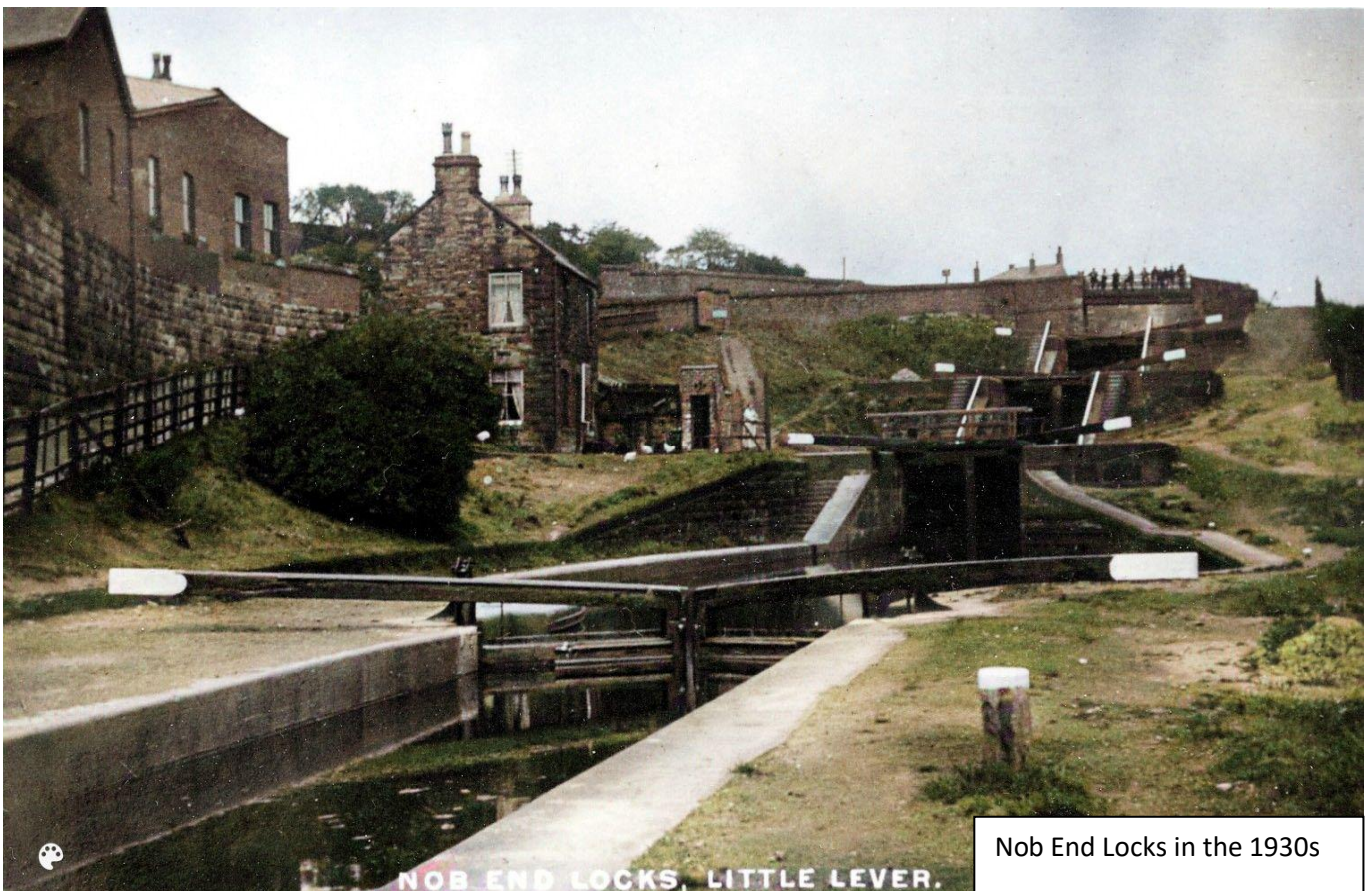


Restoring the Manchester Bolton & Bury Canal

A Vision Statement



Nob End Locks in the 1930s

NOB END LOCKS, LITTLE LEVER.

Foreword

Andy Burnham,

The Mayor of Greater Manchester Combined Authority

Greater Manchester has a vision to become a greener, fairer and more prosperous place with opportunities in all locations across the city region. The Manchester Bolton & Bury Canal offers one such opportunity in the northwest of Greater Manchester - developing a sense of identity for people and townships along its route, telling the story of their place in history and connecting communities.

