



# Just add water

linking communities;  
creating opportunities

**South East Waterway Partnership  
10 Year Strategic Plan**



Canal &  
River Trust

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**“Living waterways  
transform places  
and enrich lives”**

Canal & River Trust, 2014

# Welcome

I am delighted to present our adopted plan to you, following an extensive consultation process in autumn 2013. This will help shape our wonderful waterways, so they can play an even stronger part in defining the places they run through, add to the prosperity and well-being of these communities and be enjoyed and supported by more people than ever before.

## This plan has three challenges:

The first is to engage with all sectors of society that already enjoy and benefit from our waterways, so that we can understand how to we can make them better used, enjoyed and valued.

The second is to widen that engagement, linking with new constituencies, new partners and new communities – to include all those who could and should be able to enjoy and benefit from these wonderful community assets.

Finally, to ensure that our canals connect as fully as possible with the people, communities and economies that surround them.

## Why are we doing this?

The government granted the nation's canals and rivers charitable status in July 2012.

Integral within this major change is the desire for this priceless waterway network to be seen as owned and better used by all our communities – for fun and leisure - and also as part of the beating heart of our local villages, towns, cities and communities. The Canal & River Trust wishes to secure the community investment we need, in order to pass the waterways on, preserved and improved, to future generations.

Our job, as the Trust's South East Waterways Partnership, is to make that happen locally, working with public and private sector partners together with local communities and groups.

That's why we've produced this strategic plan - **a co-production with our partners, communities and users** – to guide the priority steps we now need to take. We look forward to realising the objectives of the plan, with your help, input and engagement.

## Going forward and next steps

My Partnership, alongside the Trust's staff, looks forward to bringing the plan to life. I am committed to keeping you updated upon our progress and, to that end, we have arranged our second Annual Public meeting for Wednesday 15 October 2014.

