

**Location:** Central Scotland Lowland Canals

**Date:** April to June 2019

**Client/ Partners**

Scottish Canals, CSGNT, KV+F LEADER

**Project type**

Feasibility and Outline design

**Item of Interest**

Data collection and assimilation, partnership working with 3 organisations, assistance in funding bid compilation

**Project Content**

Further to a Towpath Strategy compiled by TP&E in 2013 Scottish Canals wished to build on the successes of the outcomes of this strategy. By the close of 2016 all the Lowland Canal towpaths had received upgrade surfacing works and the next step was to look at improving accessibility.

TP&E were commissioned to compose an action plan for improving the accessibility to and along the Lowland Canals. An access audit was performed to gain an understanding of how accessible the Forth + Clyde and Union Canals really were and evidence was collected against 3 simple filters:

1. Safety;
2. Effect on movement and
3. Neighbouring access.



The geography of the project – 7 local authorities – and the scale of the information collected on access controls, link paths and signage, meant that a robust simple approach required to be taken. Using numbers to define, type, condition and details on each access item identified provided the ability for the data collected to be assimilated into useable material from which the plan of action could be developed.

The project changed direction when Central Scotland Green Network Trust (CSGNT) and LEADER requested that the results from the study be worked into a bid for the Central Canals Project.

The Central Canals Project aims to work with communities and wider partners to develop the Forth & Clyde and Union Canals as unique heritage and community assets also as a tourist attraction and route in its own right. The project is co-ordinated by Central Scotland Green Network Trust and funded by Kelvin Valley & Falkirk and West Lothian LEADER. Improving the accessibility through addressing restrictive barriers, poor access points and delivering a standardised approach to signage marries in with this project's objectives. In addition, those areas out with the LEADER sections have received a note of support from Sustrans as a funder of future projects.



## Outcomes

- ✦ Setting up clear filters at the outset of the study allowed immediate categorisation of the collected data. This provided the facility to interrogate the data in several ways and proved useful when approached by funders to assemble a meaningful package of works.
- ✦ Working with the client and 3 interested parties allowed a partnership to be set up around the lowland canals to ensure the focus satisfied the objectives of all involved: improved accessibility, securing the longevity of the canal heritage and promoting better its presence through signage.
- ✦ Providing a clear plan of action of the way forward for future works with interested funders.



## Key learning points

- ✦ Providing flexibility in the method of working provides great benefits when the project requires change of objectives.
- ✦ Understanding well the requirements of funders allows any piece of work to be tailored to meet those needs and thus improve the chance of a successful bid.
- ✦ Tenacity and positive drive contribute to achieving an end goal that assists in solving long term issues. In this case improved accessibility and increased awareness of great walking and cycling infrastructure through the central belt of Scotland.

*Transport Planning and Engineering is a social enterprise engineering consultancy which specialises in designing and managing the delivery of active travel infrastructure in Scotland through working with local authorities and many empowered communities.*

*TP&E is a subsidiary organisation of Scotland's national cycle training, events and promotion charity Cycling Scotland.*

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