The phased restoration of the canal and its towpath, beginning with the Summit Level in Bolton and Bury, offers many opportunities to link communities and provide a range of benefits to the city region's economy, environment and wellbeing.

Significant progress towards overall restoration is being made with the removal of a blockage to navigation, caused by a breach of the canal in 1936, close to Moses Gate Country Park in Bolton. The next phase involves securing additional resources to enable access along the canal and the towpath through to Water Street in Radcliffe.

The restoration of the full length of the canal is the ultimate goal and the route is protected in the local plans for Bolton, Bury and Salford. Investment in the restoration of the Manchester, Bolton & Bury Canal will provide opportunities to connect communities along green and active travel routes, contribute to the city region's visitor economy and link valuable wildlife habitats.

Executive Summary

This vision for restoring the Manchester Bolton & Bury Canal is essential to engage local communities and secure funding.

The aim is to seek to provide a navigable, maintained and connected waterway within an accessible 'blue/green' valley corridor which:

- **helps to meet the needs and improves the quality of life for local communities**
 - **attracts visitors and investment to the area**
- **creates an eco-highway with new and improved habitats, greater biodiversity and better access to these natural assets.**

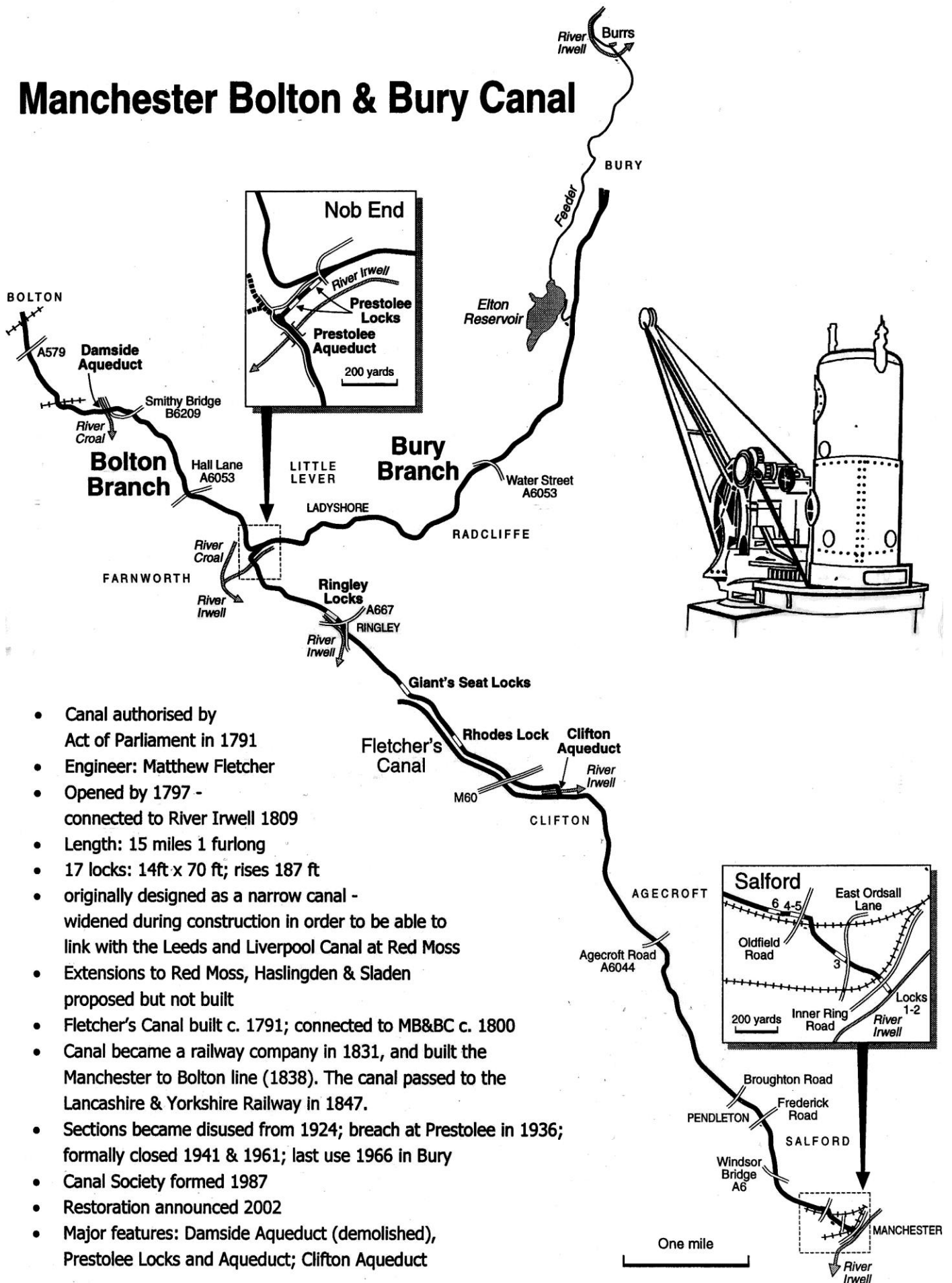
This vision will directly benefit the people of Bolton, Bury and Salford. It supports the aims and policies of these three Local Authorities, the Local Plans and the development strategy for Greater Manchester.