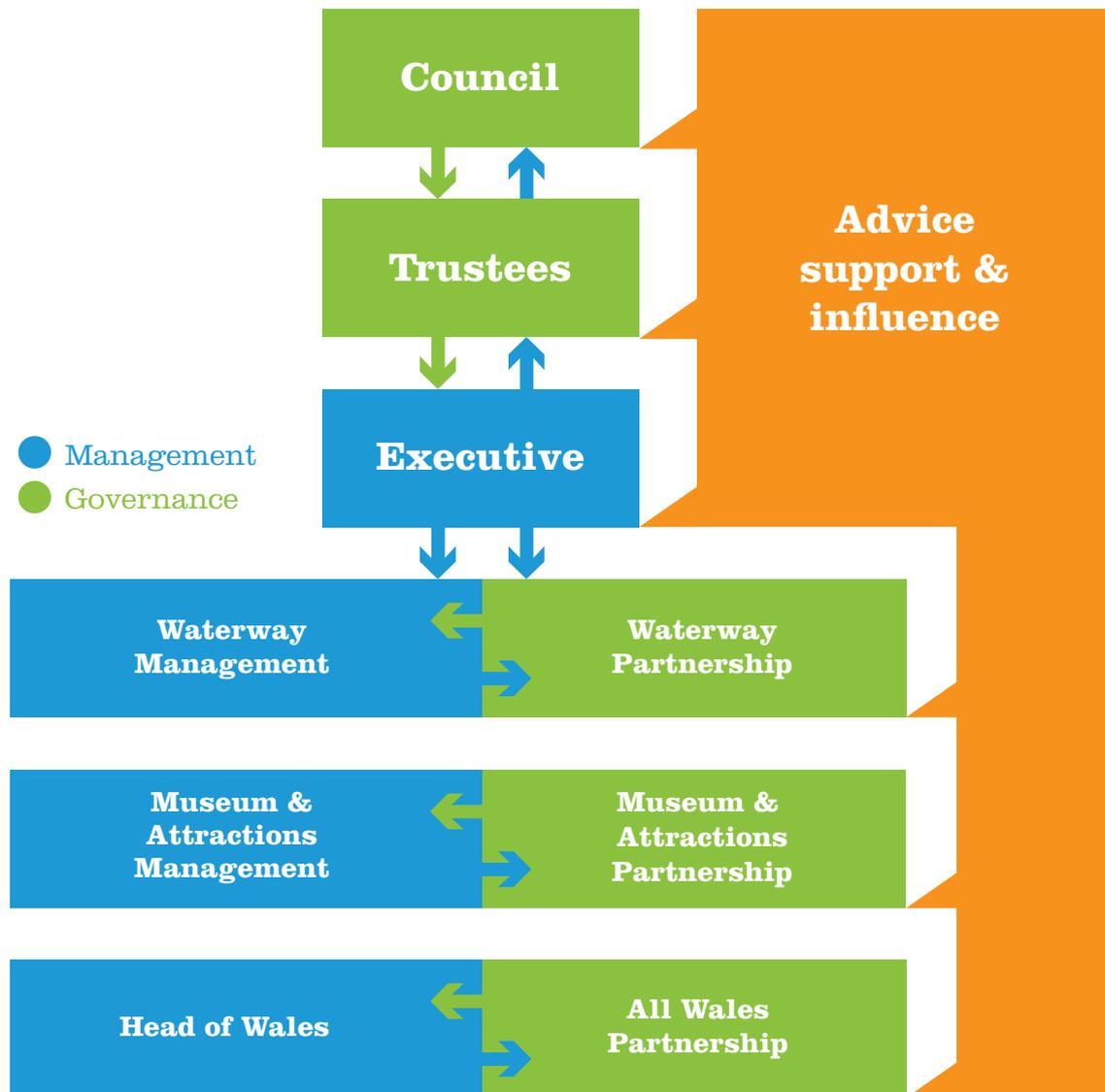


**John Best**

**Chair, South East Waterway Partnership**



# Canal & River Trust: Our Governance



## Why Local Partnerships?

We need to manage our canals and rivers as one network, with common policies across England and Wales, in order to allocate resources where they are most needed and to be most efficient and effective. However, the opportunities for joint working, as well as appreciating the challenges to better use and enjoyment of our canals and rivers, lie in understanding individual stretches of waterway and working with localities and local partners, agencies and businesses.

That is why new Waterway Partnerships have been established across England and Wales, to bring together representatives of local communities, businesses and organisations to work closely with the Canal & River Trust, to influence and add value to what we do in each area.

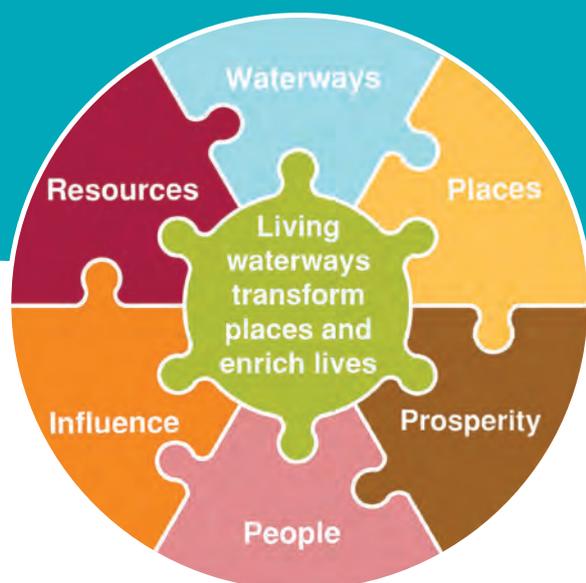
# Canal & River Trust: Our Strategic Priorities

**Almost 50% of the population of England and Wales lives within five miles of our network of canals, rivers and towpaths.**

**The network is cherished by millions of visitors, neighbours and communities, yet it has been difficult in the past for many people to get involved in shaping their future. We intend to change that.**

The true potential of our canals and rivers and their long term survival will only be secured if the new Trust fully engages and works with visitors, users, neighbours, business partners and local authorities, including parish, town and community councils.

