

THE LAGAN NAVIGATION TRUST

BRIEFING PAPER – June 2018

THE LAGAN NAVIGATION - USEFUL STATISTICS

The Lagan Navigation was one of the most successful commercial navigations in Ireland and boasts the only flight of 4 locks (Union Locks, Lisburn) on the Irish waterway network. The remains of the Lagan Navigations canalised sections is one of the region's best assets as it passes through the cities of Belfast and Lisburn, traverses through rolling countryside and picturesque villages entering Lough Neagh, the largest freshwater lake in the British Isles.

From Belfast to Lough Neagh the Lagan Navigation travels East to West, 27 miles with 27 locks, 20 road bridges, 12 footbridges and 1 Railway Bridge. It passes through three Local Government areas – Belfast and Lisburn and Castlereagh City Councils, and Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council and three Counties – Antrim, Down and Armagh. There are some 6,000 acres of public parks and open spaces, including The Lagan Valley Regional Park within the Trusts Operational Area shown below.

The Historic Monuments and Archaeological Objects (NI) Order 1995 (HMAO 1995) gives the Department of the Environment a duty to compile and maintain a schedule of historic monuments. Historic monuments are scheduled for their protection from alteration or destruction through the aforementioned Order. The Lagan Navigation has been valued as a feature of industrial heritage worthy of statutory protection and as such is scheduled as per Article 3 of the HMAO 1995. The scheduled area includes the following features:

- The canalised sections of the River Lagan
- The towpath
- All locks and gates
- The abutments of bridges crossing the Navigation, but excludes the bridges themselves
- Wharves, basins and passing points

The canalised sections of the River Lagan and the Navigation itself are afforded protection as an archaeological monument of **Regional Importance**.

The route of the Lagan Navigation passes through **48** of the most deprived Super Output Areas in Northern Ireland;

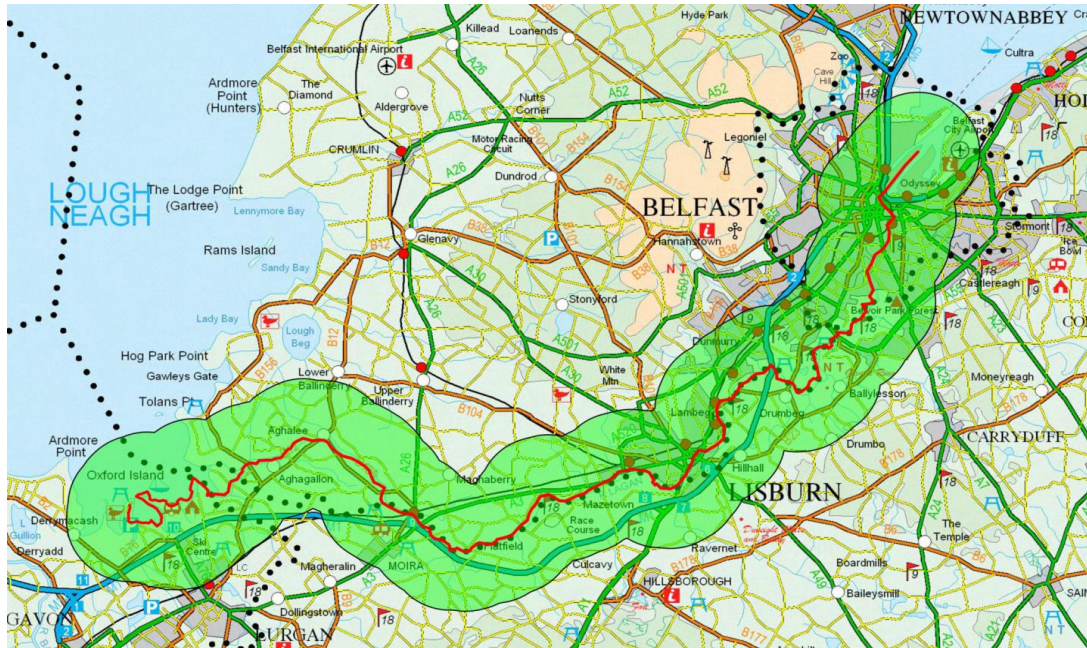
- 31 SOAs in the top 10% most deprived in NI;
- 10 SOAs in the top 20% most deprived in NI; and
- 7 SOAs in the top 30% most deprived in NI.

The Lagan Navigation Trust and its 67 Square Mile Operational Area

The primary objective of the Trust is to reopen the Lagan Navigation from Belfast Harbour to Lough Neagh. The Trust and its partners are the custodians of the 300-year-old living industrial heritage asset and we do all of this with sustainability in mind to ensure that our outstanding national asset is well-kept for future generations to enjoy whilst making a diverse contribution to Northern Ireland's economy.

