

Stafford Riverway Link Community Interest Company

Stafford Riverway Link

Outline Feasibility Study

Executive Summary

This study has been carried out in order to determine the feasibility of restoring the Stafford Riverway Canal Link starting in the village of Baswich, Staffordshire at the proposed junction with the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal to the west of Bridge 101 and ending in Stafford town centre in the north. In order to address this, an engineering assessment, environmental assessment and economic assessment have been carried out to determine whether any 'showstopping' issues or constraints exist.

The objectives of the Stafford Riverway Canal Link are to promote the restoration of the historic river and canal waterway linking Stafford town with the national waterway network. Secondly, the link aims to stimulate public interest in protecting the wildlife and respecting the history of the Riverway Link. The conclusion of this report is that this is a technically feasible project. Whilst there are some issues to address, with the appropriate work and consultation this should be achievable.

From an engineering perspective, the main issue to address is that of flood risk and water management. This will be both in terms of constructing the works without any negative impact on flood risk and also how the waterway will be managed from a flood warning perspective. At the Baswich end of the link, the 1 in 100 year flood level reaches approximately 2 metres above the existing ground level. Safe harbours for moored boats would need to be considered.

A high level desk study has also been carried out to assess the environmental constraints and opportunities of the proposed scheme. The high level desk study did not identify any major issues. However, additional detailed work will be required which will further examine potential environmental constraints. The restored canal will help maximise the potential of key economic drivers along its route and will create new opportunities for economic growth and prosperity. Beyond the purely economic benefits (job creation, increased visitor footfall, etc), the restored canal is likely to deliver wider social benefits.

Obtaining the required capital funding to allow construction of this scheme will pose a significant challenge for the scheme promoters. With a well planned strategy and the correct partners brought in to the project team, it may be possible to secure funding using a broad range of different funders.

A sensible strategy may be to break the scheme down and reduce the initial specification required for navigation, for example going initially for a water depth of 1.2 metres with the aim of increasing at a later date to 1.6 metres. This would allow the project to move more quickly and capture public imagination as they see boats once again on the River Sow.