Our priority is to widen the enjoyment of our waterways today, whilst protecting them for future generations. The Trustees have set out six strategic goals aimed at unlocking this potential.



**People** To enrich people's lives.

**Waterways** To protect and improve the accessibility, usability and resilience of our assets and their heritage, for people to use and enjoy, now and in the future.

**Resources** To secure sufficient resources, and manage them efficiently, for the long term sustainability of the waterways within the Trust's care.

**Influence** To be a widely respected partner and trusted guardian with growing influence and responsibility.

**Places** To provide special places that people value, sustainable environments and routes.

**Prosperity** To yield economic benefits for local communities and the nation.

# Canal & River Trust: Resources

## Nationally, we have:

- an annual income of approximately £120m
- 1,600 staff, over half our team are canalside, looking after the physical infrastructure of our canals and rivers every day
- 2,727 Listed Buildings and structures, we are the third largest owner of Listed Structures in the UK
- over 2,000 miles of historic canals, rivers, reservoirs and docks
- an additional 200 miles of waterways restored and re-opened in the last decade
- 1,000 wildlife conservation sites and 400 miles of Conservation Areas
- 32,000 licensed boats on the network – 2014 (more than at the height of the Industrial Revolution)
- 15,000 heritage objects, 100,000 archive records and images across museums and attractions sites.

