



STRATEGIC PLAN

2017

Stafford Riverway Link

Strategic Plan 2017 – 2027

Chairman's Introduction

The idea of re-establishing a waterway link between the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal and the centre of Stafford dates back to 1997. In 2008, the Stafford Riverway Link Company was formed. For almost 10 years, with the aid of supporters and volunteers, it has been working towards that aim.

During that time it has concentrated on:

- Raising awareness of the project
- Carrying out works at the site of the former Lock House and Basin
- Research into the history of the former link and the people who lived and worked in and around it.

We have now reached a stage where the project needs to move forward. Part of that is the preparation of a Strategic Plan for the next ten years.

The Draft Strategic Plan was adopted by the Company at its meeting on 5th January 2017. Its purpose is to set out what the Company wants to achieve by 2027. It provides a set of aims for the longer term and a more detailed work programme for the coming year. It also includes measures by which we can assess our progress.

The document will be used to inform a wide range of organisations, interest groups and the local community of the project itself. It will also be used to support applications for funding and any applications for statutory approvals for works to be carried out.

It is a “work in progress” document and we would welcome any comments and views which you may have. These should be sent to: Stafford Riverway Link, c/o Stafford Boat Club, Maplewood, Wildwood, Stafford, ST17 4SG or made via our website www.stafford-riverway-link.co.uk.

More importantly please support us in whatever way you can.

Ivor Hind

Chairman, Stafford Riverway Link

January 2017

Stafford Riverway Link Strategic Plan 2017 - 2027

Background.

History of The Stafford Riverway Link:

In 1811, work started on the one and a half mile navigation to link the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal with Stafford town centre. It was known historically as the Stafford Branch Canal and River Sow Navigation. It involved the construction of a roving bridge, a lock, lock house, aqueduct and basin at Baswich, near to St. Thomas' Bridge and the straightening and deepening of the River Sow. In the centre of Stafford, near Green Bridge, a coal wharf was built by digging out a short channel parallel to the river. The waterway opened in 1816 and remained navigable until the 1920s.

It was owned by Lord Stafford and leased to the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal Company in 1838. The lease expired in 1927. The coal wharf and channel in Stafford were infilled in 1930.

At Baswich, the roving bridge, lock and aqueduct survived until they were demolished in the 1970s. However, traces of the bridge and the basin walls are still visible. The river channel, all other bridges and most of the towpath into Stafford are still in place. Weir levels on the river have been changed as part of flood relief works and the Rivers Sow and Penk have been realigned.

A series of articles on the history of the Navigation can be found on the website (www.stafford-riverway-link.co.uk).

The Company

In 2008, a Community Interest Company was formed with the aim of re-opening the waterway link between the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal and the town centre.

Mission Statement/Aims and Objectives.

Mission Statement:

To promote the restoration of the historic river and canal waterway linking the county town of Stafford to the national waterways network for the benefit of the community and all interested groups.

To further the preservation, conservation and restoration of the SRL and promote and stimulate public interest in wildlife and respect its history.

To do this the Company will

- Establish partnerships with local authorities and other public bodies and interested groups to facilitate the restoration,
- Carry out work using volunteers,
- Raise funds, organise publicity and encourage other activities to promote their objectives.

Benefits of Restoring the Link

The Company considers that the restoration of the Link would bring a wide range of benefits to Stafford:

- Provide a destination and focus from the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal at Baswich into Stafford town centre and offer moorings for boaters to stop off in the town centre where they could explore and use local facilities, bringing welcome income for the local economy,
- Add tourism value by creating new facilities, with full access for the disabled, as well as boaters and their crews coming into Stafford. Riverside access and the presence of boats in the town centre will act as a magnet for visitors and tourists which will itself encourage job creation and economic regeneration,
- Compliment wider regeneration schemes and make the area much more attractive to investors, creating new opportunities for commercial, leisure and possibly residential development in an urban waterside environment,
- Generate new employment opportunities in the leisure and service industries through onsite activities. Initially, there would be short term construction jobs,
- Create a key leisure and social facility in Stafford, helping to improve the quality of life by encouraging a wide range of activities, including fishing, photography as well as boating. The towpath will provide a safe and healthy means of access into Stafford for the benefit of walkers, cyclists and wheelchair users,
- Enhance the local environment through the protection and improvement of the natural features of the area. Nature conservation will be an important feature of the Link. The creation and management of wetland will develop a high conservation value. Rivers and canals are valuable green corridors, especially through urban areas, allowing the movement of animals and birds and the spread of flora and fauna,
- Raise the awareness of the rich industrial heritage of Stafford and providing a valuable education resource for the whole community, enabling a wide range of topics from industrial history to biology and environmental science to be studied.

