

Thames and Medway Canal High Level Restoration Strategy

Prepared by the Thames and Medway Canal Association

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Introduction

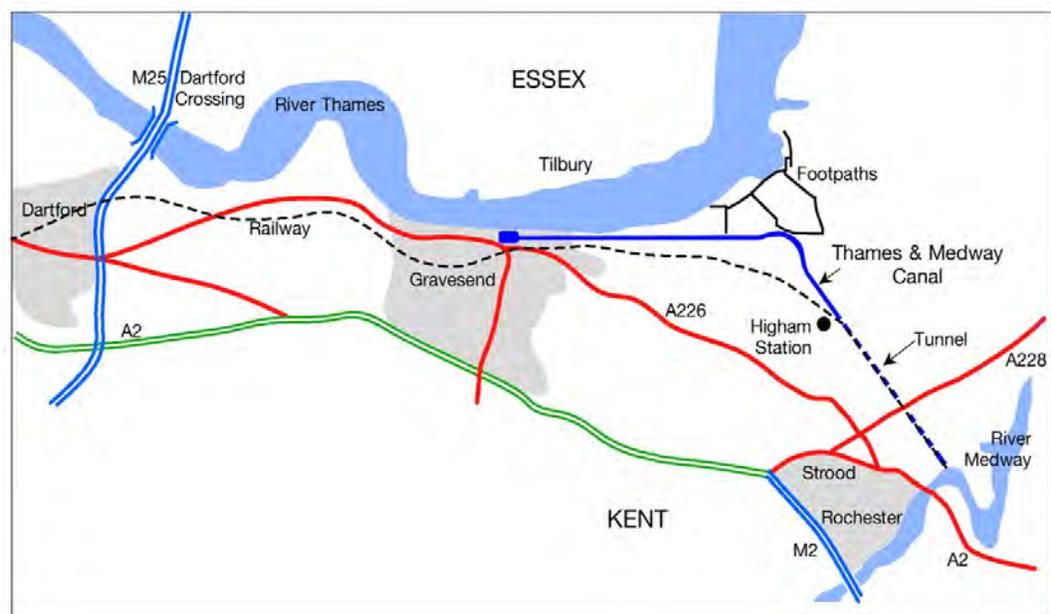
The Thames and Medway Canal was originally built in the early 1800's and ran from Gravesend to Strood in Kent. Having been superseded by the railway it was formally abandoned in the 1930's and in the next 40 years the canal and its associated structures were seriously neglected and stretches of the canal were in-filled.

The Thames and Medway Canal Association was established in 1976 to promote the restoration of the canal as a multipurpose amenity. Its formation was endorsed and fully supported by many local societies and groups.

Since its inception, the Association has served as a guardian of the canal, preventing further deterioration and infilling. Through restoration work, it has increased usable water space and access and also kept the canal in the public eye.

The developments in northeast Gravesend now offer a unique opportunity to have a fully restored canal with a viable canal basin incorporated into the master planning for the area.

To capitalise on this opportunity, the Association's vision for the canal should be communicated to decision-makers and the funding community. Equally it needs to be demonstrated that there is a formal restoration strategy in place to realise this vision. Hence this document.



Location of the Thames and Medway Canal in North Kent.
Additional detailed maps are shown at Appendix 4

This Strategy document has been produced by the Thames & Medway Canal Association for the benefit of its members, potential canal users, partner organisations, and funding bodies.

It outlines the Association's approach to future projects, illustrating its understanding of the diversity of tasks and its willingness to engage specialists where necessary.

Its purpose is to provide interested groups with confidence in the Association's professionalism and its ability to deliver against objectives.

It is a High Level document in that it defines the Association's general approach to restoration and as such it does not define any detailed projects or include any confidential information.

This strategy is not only a document, it is a plan and framework for action and therefore a guide for the Association in its planning and decision-making, to ensure that all legal, social, environmental and engineering factors are taken into account.

The Vision for the Canal

The Association's vision is of:

A sustainable, fully navigable canal and towpath between Gravesend and Higham, bringing environmental, economic and recreational benefits to Gravesham and North Kent.

New marina facilities linked by a restored canal, to a vibrant canal basin with access via lock gates to the Thames.

A reinstated canal corridor providing picnicking, boating, and fishing facilities, as well as a visitors centre supporting educational and recreational needs.

A 'green corridor' from Gravesend to Higham, enhancing and supporting protected areas for wildlife and plant species.

The Case for Restoration of the Canal

The restored canal with the canal basin and additional moorings will bring significant economic benefits to the area¹ and will provide a leisure amenity for local people and visitors irrespective of their ability or status. It will extend the wildlife habitat and preserve the canal and its heritage features for future generations.

