

THE LAGAN NAVIGATION TRUST

BRIEFING PAPER – AUGUST 2016

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 City Council, Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council, 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;

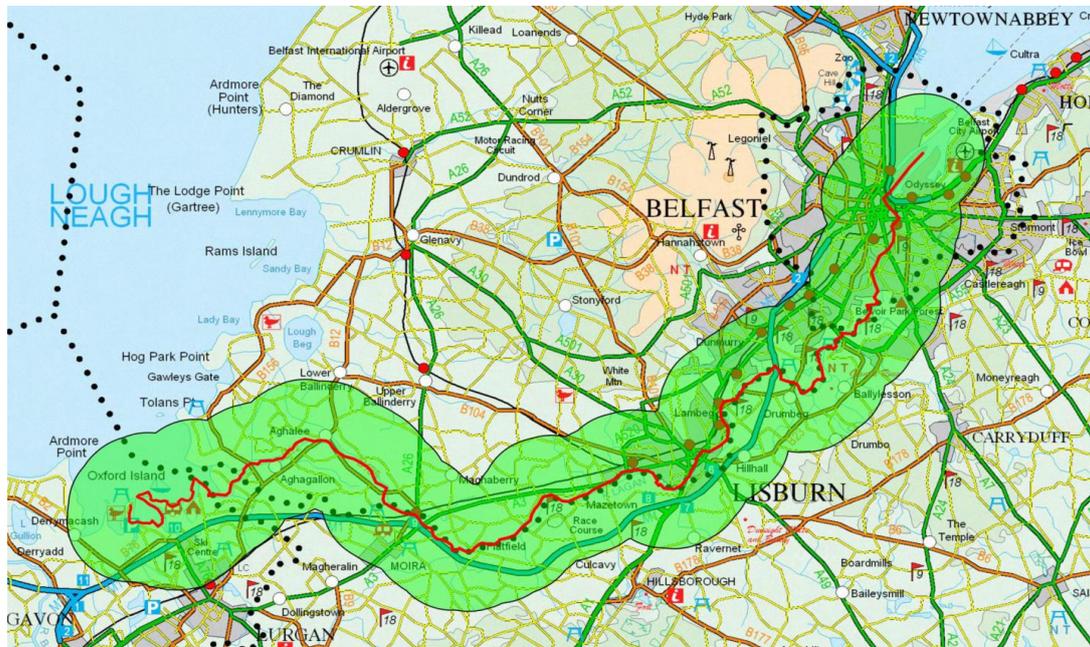
- 31 SOAs in the top 10% most deprived in NI;
- 10 SOAs in the top 20% most deprived in NI; and
- 7 SOAs in the top 30% most deprived in NI.

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 main programme of proposed works is circa £100M to be delivered over 15/20 years. The Trust and its partners are the focus of guardianship of a 300-year-old living and working heritage 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.

The rationale in developing an Operational Area, shown on the plan below, is the opportunity it presents for bringing 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 will require consultation with stakeholders and the Trust is developing a stakeholder engagement programme to address this opportunity. There are 141 schools within the Operational Area with 35K+ pupil population and 7 railway stations which provide ready access to green spaces, rural and urban pursuits. This combines the potential for community planning, economic, physical and environmental regeneration and conservation.

Defining the Operational Area highlights the role the re-opening of the Lagan Navigation will have in linking, 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

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;
- ✓ Contribute to addressing poverty, social exclusion and climate change;
- ✓ 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;
- ✓ Ensure that the Trust is resourced to deliver a complex programme of work;

We will achieve these through;

- ✓ Conserving, managing and interpreting the natural, built, cultural and industrial heritage of the Navigation with stakeholders and partners;
- ✓ Develop a multimedia digital history platform of the Lagan Navigation – ‘Just Add Water’
- ✓ Restoring the historic structures of existing locks whilst enabling their use through providing new lock gates and safety structures (under consent);
- ✓ Reinstating towpaths and create new paths into communities along the whole length of the Navigation;
- ✓ Connect and extend the National Cycle Route Number 9 through the Operational Area giving wider connectivity throughout Northern Ireland;
- ✓ Facilitating linkages between the Navigation, communities and public transport; and between existing facilities and additional ones e.g. links to villages in rural areas;
- ✓ Re-watering the canalised sections along the Lagan through reinstating or repairing the weirs associated with each lock and lateral canal built in the 18th century to enable navigation;
- ✓ Providing a new cascade weir and new lock at Stranmillis to replace the existing pen weir structure and enable navigation from the tidal Lagan to the Navigation;
- ✓ Providing a new section of river and canalised navigation between Sprucefield and Moira to replace the section of the Navigation overlaid by the M1 Motorway. This will include a canalised linkage to the Maze Long Kesh Site;
- ✓ Contribute to community health and wellbeing opportunities through greater access to leisure, sporting and recreational pursuits;
- ✓ Provide a range of additional facilities for visitors along the Navigation to enable boat usage and other water based activities, features and attractions;
- ✓ Clearly defining the potential for positive social impact in local communities through Community Planning partnerships;
- ✓ Conduct a 2 year, 2014-2016, proof of concept pilot for The Waterways College (TWC) to drive formal, volunteering, educational and community outreach programmes which address the heritage and environmental skills deficit in Northern Ireland.