The Restoration Partnership wants to see the canal:

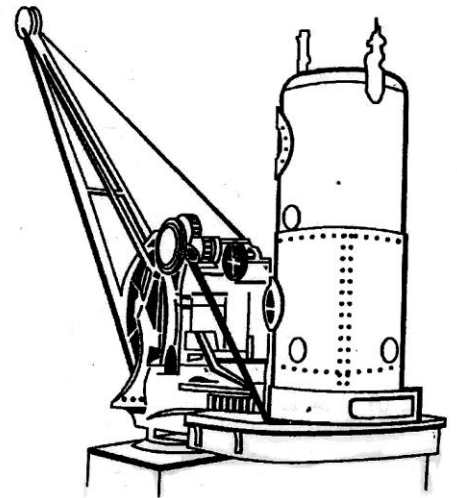
- **Restored in stages, starting with the summit level from Bolton to Bury**
 - **Enjoyed by as many people as possible, residents and visitors**
- **Provide a catalyst to regenerate the communities and land alongside it**
- **Be an improved natural asset that contributes to addressing climate change**
 - **Become economically sustainable.**



Manchester Bolton & Bury Canal



- Canal authorised by Act of Parliament in 1791
- Engineer: Matthew Fletcher
- Opened by 1797 - connected to River Irwell 1809
- Length: 15 miles 1 furlong
- 17 locks: 14ft x 70 ft; rises 187 ft
- originally designed as a narrow canal - widened during construction in order to be able to link with the Leeds and Liverpool Canal at Red Moss
- Extensions to Red Moss, Haslingden & Sladen proposed but not built
- Fletcher's Canal built c. 1791; connected to MB&BC c. 1800
- Canal became a railway company in 1831, and built the Manchester to Bolton line (1838). The canal passed to the Lancashire & Yorkshire Railway in 1847.
- Sections became disused from 1924; breach at Prestolee in 1936; formally closed 1941 & 1961; last use 1966 in Bury
- Canal Society formed 1987
- Restoration announced 2002
- Major features: Damside Aqueduct (demolished), Prestolee Locks and Aqueduct; Clifton Aqueduct



The Canal Route, Ownership and Present Condition

Canal Route

Water is taken from the River Irwell at Burrs Country Park, north of Bury, feeding Elton Reservoir. The canal begins at the River Irwell in Salford and continues through Pendleton and Agecroft to Clifton where it crosses the River Irwell. The canal goes on to Ringley and Prestolee to cross the Irwell again and reach the final flight of six locks at Nob End. From here the summit level has one arm leading to Hall Lane in Little Lever, which formerly continued to Church Wharf in Bolton. The other arm goes through Ladyshore and Radcliffe to Bury. When constructed the total length was 15 miles 1 furlong.

Land Ownership

About 12 miles of the canal (80%) is now owned by the Canal & River Trust; a further 3 miles (15%) is owned by United Utilities and in Little Lever a short length is owned by Watson Homes. Bolton Council owns the land along the route of the canal from Hall Lane to Bolton; this length is unlikely to be restored. Bury Council and GM Fire & Rescue both own short lengths at the Bury terminus.

The line of the canal has planning protection in the Bolton, Bury and Salford Council Local Plans. Each Local Authority has its own planning policies related specifically to the canal which will inform future restoration proposals.

Present Condition

In 2021 about 6 miles of the canal (40%) is still in water.

In Salford the first quarter mile at the Middlewood locks has been fully restored, and building continues alongside.



The Bolton arm is in water for $\frac{3}{4}$ mile as far as Hall Lane, Little Lever where its restoration is planned to end. Beyond will be difficult to restore as there are three missing aqueducts and the A666 (St Peter's Way) is built on the line of the canal for the final half mile.

The Bury arm is largely in water for almost 4 miles, with two obstructions: the 1936 breach at Nob End and the lowered Water Street Bridge in Radcliffe. There are detailed plans with costs estimates which address these obstacles.