The Company takes the view that the Link will form an important linear greenway from St. Thomas Bridge into Stafford Town Centre. This would benefit not only existing residents in the Baswich and Tixall Road areas but also the new communities being developed near to Stafford Crematorium and the St. Leonards area.

Current Position

Governance

The Stafford Riverway Link Community Interest Company is a not for profit Company with a Chairperson, Vice-Chair, Treasurer and four other directors. They are supported by eight Committee Members.

The Directors are responsible for the management of the Company's business. Members of the Committee have specific roles in supporting the Directors in achieving the Company's objectives. The Company was incorporated on 3rd December 2009.

The Company and Committee Members are listed Appendix 1.

The Company's Patron is The Lord Stafford, DL, FRAGS, its President is David Kidney and Vice-President is Jeremy Lefroy MP.

Activity

Since October 2006 the Group has produced a regular Newsletter outlining its activities and the historical research which has been undertaken. Copies of the Newsletters, research papers and photographs are available on the website.

Works have been undertaken by volunteers at the site of the roving bridge. This has included clearing vegetation and excavating part of the Basin and the former lock-keeper's house as well as recovering building materials. A significant activity in 2016 has been the construction of an access road from St. Thomas to the Lock House site, with the consent of the land owner. This will allow vehicular access to the site whilst protecting the integrity of the surrounding agricultural land.

A finger post was erected at the site of the lock-keeper's house in 2015, showing the direction of the proposed link.

The Company has been raising awareness of its aims and activities through a series of presentations, the publication of a leaflet, mounting displays in various locations around Stafford, organising walks, an open day and a boat trip to the roving bridge.

The Company commissioned an Outline Feasibility Study which was carried out by Halcrow Group in June 2012. The Executive Summary is contained in Appendix 2. The full report is available on the website.

Funding

The Company is currently funded by subscriptions, donations and the sale of donated and souvenir items. Some larger grants and donations have been received from Inland Waterways Association, River and Canal Rescue, Staffordshire County Council and Stafford Borough Council. To date, the largest funding contribution has been from Stafford Boat Club. The Club's contribution has included monies raised at two boat gatherings.

Support

The Company has been supported by:

- Inland Waterways Association
- Canal and River Trust
- Stafford Boat Club
- Wolverhampton Boat Club
- River and Canal Rescue
- Staffordshire Waterways Group
- Staffordshire County Council
- Stafford Borough Council
- The landowners of the Lock House/Basin site
- Baswich Canal Group

Control of Land

The Company has been liaising closely with the owners of the Lock House/Basin site and the work done by the working parties has been with their agreement.

Relationship to The Plan for Stafford Borough

The Plan for Stafford Borough was adopted on 19th July 2014. It provides the spatial vision and policies for the development of Stafford Borough up to 2031. There are a number of policies within the Plan which relate to the aims of the Company in restoring the Link. In the supporting text to Policy E7 Canal Facilities and New Marinas, reference is made specifically to the Company and its aims.

The Company believe that the reinstatement of the Riverway Link can contribute to achieving the spatial vision for Stafford Borough in relation to several policies. This would be through the provision of an improved, heritage related walkway/linear park from the vicinity of the new developments east of Stafford into the town centre.

The whole of the line of the Riverway Link lies within the area shown as green infrastructure on the Key Diagram for Stafford.

The relevant policies in The Plan for Stafford Borough are included in Appendix 3

The Strategy For The Stafford Riverway Link 2017– 2027

General

This is the first formal Strategy for the Stafford Riverway Link and is very much a work in progress document. It aims to set out what the Company wants to achieve by 2027. It also includes interim targets for the five - year period to 2022 and an annual Action Plan (work programme) for 2017.

The Strategy will be used to:

- Set out the proposed work of the Company and its volunteers,
- Measure progress and performance,
- Support applications for funding,
- Inform the public, interested parties and potential supporters of the activities of the Company.

In developing the Strategy, the Company will have regard to national and local planning policies and any other regulatory matters which would affect the reinstatement of the Link.

The Company wishes to be involved in the preparation of any planning policy documents or development proposals which may have implications for the Link.

Monitoring and Review

The Strategy will be monitored to see that its objectives are being achieved and, if necessary, changes will be made.

The Committee will consider the progress being made at its regular meetings and, if necessary, make amendments to the Strategy and Action Plan.

An Annual Monitoring Report will be made to each January Committee meeting to link to the annual report of accounts. The annual Action Plan for the forthcoming year will be agreed at the same

The Strategy 2017 -2027

What do we want to achieve by 2022?

- At Baswich, having excavated the Basin, to have rebuilt it,
- To have a route agreed with the Environment Agency and all other interested parties,
- To have obtained the necessary permissions for building the Link.