Defining an Operational Area, shown on the plan below, brings together public and private sector interests and those of the communities, some 300,000 people, along the 67 square miles into a focussed, dedicated zone where social well-being is supported by a vibrant economy sustained by a healthy environment. The ambition to co-design and co-produce a viable re-opening requires partnerships on a regional scale. There are 141 schools with the Operational Area with 35K+ pupil population. Many miles of towpath linking communities to 7 railway stations affording alternative routes to work and school and ready access to green spaces, rural and urban pursuits. This scale of potential for community planning, economic, physical, environmental and regenerative in a heritage infrastructure project is unique in Northern Ireland.

Re-opening the Lagan Navigation will link, through Lough Neagh, the inland waterway system on the island of Ireland North and South to maximise the tourism and economic potential of over 600 miles of waterways – connecting the Eastern seaboard in Belfast to the Western seaboard in Limerick. The plan below shows the route of the Navigation and Operational Area.



Plan showing the Trust Operational Area in green with the line of the Navigation in red



Plan showing waterways network in Ireland with solid blue lines indicating navigable routes and broken lines under re-opening projects

THE TRUSTS OBJECTIVES

- ✓ Ensure that all our work is informed by and fits with the Programme for Government and the NI Strategic Investment Plan 2011 – 2021, the re-opening is highlighted in this document, and addresses the objectives of our Departmental, current and potential partners and stakeholders;
- ✓ Develop an important historic and cultural asset which is recognised locally, regionally and nationally as having the potential to make a significant contribution to Northern Ireland's economy;
- ✓ Contribute to addressing poverty, generational unemployment and social exclusion;
- ✓ Ensure that the Trust is resourced to deliver a complex programme of work.

KEY PROJECTS

1 Discover Waterways Lisburn Project (DWL)

Navigation House, Lisburn built in the 1864 for the Manager of the former Lagan Navigation Company is the focus for DWL. The project seeks to exploit the natural and built heritage at this location. The extensive grounds and outbuildings and those of the adjacent Lock Keepers Cottage will be a destination for local communities and visitors as well as the home for The Waterways College.

The major elements of DWL have been brought together in partnership with LCCC and many other partner organisations and the private sector in a masterplan which is being used as a basis for a planning application which was submitted in May 2018. Scheduled Monument and Listed Building Consents will also be obtained.

Following an initial and subsequent public and statutory consultations the elements of the project currently being designed are;

- restoration and opening to the public of Navigation House and The Stables to provide a home for the Trust, The Waterways College and a digital resource centre to interpret the history of the Navigation over its 300 year history;
- potential acquisition and restoration of the Lock Keepers Cottage at Union Locks to form a café and boathouse;
- work to bring the extensive gardens, circa 1 acre, into public use for the first time;
- restoration and re-watering of the Union Locks, the only staircase locks on the 600 mile inland waterways of Ireland and repairs to the weir and re-opening of Becky Hogg's Lock, development of a canoe 'nursery facility' in the basin where the M1 motorway severed the Navigation from its route to Moira;
- access via a new, disability compliant, pedestrian route to Navigation House from the lower footpath;
- access from the rear of the Premier Inn, Hillsborough Road to the tow path at Union Locks;
- a new walking and cycling route at Old Warren and a number of strategic locations to afford better connectivity and access to the towpath;
- new foot/cycling paths to extend the National Cycle Network Route No 9 through to the Maze Long Kesh site and beyond.

2 Lagan Gateway Project, Stranmillis

Belfast City Council's very ambitious plans to build a new lock Number 1, the first new lock on the network in 250 years, and provide an iconic structure footbridge from Stranmillis to the Annadale Embankment has seen a contribution of £1m from Ulster Garden Villages lever-in an additional £3.2M from BCC and others making a total investment in the Navigation of some £5M. This is an important step in the re-opening of the Lagan Navigation and walking routes connected to local facilities. The project started on site in December 2017 with repairs to the Stranmillis weir and will complete in 2019.

3 Demonstration project

The Trust has devised a number of ways to related strategy to sustainable actions. We have developed a number of demonstration projects which show how combining the objectives of local communities and the Trusts objectives can bring real value to each. We are doing this through a number of demonstration projects. An example of this work is;

- **Locks no 24, 25 and 26 Aghagallon**

The community group and the Trust submitted a successful joint funding bid to Craigavon Borough Council to examine the feasibility of clearance of vegetation in and around the three lock chambers in the locality and potential upgrading

of the tow path in this area with a connection to village services for visitors. Resident's objectives are to increase visitor numbers to boost economic activity in the village and for greater access to the Navigation. The Trust objective is to re-open the Navigation along its 27 mile route and in doing so to influence economic vibrancy and increase access by local communities.

Recognition of the perilous state of the three Scheduled Monument locks in the Village Planning Area, lock numbers 24, 25 and 26 – Goudy, Fegans and Cranagh respectively gained funding from Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council to carry out a technical feasibility looking at joining the towpath to the village. Progress on this work is now seeking support from the Rural Development Programme for NI and the private sector to complete the proposed works.