¹ Thames and Medway Canal Restoration Economic and Employment Benefits Study by Atkins Published December 2004

- A pre-feasibility study has shown that there are no insurmountable obstacles to restoration¹ and Gravesham's Planning Policy already protects the line of the canal from any development that would prevent restoration.
- A fully restored canal will significantly increase the attractiveness and vitality of the area for everyone to enjoy and in doing so will significantly enhance the values of any residential and commercial property in its proximity.
- The restoration of the canal basin is a key part of Gravesham's Unitary Development Plan but additional moorings are needed to ensure overall viability and a restored canal will provide the link to these additional moorings.
- In an area of the country where moorings are in short supply, the canal would provide a welcome haven for local and longer distance boat owners and sailors.
- Boating activity, including boat hire and trips as well as visitor's boats exploring the full length of the canal, will be additional attractions for visitors to the area.
- New facilities required to support visitors to the canal and marinas will provide the opportunity for new employment.
- In Kent where there are limited safe water facilities, a restored canal would give opportunities for learning skills and participating in water based leisure activities by local youth groups, residents and visitors.
- Many of the casual leisure activities associated with the canal corridor will be free or easily affordable, in an area where incomes are relatively low.
- A canal-side visitors centre will become a focus for education and information about the canal and its hinterland, bringing spending and job opportunities to the area.
- The line of the canal passes through some unspoilt countryside and conservation areas. A restored canal will be an attractive wildlife corridor providing an accessible link between urban and rural areas of Gravesend and Higham, uniting the Borough with a regional park.
- The restoration will be an opportunity to provide additional water to support and extend the wildlife of the area. It will add to the range of aquatic and woodland edge habitats already protected at various levels along the canal.
- Restoration of the corridor will enable the canal and other features to be fully restored with its heritage preserved for future generations.

¹ Thames and Medway canal Pre-Feasibility Assessment of Engineering Works & Costs by Roy Sutton Hon Consulting Engineer IWA Published December 2003

Achievements already secured

Previous work by the Thames & Medway Canal Association has resulted in changes to Local Government planning policy, improvements to the canal and its environs, and the raising of awareness of the canal and its potential for restoration.

- Following representations by the Association at a Public Enquiry, local planning policy now states that all developments must preserve the line of the canal suitable for restoration.
- The Association has organised large-scale clearances, monthly working parties, dredging and reed clearance, as well as water measurement collation and maintenance work.
- Seating, litter bins, viewpoints, a landing stage and information boards have been installed.
- High volume pumps have been installed to maintain the water level maintained by Gravesham Borough Council a valued partner.
- A fixed bridge and the last remaining Swing Bridge have been restored.
- A slip way and some major dredging work has been achieved.
- The Association has encouraged local youngsters interested in water activities to canoe, raft build and row on the canal as well as inform the local residents of its existence and history.
- The Association's influence and subsequent pressure has resulted in several reports, strategies and studies being completed in partnership with Gravesham Borough Council and other agencies including SEEDA, Thames Gateway Kent Urban, SUSTRANS and the IWA.
- An Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Council report on Restoration Priorities included the Thames and Medway Canal and recognised it as being of medium heritage and high nature conservation interest.
- The Association has forged links with voluntary and youth groups and gained support from conservation groups and historical societies.

Restoration Strategy - Overview

For the Association to achieve its goals the approach to management, funding and restoration activities must be maintained.

Management

The Board of Directors, each elected for a three-year period, recognises that as restoration proceeds it will become essential to form partnerships with other organisations and local authorities.

While it is envisaged that the Association will remain a promoter of restoration projects, more complex joint management arrangements may have to evolve.

Funding

Funding for restoration and maintenance has been raised through Association membership subscription, fund-raising activities, a legacy and gifts 'in kind' including advice, plant, operatives, building materials, etc. and awards of grants.

To progress future major works, additional sources for funding are necessary. The Association must work in partnership with appropriate bodies such as developers, Agencies, and Local Authorities, and grant awarding bodies to achieve the levels of funding required.

In order to improve the chances of a successful bid and maximise funding, the Association has appointed a publicity and fund raising manager to coordinate and match individual projects to suitable fund holders and sources.

Restoration

The restoration and major project coordination of the canal is carried out by Association volunteers. Future project analysis will identify those schemes best undertaken by volunteers alone, those requiring input from professional engineers, designers and contractors commissioned on behalf of the Association and its partners, and those schemes which may best be performed as part of other development initiatives.

Restoration Strategy - Framework

For canal restoration to be successful, the Association recognises that social, economic and environmental issues are as important as engineering ones. Due to the complexity of the interactions between these issues it is necessary to define an overall framework to identify the various tasks that have to be performed and their dependencies.