What do we want to achieve by 2027?

- To have started building/reinstating the route from both ends,
- To have boats mooring at the Basin.

Medium Term 2017 - 2022

Physical activity will be concentrated around the Lock House site to establish a focal point for its activities. Work will include:

- Continuation of work on the Lock House site itself, outlining the footprint of the building,
- Establishing the Lock House garden,
- Establishing the Basin to create moorings,
- Investigating the establishment a café which would benefit the local communities as well as canal users and establish a focal point for activities and information provision.

The Company will continue to discuss its aims, objectives and proposals and where necessary seek the appropriate approvals for any works it requires to be carried out.

Action Plan 2017

Physical:

- There will be a programme for regular work parties at the Lock House site, details of which will be sent to members and posted on the website.

Raising Awareness:

- There will be a programme for displays, including at Stafford Boat Club Gathering, local supermarkets and The Sun PH, Stafford,
- It is intended to hold events on site and hold guided walks along the route of the Link,
- The Company will prepare regular press releases on its activities and seek to include regular articles and features in the local press,
- When invited, the Company will give presentations to interested groups.
- The Company will organise a number of social evenings to keep in contact with existing supporters and encourage new members.

Increasing Support:

- Through raising awareness, the Company will seek to increase individual membership,
- The Company will inform its current supporters of the preparation of the Strategic Plan and seek their comments and input,
- The Company will continue to discuss and develop its proposals for the Link with the Local Authorities, Environment Agency and any other relevant regulatory bodies,
- Building on the goodwill of the landowner and those who have supported the Company in the past, it will regularly update supporters on the progress being made,
- It will seek support from a range of bodies including land owners and businesses close to the route and canal societies etc. In particular, the Company will seek the support of the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust,
- Members will raise awareness travelling the canal system, attending rallies etc. by talking to other boaters and interested groups and organisations and giving out leaflets.

Studies:

- The Company will seek to commission hydrological studies, on the Rivers Penk and Sow, using a local university.

Fund Raising:

- The Company will seek other sources of funding and where appropriate make applications, using the Strategic Plan and other evidence to support its case,
- It will seek to increase income through an increase in membership,
- It will continue sales of plaques,
- It will launch a “buy a block” fund raising scheme.

Monitoring

It is important that the Action Plan is monitored to record progress measure activity against the Company’s objectives. Appropriate monitoring criteria will be developed during the first year of the Action Plan. However, the following examples will provide the basis for monitoring criteria:

Physical:

- By January 2018, it is intended to have held 10 working parties (including a week a week long one) with the aim of i) completing the access road, ii) setting out the Lock House garden, iii) establishing the footprint of the Lock House, iv) clearing the site of rubble and v) commencing work on the basin wall.
- Man-hours spent on working parties will be recorded.

Raising Awareness:

- By January 2018, it is proposed to have held 4 displays at local venues,
- By January 2018, it is intended that at least 4 articles on the Link will have appeared in the local press.

Increasing Support:

- By January 2018, the aim is to increase membership significantly.

Fund Raising:

- By January 2018, it is intended that progress will have been made on identifying sources of funding.

Studies:

- By January 2018, a dialogue will have been established to set out a project brief for hydrology studies.

Stafford Riverway Link Committee 2016

Patron: The Lord Stafford, DL, FRAGS

President: David Kidney

Vice-President: Jeremy Lefroy M.P.

Chairperson: Ivor Hind*

Vice-Chair: John Mountfort*

Treasurer: Yvonne Plant*

Secretary: (vacant)

Paul Bryan* (Webmaster, AWCC & CRT Liaison)

Councillor Ann Edgeller (Stafford Borough Council)

Geoff Hales* (Exhibitions Coordinator)

David Jones* (Research and History)

Joe Lockwood*

John Potter (Site Co-ordinator)

Peter Moore (Membership Secretary)

Nigel Senior (Staffordshire County Council)

Phil Sharpe (Inland Waterways Association)

Ken Turner (Publicity Officer)

Vee Potter (Newsletter Editor)

Mike Price (Planning Officer)

Alistair Proffitt

*Directors of Stafford Riverway Link Community Interest Company

(Company No. 7093971)

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.

The Plan for Stafford Borough

The Plan for Stafford Borough was adopted in June 2014. As the Borough Council's prime spatial planning policy document, it provides the planning context for the restoration of the Stafford Riverway Link.

It has a Spatial Vision which includes:

By 2031 the county town of Stafford will have.....

o) provided new green infrastructure/biodiversity enhancement schemes"

One of the Plan's Key Objectives for Stafford Town is as follows.....