A Navigable and Accessible Canal

A key aim for the canal is to be a navigable waterway used by boats, canoes, paddle boards and other craft, which will need launching facilities to be established.

Capital funding is needed to restore the canal, plus regular revenue income to maintain the canal's water supply, towpath and ecosystems.

Accessible Canal, Towpath & Blue/Green Corridor

Access to the restored canal, its towpath and adjacent land for local people and visitors will encourage use of its facilities, enjoyment of the varied industrial and social heritage, its biodiversity and natural assets.

The towpath will be made more accessible for a range of users, for example, walkers, runners, anglers, cyclists, pushchair & those with limited mobility.

Local people will be able to access the restored canal. The towpath will be improved and promoted as providing safe and accessible off-road leisure and commuter transport routes. The design of local restoration schemes will incorporate the towpath to residential, employment and recreational areas and public transport.

Access will be indicated by on-line guides, maps, interpreted walking and cycling routes to and from access points.

Disabled access and car park facilities will provide easy and safe access to the restored canal for those with mobility issues. New visitor centres, facilities and car parks will be established along the canal. These will focus on interpreting local heritage, improving access to natural assets, improving biodiversity, creating education and visitor resources for the benefit of local people and visitors.



Community Needs, Outcomes and Benefits

The Vision for a restored canal is to meet the varied and multiple needs of local people and visitors.

Over 250,000 people live, work and are educated in the communities alongside the canal, many of these individuals and families live in areas with some of the highest levels of UK multiple deprivation. The restored canal, towpath and improved facilities will attract increasing numbers of people who are looking for leisure and sport activities, for example, walkers, cyclists and anglers.

Local communities, their representatives and visitors have identified the following immediate needs, longer term outcomes and benefits that the restored canal needs to deliver.

	LOCAL NEEDS	OUTCOMES REQUIRED	BENEFITS
1	Economic regeneration	New training opportunities, skills & jobs created. More visitors to canal and towpath.	Development & income opportunities for local people, shops and services such as cafes and pubs.
2	Health improvement	Increased wellbeing, reduced physical, mental illness & loneliness. Targeted social prescribing, volunteer opportunities and better facilities for outdoor leisure & sport activities.	Improved local health outcomes, reduced workload & costs for health services and providers.
3	Educational attainment	Learning materials on-line, new outdoor resources & facilities.	Increased range of effective educational interventions.
4	Outdoor leisure & sport facilities	Accessible & safe opportunities to walk, run, cycle, fish, paddle and explore.	Improved mental & physical health, reduced levels of local anti-social behaviour.
5	More variety & increased quality of connected habitat	New and improved aquatic, grassland, woodland, other habitats and the management of invasive non-native species to improve biodiversity.	Improved natural assets. Enriched quality of life for local people & wildlife. Contribution to managing local effects of climate change.
6	Improved water quality in the canal and rivers	Reduced chemical levels, reduction in sedimentation, higher oxygenation levels, reduction in waste dumping and fly tipping.	Lower water treatment costs. Improved aquatic habitats & wildlife diversity. Contribution to managing local effects of climate change.
7	Reduced flood risk for residents in catchment	Water storage facilities. Less surface run off into the rivers.	Safer local communities. Reduced flood intervention costs.
8	Restored, protected & interpreted heritage & natural assets	Navigable canal, accessible towpath, boat trips, volunteer opportunities, learning materials, resources and public events.	Increased local understanding, greater pride and involvement in caring for natural assets and heritage.
9	Sites and venues for art, design, music & cultural events	Art installations, music & cultural events. Wider opportunities to develop art & design skills. More visitors to the canal.	Greater use of and more reasons to visit the canal and its 'blue/green' corridor. Raised awareness & interest in local facilities and features.

Economic Regeneration

Restoration of the canal will secure additional public and private investment that provide new jobs and training opportunities in the service, housing, construction and 'green' employment sectors. Liaison with the three Council Regeneration and Planning teams will bring key areas of brownfield land back into use for valuable housing and commercial development. This will improve the quality of life and support communities with multiple deprivation.

Tourism & Recreation

The restored canal and towpath will provide attractive routes, connecting nearby centres of population with local visitor facilities and attractions, linking existing country parks and recreational areas. It will offer safe and easy access for users, including young families, elderly and the disabled. New visitor centres and catering facilities will highlight industrial and natural heritage assets and promote the canal.

Health & Wellbeing

Improved access will provide a better-quality water and countryside environment. Restoration will enhance local surroundings and encourage increased use by groups with physical, mental illness needs or loneliness. Sustained, strategic liaison with health improvement professionals will deliver targeted use of social prescribing and volunteering to provide opportunities for fun, outdoor activities and the company of others.