## Our income comes from a wide range of sources including:

- individual donors and corporate sponsors
- commercial income including revenue from the licensing of boats, moorings and angling; and from property and utilities
- grants from other organisations
- our 15 year contract with the UK Government.



# South East Partnership: Resources

## Locally we have:

- 410km of historic urban and rural canals and rivers plus 15 resevoirs.
- 307 Listed Buildings and structures and 4 Scheduled Ancient Monuments in our care
- 30 Conservation Areas, including three linear lengths of canal totalling 151km; we also have four SSSIs (Sites of Specific Scientific Interest)
- 6,500 licensed boats locally on South East waters, out of a national total of 35,000 (more than at the height of the Industrail Revolution)
- Four significant new and restoration projects:
  - Beford & Milton Keynes Waterway (new)
  - Daventry Canal Arm (new)
  - Wendover Canal Arm (restoration)
  - Buckingham Canal Arm (restoration)
- More than 1,000 volunteers, supplementing our own staff, with over 5,600 volunteer days per year across a broad range of customer-facing and maintenance tasks.
- Over 100 local canal societies, angling groups and conservation and wildlife organisations actively involved in projects on the waterway.
- 21 Local Authorities, including six County Councils; 135 Parish and Town Councils.





# South East Waterway Partnership

## Who are we?

We are a group of volunteers from public, private and community organisations with a wide range of professional, community, waterway interests and skills. Among these are town planning & regeneration, boating & boating trade, heritage & tourism, walking, design, angling, volunteering, community welfare, marketing, event management and PR, finance, rural economy and local authority. You can find out more about our partnership members at the end of this publication.

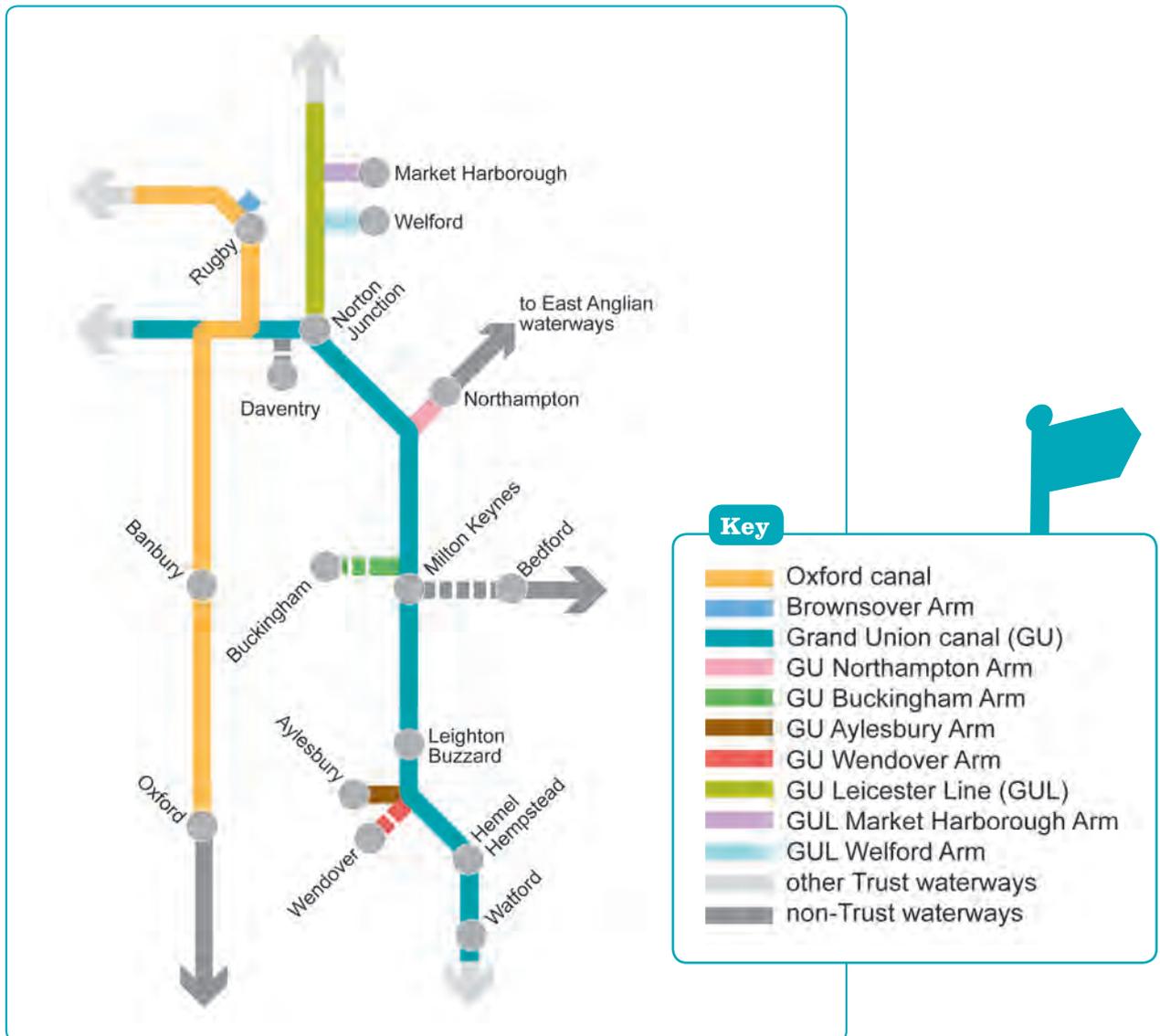
## What are we for?