"Enhance existing and provision of new green infrastructure and habitats, such as the canal from surrounding countryside and the Cannock Chase AONB into the heart of Stafford to encourage healthy living, for leisure time activities whilst safeguarding and enhancing the landscape setting."

The Company believes that the Stafford Riverway Link will play a part in achieving both the vision and the Key Objective by the provision of an improved, heritage related green walkway/linear park from the vicinity of new developments east of Stafford into the town centre.

The Plan includes a policy related to canals and their facilities.

Policy E7 Canal Facilities and New Marinas

In the supporting text for this policy, it is recognised that *"The extensive canal network has significant potential for restoration and expansion"*. It also notes that *"the Stafford Riverway Link Community Interest Company has been established to promote the restoration of the historic canal and river link from the Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal to Stafford town centre."*

The Policy itself is as follows:

"Proposals for new development alongside canals at settlements within the settlement hierarchy will be supported where they take the opportunity to provide economic uses by creating an active canal frontage and have regard to the canal's use and accessibility, including safety measures."

Away from settlements in the settlement hierarchy, marinas and moorings with limited service facilities will be accepted provided:

- a. Canal related proposals constitute uses that are essential to be located in proximity to the canal;
- b. The countryside is protected, in terms of its openness, rural character and attractiveness;
- c. The development respects the character of the canal conservation area and the setting of heritage assets along its route;
- d. The proposal is appropriate in scale to its locality;
- e. The development proposal has minimum or sensitively located lighting, to reduce light pollution and interference with nocturnal wildlife species;
- f. Facilities, including car parking, have adequate landscaping and screening, to minimise visual impact;
- g. Where located in the Green Belt, the proposal is consistent with Green Belt policies; and
- h. There are no permanent moorings for residential purposes.

Proposals for new canal facilities and associated infrastructure will be supported where:

1. *Public access is improved and integrated with the canal frontage;*
2. *The development does not have an adverse effect on water quality;*
3. *Canalside development, particularly new build, is of high quality which contributes and enhances the function and appearance of canals and their frontages, wherever possible, providing regeneration and re-use of redundant canals and related buildings, taking into account Conservation Area and Listed Building designations;*
4. *It does not create conflicts between different users of the canal, such as pedestrians and recreation users on / by the water;*
5. *The traffic generated by the proposal does not adversely affect the safety of the existing road network and adequate car parking facilities can be provided within the site for the likely needs arising from the proposal;*
6. *Adequate provision for short-stay moorings and related facilities are incorporated, where appropriate;*
7. *The wildlife value of the locality is conserved and, where possible, enhanced including wildlife corridors;*
8. *The proposal does not have any detrimental affects on area designations identified in the development plan; and*
9. *The proposal does not conflict with landscape or nature conservation policies.”*

There are other policies which are relevant to the restoration proposals.

Policies for Stafford Town

The route of the Stafford Riverway Link lies within the area shown as “green infrastructure” on the Key Diagram for Stafford Town.

The policies for Stafford Town which are likely to have an impact on the restoration of the Link are those which relate to green infrastructure and promotion of tourism.

Policy iv) sets out the intention of

“improving access into the countryside by means other than the private car, such as public transport, walking and cycling including the use of green links and the canal network”

Policy E6 Tourism

“Opportunities for tourism and new visitor accommodation will be promoted and enhanced in appropriate locations where it can be demonstrated through a business case that the use can be sustained throughout Stafford Borough:

(b) consistent with Policy E7(Canal Facilities and New Marinas) encouraging water-based recreation and continuing the regeneration and restoration of the extensive canal system across Stafford Borough to maximise water-based transport, walking and cycling without undermining water quality, flood risk areas, nature conservation and biodiversity

(c) promoting and enhancing visitor and recreational attractions

(d) promoting new and existing walking and cycling routes, including towpaths and linkages to national networks through the Borough’s countryside.”

Stafford – Riverway Link Strategic Plan

Monitoring Report 2017

Committee Date: 2nd March 2017

Physical

- Working parties were held on 9th&10th February;
- Work was carried out laying roadstone on the access road;
- Approx. one third of the Lock House garden area was prepared for turfing.

Raising Awareness

- First Social Evening held at The Sun PH, Stafford 1/2/2017;
- Article about the Link appeared in “Towpath Talk”.

Increasing Support

- The Sun PH/Titanic Brewery support by providing venue for Social Evening on 1/2/2017.

Fund Raising

- “Buy a Block” Scheme launched at Social Evening, 1/2/2017;
- Raffle tickets and quiz sheets sold at Social Evening;
- £67.00 was raised on the night;
- Quiz sheets were sold throughout February.

Studies

- Contact was made with Staffordshire University in respect of proposed studies.

Other