This strategy is not a timetable of actions but rather a guide to the Association to ensure that things happen in the right order, at the right time with all the essential steps in place.

The framework strategy will give the Association a flexible yet structured approach to the overall restoration and illustrate to future partners a clear strategic framework in which their roles can be identified.

There are three main strands of activity, which are complementary and interdependent and all of which are necessary for the Association to achieve its goals.

These are: - day-to-day operation of the Association, the commissioning of essential studies and the actual physical restoration.

Day-To-Day Operation

The following ongoing activities will be organised using the existing management structure.

Membership

The Association intends to maintain and extend its membership via public events and improve communication with members via its members magazine, website and social media.

Maintenance of a strong membership is a key element of the restoration strategy since it is an important measure of both the local and wider support for restoration, which grant awarding bodies take into account.

Promotion

Effective publicity to local and national audiences will continue to be produced and develop our task to enhance our web site and visibility on social media.

Core fundraising

Financial support to run the Association must be found from amongst the members and this will be achieved by a Fund-raising and Publicity Manager to ensure its continued healthy financial position.

Canal corridor protection

The Association will ensure that any infringements of the protected line will be brought to the attention of the planning authority. This depends upon a lively network of members and increasing awareness of the canal among council officers, councillors and the general public.

Restoration Strategy – Framework (*continued*)

Studies

Studies are an essential component of any restoration strategy. They provide the Association with essential information on which to base decisions and to plan projects.

Furthermore, the Association is conscious that funding bodies look to the completion of these studies as a measure of an organisation's readiness for large scale funding and/or support.

The Association ensures that studies are of a professional quality and as independent of the Association as possible. The following studies have been identified as being required and some have already been completed or are in progress. (See Appendix) A description of each study is also given.

These studies are not necessarily listed in the order in which they have or will be carried out.

<i>Pre-feasibility assessment</i>	For the whole restoration project
<i>Overall Restoration Study</i>	Breakdown by volunteer & contractor based works
<i>Water Resources Study</i>	For water supplies and water movement
<i>Environment Study</i>	For conservation and biodiversity
<i>Heritage Survey</i>	For protection of existing structures
<i>Land Ownership Study</i>	For boundaries, ownership & leasing information
<i>Economic Benefits Study</i>	For employment & social benefits
<i>Management Strategy Study</i>	For identification of post restoration requirements

Study Report Availability

Each study forms a complementary component of the whole strategy, and not be an exclusively isolated exercise. To maximise the potential of each study, a policy of openness is followed throughout, unless there are definite reasons to the contrary.

Each report includes a freestanding summary that will be made publicly available and provided in electronic form. Each study report will be organised in such a way that any confidential information will be included only in separate appendices and excluded from general circulation.

Restoration Strategy – Framework (*continued*)

Restoration Implementation

Restoration work, except maintenance or minor repairs, by volunteers or contractors will be organised into managed projects and executed to professional standards.

As far as possible, restoration projects will extend or improve existing lengths of canal, and create new stretches and/or structures that are of strategic importance and benefit.

The Association will initiate projects in partnership with other bodies where appropriate, to pool resources and expertise and improve chances of obtaining funding. In all cases, the securing of funding will form part of the project process.

All restoration projects will be carried out on, or from, land the Association owns or over which legal rights have been agreed as informed by the Land Ownership Study. The acquisition of land, or legal access to it, will be part of the project and its cost.

Restoration Project Management

This will consist of a project team reporting to the Board. For major projects, the project team may be larger to ensure that all partners are properly represented.

In such cases, and wherever contractors are engaged to carry out major works, the project will be managed on a day to day basis by a competent project manager, funded from within the project budget.

Each stage of restoration will be approved by the Board before proceeding to the next. Most projects will be in six stages.

- Concept
- Initiation
- Project Planning
- Resourcing
- Engineering
- Completion

Full details for the Project Management structure are included in Appendix.

Conclusion

From its inception, the Association has had a vision of a restored canal being a significant asset for the local community. However now, with major funding associated with the development of the Albion area and Nuralite, is the time for us to share with and promote this vision to a wider audience.

It has continued to strive to involve local residents and councillors, various agencies, along with youth and voluntary groups, to raise the profile of the canal as a potential leisure asset, and to preserve this part of Kent's heritage.

The Association acts professionally and responsibly and as a result has attracted funding, donations and support. It has retained and improved the existing canal preventing further deterioration, within the constraints of its finances, so that the canal has remained fit for restoration.

This strategy therefore is not a starting point, but rather builds upon what has been done to date, by the Association and its supporters. It is a working document and will change in time as tasks are completed and issues resolved.