- Promoting knowledge and use of the waterways locally.
- Understanding the issues facing communities in the South East Waterway and assessing how the waterways can play a part.
- Shaping future plans of the Canal & River Trust, to deliver these either on our own or in partnership with others.
- Securing the resources for the Waterway to deliver those plans.
- Ensuring the job gets done.

## How will we do that job?

- Considering the relevant information held by the Trust and others.
- Publishing the Strategic Plan following the consultation process
- Engaging with all involved partners to clarify roles and responsibilities covered in the plan.
- Developing relationships with involved partners to move the actions forward.
- Channelling skills, experience and resources of the Partnership, and the Trust towards delivery and stakeholders.
- Monitoring and reviewing progress regularly and refining objectives to reflect changing circumstances.
- Undertaking to feedback and inform stakeholders of progress and achievements.

# Our Waterways



The South East is home to a diverse range of canals, embracing Hertfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Northamptonshire, Leicestershire, Warwickshire and Oxfordshire, linking several urban centres with the tranquillity of some of the nation’s finest countryside - along both along the Grand Union and Oxford canals.

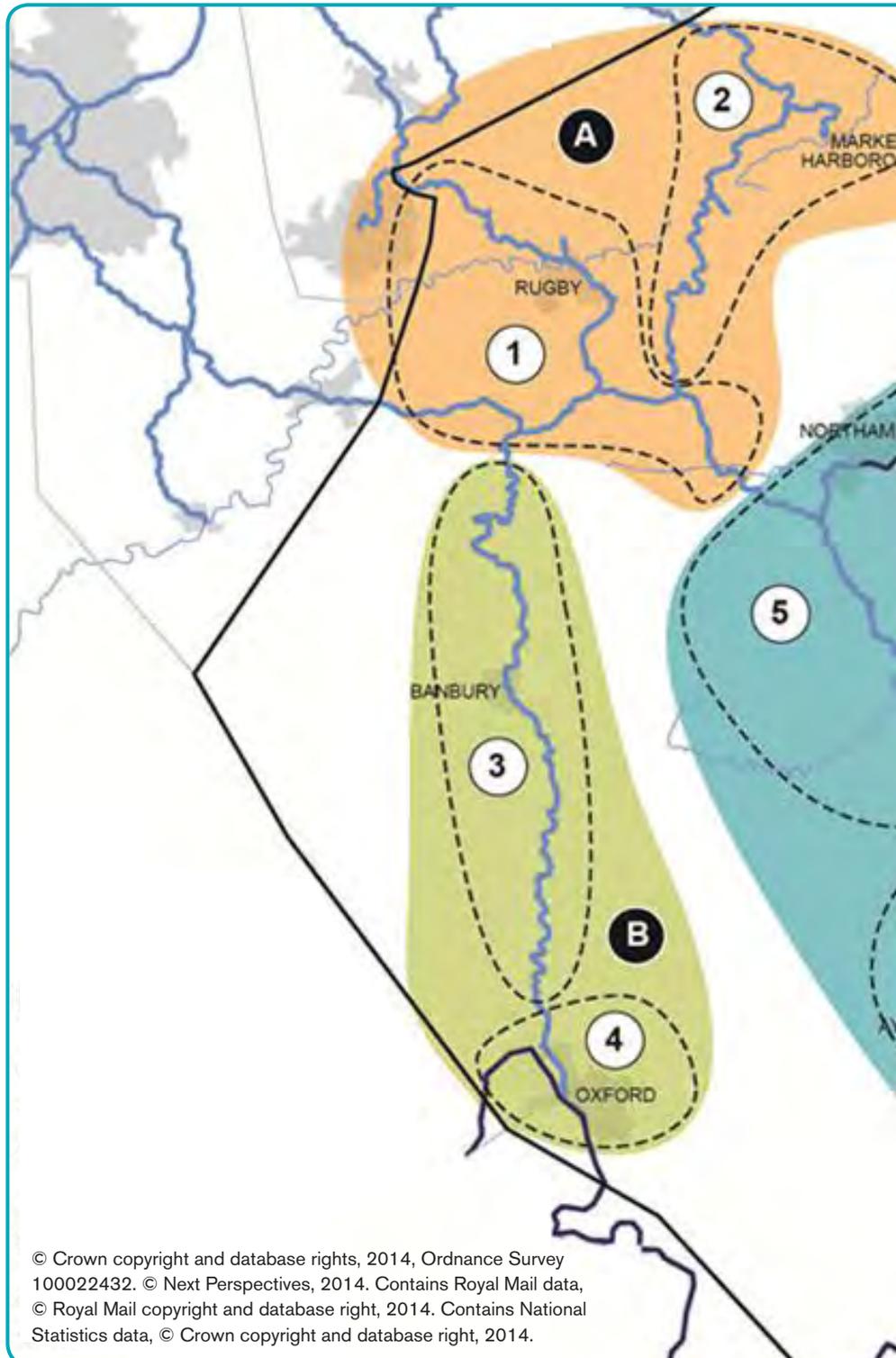
These canals, originally the arteries connecting the nation’s capital to the industrial heartlands of the midlands, are now home to a fifth of all pleasure boats nationally. Whilst not experiencing the urban concentration of our neighbours, the South East is typified by a rich and diverse network of picturesque hamlets and villages, punctuated by market towns and large regional centres such as Oxford and Milton Keynes.

