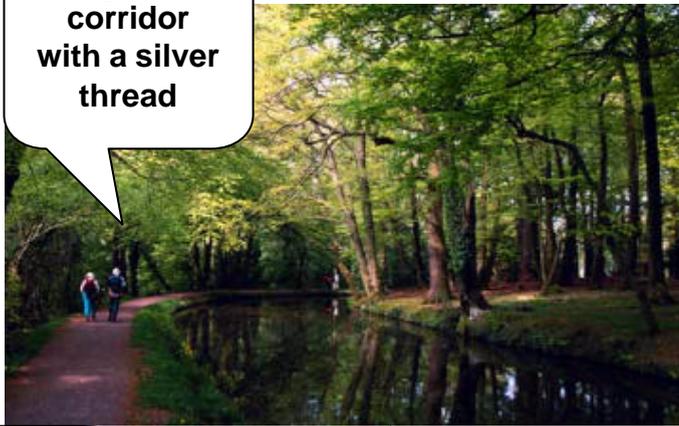
Open to navigation



Sensitive to wildlife & environment



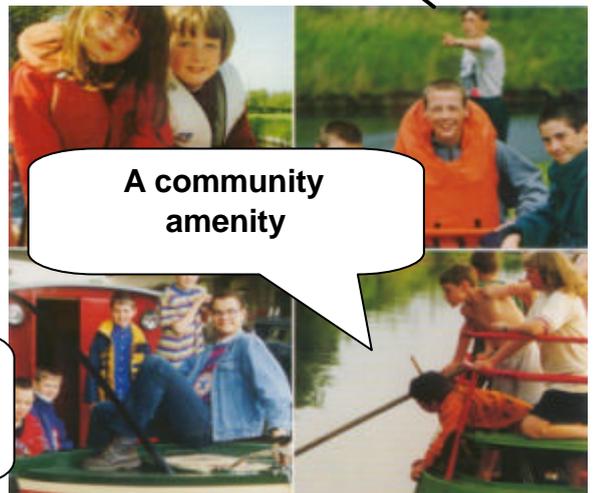
A green corridor with a silver thread



Tranquil, peaceful



A community amenity



Built heritage



## 6 CONCLUSIONS

---

As described in the Introduction to this report, the overall intention of the Consultation was to gather information about the following elements:

- How the canal is used and valued now, including local concerns and opportunities.
  - How people feel that it may be improved.
  - Public perceptions of the local landscape and the significance of the canal and its associated structures in this landscape.
- Existing and potential access arrangements and how these link to other local facilities.
- Potential economic and community impacts and benefits.
- A vision for the future.

Despite some weaknesses, the Consultation has been successful in achieving its aims. Detailed and clear feedback was obtained from a spectrum of stakeholders that provides comprehensible messages to BW and the Montgomery Canal Partnership about current and potential concerns and desired actions for the short and longer term. The sum of the feedback was condensed into a representative community-based vision.

There are many recurring themes identified, which are all being built into the CMS. Tourism and jobs, access, community partnership, built heritage, wildlife all play their part, but the big message seems to be that, planned well, restoration can meet local needs, as well as those of wildlife and navigation, but that all of this needs thought and good management.

The outputs and recommendations of the Consultation cannot be considered in isolation, as several of the elements that were included in the Consultation are core research projects in their own right within the CMS preparation, namely landscape, ecology, access and the economy.

In addition, the Consultation process in itself is an output, in terms of developing BW's consultation capacity and experience, and in further setting the stage for community involvement with the Montgomery Canal. It is clear that there is public support for the CMS project – support best retained and extended by continuing public information and consultation during the life of the project.