KEY OPERATIONAL FOCUS

1 Discover Waterways Lisburn Project (DWL)

With Navigation House which was built in the 1864 for the Manager of the former Lagan Navigation Company as its focus DWL will exploit the natural and built heritage at this location. The house had been empty for some years and the extensive grounds and outbuilding were neglected and dilapidated and the gardens overgrown. It was listed in June 2012 and bought for use by the Trust in June 2014.

The major elements of DWL have been brought together in a masterplan which is being used as a basis for a planning applications which will be ready for submission in late 2016, Scheduled Monument and Listed Building Consents will also be obtained.

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

- restoration and opening to the public of Navigation House and stables to provide a home for the Trust, The Waterways College, a digital resource centre to interpret the history of the Navigation; 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 Hoggs Lock, development of a canoe 'nursery facility' in the Dry Cut where the M1 motorway severed the Navigation from its route to Moira;
- connectivity of the upper and lower footpaths at Union locks 'Dry Cut' at Union Locks via a footbridge/boardwalk;
- access via a new, disability compliant, pedestrian route to Navigation House from the lower footpath- this will impact considerably on remaining land usage within Navigation House garden;
- 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 beyond 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 Councils very ambitious plans to build a new lock number 1 on the Navigation provide a footbridge over has received support for c£3Million investment from BCC elected members which was levered by a contribution of £1m from Ulster Garden Villages for Phase 1 of the works. This is an important step in the re-opening of the Lagan Navigation and walking routes connected to local facilities. The Project Board is now up and running with the objective of a start on site in 2017 and completion in 2018.

3 The Industry Lighter, Lock No 3 Shaws bridge

The former Castlereagh Borough Council, now Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council, the Inland Waterways Association of Ireland, the Department of Culture Arts and Leisure, DCAL and a number of funders worked in partnership to bring the derelict 'lighter' (the local term for a working barge) to lock number 3. Now available as an educational facility and for hire the boat animates the story of industrial heritage in that area.

4 Demonstration projects

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, numbers 24, 25 and 26 – Goudy, Fegans and Cranagh respectively has 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 will seek support from the Rural Development Programme for NI.

5 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.

6 The Waterways College

The Waterways College (TWC), in its two year pilot project phase which began in October 2014, will deliver waterways based traditional and new heritage and environmental learning opportunities. Unemployed people of all ages, volunteers, and educational and community outreach participants will have the opportunity to work on the Trusts projects along the Navigation. The stakeholder engagement programme will inform development of TWC.

The two year pilot with Social Enterprise partner, Springvale Employment and Learning, will deliver some 150 formal learning and some 200 volunteering opportunities in the Lisburn/Belfast City Council Area. The programme and projects will be delivered in two distinct strands;

Strand 1 formal learning;

Strand 2 social learning.

TWC held its first Summer School for five weeks in August 2015 on site at Navigation House and Union Locks in Lisburn. With some 50 learners and up to 15 volunteers at any one time the Summer School provided exposure and project work involving a number of traditional skills delivered by TWC Champions. These included water safety training, stonemasonry, joinery, environmental management and grounds maintenance along the tow path. The learning opportunity culminated with a canoeing training and 'on the water' event provided by Lisburn City Paddlers. A further Summer Scholl is taking place in late August 2016 for 5 – 12 year olds at Navigation House with other events scheduled to mark the end of the two year pilot period.

7 '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 Lisburn & Castlereagh City and Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough 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.

Annual Conference 2015

The Trusts Annual Conference held on the 28th October was hosted by Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council at Lagan Valley Island Centre, Lisburn. Our theme this year was 'Waterways as a catalyst for social, environmental and economic vibrancy' Some 100+ delegates heard from a diverse range of speakers including the Senior Responsible Owner for the new Department of Infrastructure, John McGrath, Tourism NI Regional Director Martin Graham, Gerry Millar Director of Property and Projects Belfast City Council, Kerrie Sweeny CE at Titanic Foundation, Norma Herron Waterways Ireland and Gerry McMahon Springvale Employment and Learning. A lively event with a very useful plenary session during which we were challenged by anglers on the re-opening proposals which served to highlight the need for continuing consultation with all users of the Navigation.

Annual Conference 2016

Make a note in your dairy that this will take place on the 9th November. This year's conference will take place in the Armagh City Banbridge ad Craigavon Borough Council area. We are expecting some 200 delegates at a joint conference with Heritage Trust Network and the Institute of Historic Building's Conservation.

Change of name

The Trustees agreed to change the name of the Trust to The Lagan Navigation Trust in March 2016 and this has now been accepted by Companies House and the Charities Commission NI. .