This gives our waterways the potential to make an important contribution to the economy and quality of life here in the South East. They can act as strong catalysts for regeneration, helping to tackle social and economic challenges, and contributing to vibrant, healthy communities.

# South East Waterway Unique and diverse



In recognition of these differing characteristics, we have divided the region into three distinct areas, each of which is subdivided to further identify their own character, challenges and opportunities.



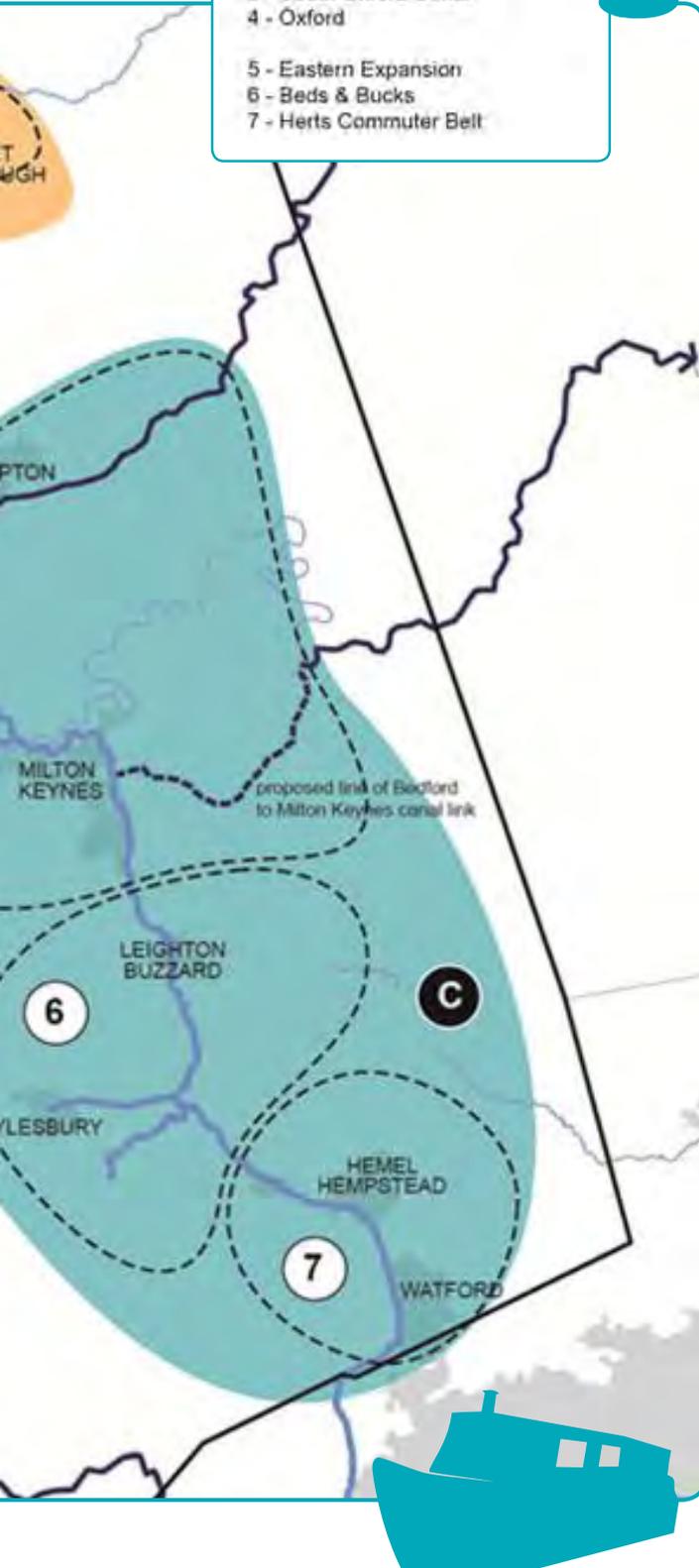
### Key

**A - South Midlands**  
**B - Oxford Canal Corridor**  
**C - London Gateway**

1 - Midlands Gateway  
2 - Leicester Gateway

3 - South Oxford Canal  
4 - Oxford

5 - Eastern Expansion  
6 - Beds & Bucks  
7 - Herts Commuter Belt



## A. South Midlands

This area includes the Midlands and Leicester Gateways.

The north Oxford and Grand Union canals form cruising rings linking the South East to the Midlands. High throughput of boating traffic going via Napton and Braunston Turns. Typified by the lock flights at Foxton, Watford and Stockton which serve as tourist attractions in their own right.

## B. Oxford Canal Corridor

This area includes the South Oxford Canal and Oxford sub-areas.

One of the earliest canals, the Oxford Canal winds its way along the River Cherwell valley, through Oxfordshire and South Warwickshire, with its characteristic lift bridges. The two main centres are Oxford and Banbury, with picturesque settlements like Thrupp and Cropredy strung along the canal route.

## C. London Gateway

This area includes the Eastern Expansion, Beds, Bucks and Herts Commuter Belt sub-areas.

With the greatest urban context, development activity and on-going development potential, linking London and Birmingham, runs parallel to the Grand Union Canal is shadowed by the M1 and the West Coast mainline railway. The greatest boat concentration in this area defines key actions for the immediate future.

# South East Waterway Ten Year Strategic Plan

Our canals have a significant and unique role to play, connecting people, places and opportunities by improving the physical environment and prospects for people and the wider economy, as well as supporting carbon reduction and environmental sustainability. The canal network already generates public benefits to local communities and the economy within the South East, but they have the potential to deliver so much more.

## Making prosperous places

### Place making

Local distinctiveness and support for development that positively addresses its unique waterside setting. Opportunities for regeneration and enhancements that enable the place to gain benefits from the water.

Improving access to, from and along the waterways, particularly via upgraded towpaths that serve the entire community and encourage greater use.

### Economy & tourism

Growing and nourishing 'honeypot' sites, and increasing the number and diversity of events and activities, will draw people to them. Highlight and celebrate the unique waterways heritage, bringing delight to those who visit.

Working with leisure boating organisations and hire businesses to improve those parts of the network that can most benefit the local economy.

Promoting water-based and water-side businesses to generate local benefit from canal traffic and tourism.



# Upholding quality of life

## Recreation, health & well-being

Promoting and using the waterways as part of the 'natural health service'. The waterside experience can provide excellent reflective, recreational and communal experiences for mental and social well-being. Water-based sports such as canoeing help people to keep fit. Our towpaths provide good walking and cycling routes for all.

## Sustainability and environment

Working to improve safety and an even healthier ecosystem, specifically by improving the quality and reliability of water supply, together with protecting and enhancing the natural environment.

# Building communities

## Community engagement and youth involvement

Stimulating local community ownership of their waterways through adoptions and volunteer days, giving people of all ages and abilities the opportunity to help care for their locality and improve their local environment.

Enhancing the region's skills base through training, volunteering and work placement; improving social cohesion by developing a sense of common purpose;

Stimulating active youth engagement through sport, coaching and leadership schemes across the waterway network.

## Supporting boater communities

Increasing the number and quality of off-line residential and leisure moorings, boaters' facilities and improving management of towpath moorings both for visiting boats and moorers who have a connection with a specific region.

## Working in partnership

Working with others, formally and informally, to achieve our common goals in partnership with local authorities, organisations, communities, businesses and individuals.