Education, Culture and Heritage

Restoration will provide opportunities and facilities for new educational, cultural and heritage initiatives which will benefit the local community. Schools will benefit from resources. Restoration will help to build local pride and support from residents for the canal. Community led events, concerts, art and design installations along the canal will supplement existing attractions and encourage fresh initiatives. Restoration will preserve and interpret unique industrial heritage and natural assets.

Leisure and Sports Facilities

Restoration will establish new facilities along the canal. Programmes and facilities which provide water-based activities will attract new visitors, for example canoeing, paddle boarding and angling. The improved towpath with signposts, information boards and guided trails will connect the canal, its heritage and natural assets.

Environment & Climate Change

Most of the separate lengths of canal that are currently in water are designated as Sites of Biological Importance. Restoration projects will protect, manage, improve and extend these assets connecting a further 9 miles of varied habitats to support greater biodiversity. Increased use of travel along the restored towpath will encourage more local journeys. Improved management of invasive non-native species will help to improve water quality to support a wider range of biodiversity. Opportunities to create natural water storage facilities and 'slow the flow' drainage features into the rivers will help to mitigate some of the effects of climate change.

A Staged Approach

The **Restoration Partnership** includes the Canal & River Trust, Bolton, Bury and Salford Local Authorities, the Canal Society, plus other landowners and stakeholders. It builds on the work of the Joint Steering Committee which was established in 2000. These partners will work with funders and local communities to co-ordinate restoration.

Deciding which sections of canal to restore first will be based on the principle of which will deliver the most benefit at the lowest cost and availability of funding. As each stage of restoration is completed, case studies will identify and promote the benefits that have been achieved. These will help to overcome barriers on the more expensive and difficult sections of the restoration programme.

The Restoration Feasibility study in 2021 for the summit level from Little Lever to Bury has identified the cost/benefits of restoring this length of the canal and concluded that this investment represents good value for money. The Restoration Partnership is exploring grants, other public and private funding to restore this summit level section of the canal over the next 10 years.

Development Opportunities

A staged approach to restoring the canal will allow a clear case to be made for restoring the canal. The partnership will also progress local opportunities and funding for canal and towpath renewal. For example, section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy monies could be used to fund local restoration and improvement projects. Landowners who are planning housing, commercial and other developments sites next to the canal will be required to protect the line, achieve bio-diversity net gain and encouraged to include the benefits of canal restoration and improvement in their design.

Community Engagement

Long term engagement with local communities is essential for achieving the vision, outcomes and benefits. This will support sustainable delivery and maintenance of a fully functional canal, towpath, facilities and natural assets. Schools, community, volunteer, youth, sports, disabled, carer, faith, heritage and other groups will be encouraged to engage in caring for their canal, its restoration and maintenance with appropriate development programmes and local investment. Community renewal initiatives which focus on local sections of the canal will deliver as much benefit for local people as the physical restoration and improvement activities.

Funding Options

The range of public, private and third sector organisations within the Restoration Partnership will provide access and relevant expertise to secure different sources of funding. Local authorities can apply or support bids from charities and private sector organisations, for central and regional government grant funds. Relevant charities and private sector organisations in the partnership can apply to specific heritage, environmental, community, sports and arts funding bodies.

The lead partner of each joint bid will work with restoration partners, other stakeholders, nearby community and other interest groups to improve the chances of securing funding. This approach will demonstrate the level of local involvement and support for the project. Partnership agreements will clarify the roles which are required from different stakeholders for each project and its contribution towards the overall restoration programme.

Restoration to date

The Canal Society was formed in 1987 to protect and restore the canal. The construction of the Inner Relief Road in Salford in 2001-2 threatened to sever the canal close to its connection with the River Irwell, but a tunnel preserved the route. British Waterways announced the restoration of the canal in 2002, and the first length at Middlewood in Salford was re-opened in 2008. The canal society built the Meccano Bridge at Little Lever in 2012, and recently Transport for Greater Manchester has funded towpath improvements from Radcliffe to Hall Lane, Little Lever and Ringley. The next stage of restoration is planned to be the summit level from Hall Lane through Radcliffe to Bury; the restoration feasibility study for this length, completed in 2021, supports these plans.

Available Strategy Documents & Restoration Studies

British Waterways restoration proposals & estimates, 2003

MBBCS Eco-Highway Policy, 2020

Restoration Feasibility Study: Little Lever to Bury, 2021