4 Stakeholder Engagement and Management Programme

Keen to generate greater community and business involvement in the re-opening the Trust has established Stakeholder Groups which comprise tourism agencies, businesses, community and user groups to advise on the development of Navigation-related visitor and marketing of the potential to re-open the Navigation. The first Stakeholder meetings with groups have taken place and this identified a number of common concerns and opportunities which are being addressed. The main outcome was the recognition that the Trust is developing a Stakeholder Engagement Programme to ensure that people are the focus of its work over the entire 15/20 year capital delivery programme.

5 'Just Add Water'

The Lagan Navigation was constructed in 2 stages;

- 1756 - 1763 by engineer Thomas Omer - Belfast to Lisburn
- 1779 – 1793 by engineer Richard Owen – Lisburn to Lough Neagh

Throughout three centuries people have left a rich legacy of ground-breaking architecture in buildings and structures, early engineering design and agricultural practices, literature and stories. In order to capture and record this story with and for future generations the Trust wants to develop a digital history platform which will articulate the story of the Navigation, its people and industrial and cultural heritage.

The Trust is working closely with the Heritage Lottery Fund and a matrix of partners including Lisburn & Castlereagh City and Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council & Belfast City Council. The project will see a Community Heritage Audit on the 27 mile Navigation over two years whilst developing a digital platform to capture stories from the landscape from local people and the Irish diaspora. It will handle information on a multimedia format with the objective of developing a social and educational resource aligned to community participation and the National Curriculum.

6 The Navigation at Moira

Work has begun to develop a project close to Moira Railway Station which gives direct access to the Navigation and which will be a focus for non-motorised water sports. The location will also be a starting point for guided walking, cycling and canoe trail as the project develops.

The Trust has received major funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund, Tourism NI and the Department for Communities Historic Environment Division to develop a digital app, a virtual tour guide accessed via smartphone technology, which will enhance the visitor experience to the Navigation and its towpath in this location.

7 The Primrose Project

The Trust has established a native primrose seed nursery at Navigation House, Lisburn from seeds which are carefully gathered from plants growing on the banks of the Lagan Navigation. With the express objective to grow on, plant out and establish native primroses along the 27 mile route of the Navigation from Belfast to Lough Neagh. An endangered species of native wild flower this need has been identified through working with waterways organisations across Europe. The Trusts Chief Officer is a founding member of Network of Inland Waterways Europe bringing together organisations from 18 countries in Europe and 35 groups to discuss, act on common issues and seek funding support for projects. The Trust works with horticultural specialists, the Departments for Infrastructure and Communities, Historic Environment Division and Rivers Agency.

8 The Trust Storymaking Festival

This began in September 2017 with creative writing and tapestry workshops right along the 27 mile route of the Navigation with some 11 writing groups and 8 community groups creating written and crafted stories with the theme **Where My River Flows**. People were also invited to submit on line their entries for a storymaking competition and over 60 people did. The shortlisted competition entries across a number of categories were invited to the award ceremony along with all the participants who had entered. The Festival culminated in an awards evening with readings, reflections

music and entertainment at the Lagan Valley Island Centre in Lisburn on the 2nd February which was attended by some 120 people of all ages.

The 2018/19 Storymaking Festival will open for entries and workshops will begin in September 2018 this years theme is ***'Linen on the Lagan'*** to coincide with the Linen Biennale in Lisburn and European Year of Cultural Heritage. The venue sponsor for the event is The Odyssey Trust where workshops and the celebration event will be held 1 February 2019.

9 Corporate working

2017/8 has seen a significant effort to involve the corporate sector with the work of the Trust.

- We gained agreement on transfer of land to the Trust from a private housing developer to facilitate car and mini bus parking to the DWL project and Navigation House. The developer is also building out the car park which will be ready in 2018/19.
- We secured a sponsorship deal with a food chain over 5 years.
- We have secured 23 acres of waterside land through Community Asset Transfer on which we will develop a native species community garden
- We have secured The Odyssey, Belfast for our Storymaking Festival, the Odyssey Trust is our venue sponsor.
- Other corporate sponsorship deals are in negotiation along the 27 mile route.
- Our activities attract business wishing to contribute to meeting their Corporate Social Responsibilities in our 67sq mile area of influence.

New partnerships have been forged within the Departments for Infrastructure, Communities and Education. Translink will be a joint partner on a project upstream of Lisburn.

Our core funders, Belfast and Lisburn & Castlereagh City Councils and Armagh City Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Councils continue their support both financial and in-kind and we are grateful for which we count as evidence of the value of the work of the Trust to local government.

The Trust receives no project funding for its capital projects, it sees itself as a commissioning body, co-design and co-production with communities and developing projects for partners to deliver. Capital funds are raised through grant and sponsorship with matched funding from our partners, the public and private sectors and communities. We have £12M of projects in the pipeline.

The Trust supports the work of The Waterways College which is a new spin off social enterprise of the Trust providing formal and informal accredited learning of traditional and new heritage & tourism skills on waterways in Northern Ireland.

Our events programme throughout the year is a busy one with summer schools, Storymaking Festival and celebrations such as the Autumn Festival which attracts some 300 people. All our events are free to enter.