# South East Waterway How will we achieve this?

**Our plans ensure that our waterways are used and developed in a way that has maximum benefit for our local people, visitors, places and local economies. Our short term actions are outlined on the following pages.**



# Our short term actions are:

## **1 Build community engagement, volunteering and ownership.**

This means increasing the number of community- based and business adoptions, volunteer-days, visitor numbers and partnerships.

### **We plan to:**

- **Develop corporate relationships**
- **Increase community Involvement**
- **Increase dialogue with local communities**

## **2 Improve the perception of people living and working in the area, including community engagement and social investment.**

This means reducing antisocial behaviour, improving the condition of our structures and increasing the sense of ownership by waterside owners.

### **We plan to:**

- **Connect with young groups in priority locations**
- **Define anti-social issues and 'IMD' (Indices of Multiple Deprivation) areas specifically across South East**
- **Define specific objectives for each adoption / canal partnership location**
- **Target angling & canoe groups to support the agenda**

## **3 Use canals for open-air lifelong learning activities**

This means promoting the waterways as outdoor classrooms.

### **We plan to:**

- **Extend the Explorer volunteers scheme**
- **Enhance skills capability of volunteers**
- **Approach Sector Skills Council**



**4 Promote the waterways as part of a ‘natural health service’.**

This means developing a network of angling development locations; increasing canoe/kayak activity; progressing health walks and activity links with GPs; and continue boater-centric pastoral care at relevant community locations.

**We plan to:**

- **Develop Angling**
- **Extend Canoe / kayak activity**
- **Expand and Promote Health Walks**

**5 Maintain and improve the safe working condition of the waterway infrastructure, including reliability of water supply.**

This means improving water management resilience across SE; and securing improvements to the South East’s ‘worst’ sections of towpath.

**We plan to:**

- **Improve Water management**
- **Deliver towpath improvements**

**6 Improve the visitor experience**

This means focussing on improving the visitor experience at priority destinations; establishing Welcome Centres at key locations, plus mobile units to achieve coverage elsewhere; and encouraging new canalside events.

**We plan to:**

- **Enhance the Visitor Experience**
- **Expand Welcome Centres**
- **Focus on Canalside events**

**7 Focus on boating development in the South East.**

**We plan to:**

- **Improve towpath moorings management**
- **Review boater facilities**
- **Improve the boating experience**
- **Engage with boaters more constructively**





## **8 Work in partnership to make waterside developments 'waterway embracing'.**

This means promoting waterside places for growth, regeneration and enterprise; seeking willing local partners to develop local improvement plans and Neighbourhood plans; and producing Good Practice Planning Guide for local authorities.

### **We plan to:**

- **Promote waterside places**
- **Develop plans with local partners**
- **Produce a Good Practice Guide**

## **9 Expand the network and maximise connectivity.**

This means expanding the navigable network through restoration and new waterway construction; and developing, mapping and promoting new & existing walking, cycling & canoe trails.

### **We plan to:**

- **Expand the navigable network**
- **New and existing trails**

## **10 Sustainability.**

This means protecting and improving the condition of SSSI & other key wildlife sites; promoting renewable energy sources to reduce energy consumption & costs; promoting wildlife and biodiversity in the South East; and expanding recycling along the canal corridor working with LA's in Partnership.

### **We plan to:**

- **Improve wildlife sites**
- **Promote Renewable energy**
- **Promote wildlife biodiversity**
- **Expand recycling**



# Our Partnership



## John Best

Waterways Partnership Chair  
Former Chief Executive of Milton Keynes Council, John is an engineer, experienced urbanist and town planner. He is also Trustee Director of the Bedford & Milton Keynes Waterway Trust and in the past was secretary of a pioneering waterway pressure group in East London, the Lee Valley Association, which promoted community activity on, along and around the waterway.



## Ken Atack

Partnership member  
Following a long career in banking, Ken is now a Councillor with Cherwell District Council. He is both Cherwell's lead member for financial management as well as rural champion. His ward extends from Claydon to Banbury outskirts. Cherwell DC is the largest 'owner' of canals in the South East Waterway region with 58 km within its boundary and has recently created the Oxford Canal conservation area, to ensure the historic canal background is both protected and promoted to meet the needs of present day canal recreational users.



## Ann Davies

Partnership member  
Ann runs her own boat hire businesses in both the UK and the continent.

Ann is a very experienced trade champion having held Chair positions on both APCO (Association of Pleasure Craft Operators) and BHCF (British Hire Cruiser Federation), she was also a past board member of British Marine Federation (BMF). Currently Ann is chair of a BMF sub-committee and an appointed member of the British Waterways' Ombudsman's Committee.