APPENDIX 1

Project Management of Studies - The following gives details of the project stages referred to on Page 9

<i>Project initiation</i>	Determine Scope Partnerships formation Identify funding sources Risk assessment Establish timescales Produce specialist briefs	Terms of Reference Cost estimates Identify specialists Identify contingencies Establish quality standards Define update arrangements
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When completed, authorisation must be obtained from the Association's Board before proceeding to the remaining stages:

<i>Procurement</i>	Securing of funding Evaluate quotations	Issuing invitations for quotation Commissioning
<i>Report development</i>	Progress meetings Draft reviews	Evaluate specialist results Compile Feasibility Study Report
<i>Publication</i>	Press releases Seminars	Report circulation Press & Publicity promotion

Outline Timetable and Status as of October 2020

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Membership, fundraising, publicity and promotion.	Publicity Material, Logo, Website and Magazine updated Appoint Publicity and Fund raising manager <i>Completed</i>	Membership drive and fee increase. Appoint 'Canal Development Partnership' manager. <i>Completed</i>	Formation of a Canal Partnership with local community groups, businesses and other organisations		
Studies					
Pre Feasibility Assessment of Engineering Works	Projects and costings <i>Completed</i>				
Natural Environment	NWKCP project <i>Completed</i>				
Heritage Survey			Planned.		
Land Ownership	Establish Scope.	Research Report			
Economic and Employment Benefits	<i>Completed</i>	Dissemination of results			
Overall Restoration Strategy	<i>Completed</i>				
Physical restoration.	Swing Bridge refurbishment. <i>Completed</i> Mark Lane Base refurbishment. <i>Completed</i>	Creation of Boat Park at Triangle. Creation of Picnic area at Shorne Mead crossing.	Knotweed eradication. Dredging.	Knotweed eradication. Dredging.	

Studies

The following describe the Studies referred to on Page 9

Pre-feasibility assessment

This study is to determine the feasibility of the whole restoration project within reasonable quantifiable costs, and identify the engineering works and challenges, and ways they could be overcome. Close examination of every engineering issue along the line of the canal is not necessary for this Assessment, as a detailed engineering report will form the initial part of each separate restoration project.

Heritage Survey

Few structures associated with the original canal remain, emphasising the importance of and maintaining those that have survived. This study will describe and identify all the existing structures and outline management plans for their continued maintenance insofar as the Association has control over them.

Land Ownership Study

The line of the canal and its surroundings is in the ownership of several companies or individuals. This study will identify the boundaries and parties involved and issues in relation to leasing and acquisition.

Economic and Employment Benefits Study

This study will examine the potential public economic, environmental, social and recreational benefits arising from the restoration of the canal corridor. This is essential to provide evidence of the viability of restoration and will, in turn, inform future local and regional development plans.

Overall Restoration Study

Physical restoration of the whole line of the canal is unlikely to be undertaken as a single project. This study will be an analysis of which lengths can be restored by volunteer effort, and which would require contractors. It will identify potential projects and the most appropriate order in which they should be tackled.

Post Project: - Management Strategy Study

Canal parts, associated features and structures once restored must be properly maintained and managed. This study develops strategies for ensuring the long-term sustainability of the restored parts of, or the whole of, the canal and identifies the options for future maintenance and management arrangements.

APPENDIX 4

Project Management of Restoration projects - The following gives details of the Project Management Structure referred to on Page 10 - Most large Restoration Projects will fall into the following six stages:

Project Conception

This preliminary stage makes an overall informal assessment of a potential project, carried out at little or no cost, to establish if it is worth carrying out a full Project Initiation. It will identify the main benefits of the potential project and likely challenges to be overcome.

A short Report will be produced to enable the Board to decide whether a full Project Initiation is appropriate.

<i>Initiation</i>	Project vision Engineering requirements Environmental requirements Land ownership Establish partnerships Preliminary risk assessment	Scope Water resources Heritage aspects Legal matters Preliminary cost/benefit analysis
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The Project Initiation Report will be subject to Board approval before proceeding to:

<i>Project Plan development</i>	Detailed engineering design Detailed costing Potential funding sources Establish timetable Contingency plans	Land acquisition / access Contract and works definition Environmental / Biodiversity plans Risk assessment Maintenance & management plans
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The Project Plan will be subject to Board approval before proceeding to:

<i>Securing Resources</i>	Funding Contract management team Production of specification Invitations to tender	Land or access rights Contractors & equipment / plant Production of works schedule Tenders evaluation
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When completed, the Board will authorise procedure onto:

<i>Engineering stage</i>	Letting any contract(s) Monitoring Quality Verify contingency items	Management of engineering work Monitor specification compliance Monitoring costs & timescales
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For major projects the above stage may be further sub-divided for more effective management.

<i>Project Completion</i>	Final inspections Transfer to ongoing maintenance and management arrangements	Works packages sign off
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