**“For all our waterside cities, towns and villages within the South East to embrace their waterway as a defining and distinctive local feature of their community.”**

South East Waterway Partnership, 2014



### **Cath Fincher**

Partnership member

Cath is an enthusiastic boater usually covering more than a thousand miles each year on canals and rivers in the family boats, and attending several festivals and rallies every year with their historic tug. Cath is a regular towpath walker and cyclist, with a considerable interest in industrial archaeology and canal history and heritage, as well as nature and the environment. She is a recently retired Subject Leader of Computing and ICT in a large and successful secondary school with experience of teaching a wide range of subjects as well as teaching and training of adults.



### **Kerry Foster**

Partnership member

Kerry brings valuable experience of tourism and the visitor economy, with experience at Madame Tussauds, the British Film Institute London, IMAX Cinema and the British Museum. Currently she is a General Manager with the National Trust based at Stowe in Buckinghamshire. Responsible for a portfolio of properties throughout the Aylesbury Vale.

Kerry, a regular towpath user and walker, is passionate about preserving the natural environment, and the habitats and fauna supported by our waterways.



### **Lynda Payton**

Partnership member

Lynda is an interior designer and website designer and, having run a London based business for 17 years, is now a freelance consultant.

She has extensively supported waterways and related interests through her longstanding links with the Northampton Inland Waterway Association , Stoke Bruerne Canal Partnership and Friends of Stoke Bruerne Canal Museum.



### **Andrew Taylor**

Partnership member

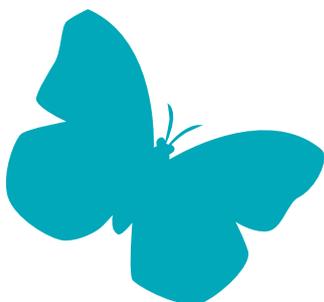
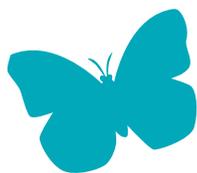
Currently a volunteer team leader with the Watford Waterways Chaplaincy, Andrew has an extensive background in teaching, training and personnel development gained across multiple sectors including the RAF. He has been a school governor for 20 years and has worked extensively with volunteer groups.



### **Dick Pilkington**

Partnership member

Current Chair of GUSAC (Grand Union South Angling Consultative) as well as a member of the Canal & River Trust's National Angling Advisory Group, Dick has a commercial background in logistics and customer care. More recently Dick has been active on numerous charities and groups across Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire – supporting angling, heritage and local history. He is a tireless advocate for the canal network in its broadest service.





### **Chris Stanley**

Partnership member

A marketing, event management and PR professional with over 20 years' experience in the public and private service sector. Events such as the Gloucester Tall Ships Festival & the Crick Boat Show have benefited from his expertise. In recent years Chris has set up his own marketing services consultancy specialising in developing and delivering, original, creative and cost effective events, marketing, PR and graphic design services, with a broad range of clients across the country. Based near Rugby, Chris is married with three young children.



### **Kathryn Dodington**

Kathryn retired from a 35 year business related IT career in British Airways in 2010. She has a passion for waterways, having been introduced to the waterways by her aunt, the original 'Idle Woman', Daphne March; Kathryn lives canal side in Stoke Bruerne. She is a member of the Stoke Bruerne Canal Partnership, The Friends of The Canal Museum, volunteers with the local canal adoption group and is actively involved with CRT's heritage boat Sculptor.





**The South East Partnership has developed an action plan for this area, in consultation with our interest groups, partners and stakeholders. We have ambition and enthusiasm to make a positive difference and we are keen to work with you or your organisation to make improvements to our network.**

# Why not get involved with the South East Waterway Partnership?

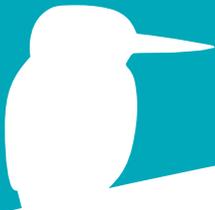


We need offers of help with all levels of our work, and we need ideas for the continuing development of our work.

Get in touch with us at:

**[enquiries.southeast@canalrivertrust.org.uk](mailto:enquiries.southeast@canalrivertrust.org.uk)**

- How can we work together on community, economic or environmental projects?
- Would your local school, organisation or community like to get more involved in your local waterway's future?



## Ways to contact the South East Waterway Partnership:

**John Best, Waterways Partnership Chair**

**E:** [enquiries.southeast@canalrivertrust.org.uk](mailto:enquiries.southeast@canalrivertrust.org.uk)

**T:** 0303 040 4040

### Address:

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Station House,  
500 Elder Gate,  
Milton Keynes MK9 1BB

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