

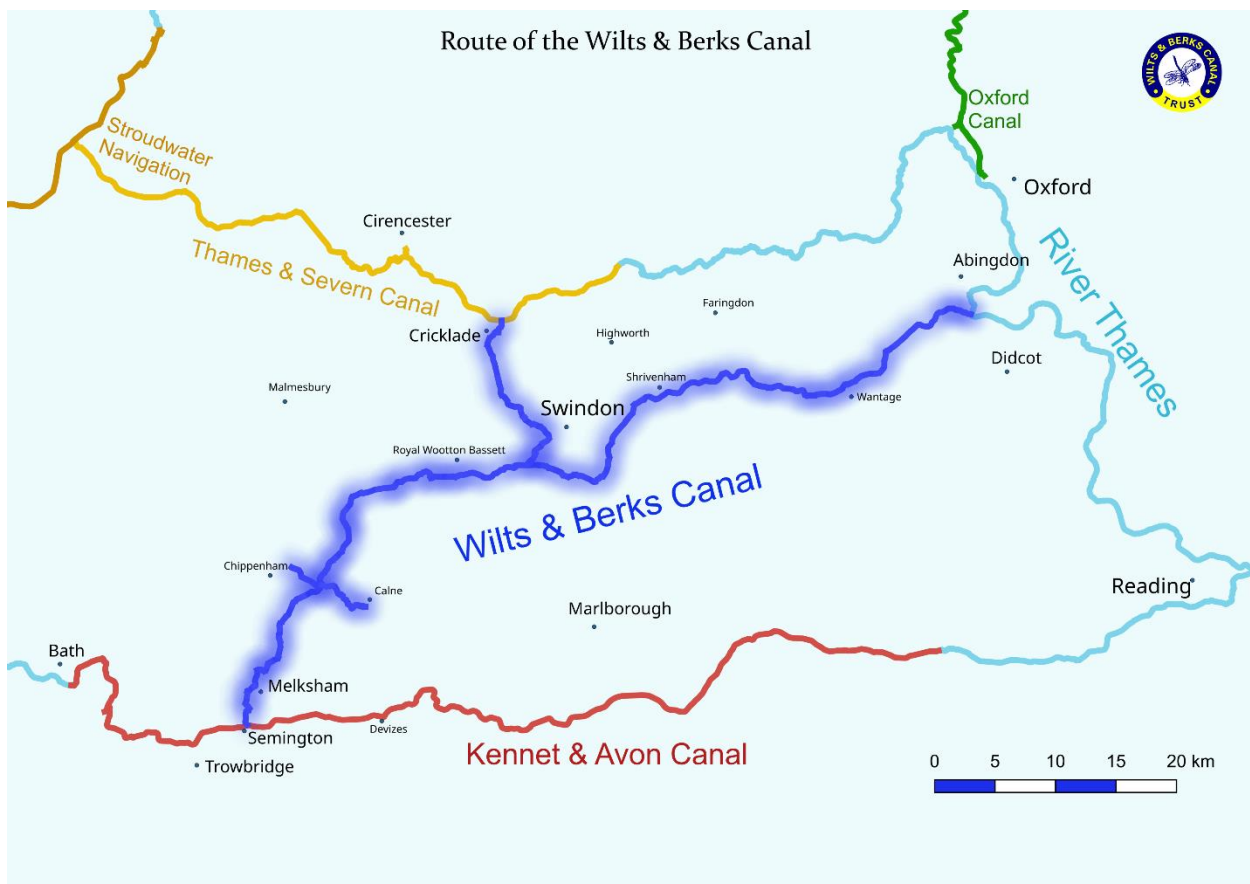


Case for Support 29/03/2023

The Wilts & Berks Canal Trust has identified £250.6M pa of recurring economic benefits and £45.5M of one-time benefit, resulting from its ongoing 70 mile canal restoration project.

There are 5,000 miles of navigable waterways in mainland Britain. The ongoing regeneration of these canals and rivers, along with bringing a further 500 miles of currently derelict waterways back into use, will provide many benefits. The Wilts & Berks canal restoration will deliver 70 miles of those 500. It is currently the largest such project in Britain.

Abandoned by Act of Parliament in 1914, our canal is at the heart of a partially completed, but strategic, restoration project which will connect the English northern and southern canal cruising rings. Here is a map of the Wilts & Berks canal's route:



The Inland Waterways Association has described the benefits of restored canals under some 12 headings in its 2022 paper, entitled *Waterways for Today*. We have followed their formula for the description and evaluation of restoration benefits, under 4 broad headings on the following pages, **Economic, Natural & Built Environment, Local Communities and Improving People's Lives**.

In doing this work we have drawn on many sources, including:

- A Scott Wilson 1999 report to the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust on its economic benefits

- The 2019 Wiltshire Swindon and Oxfordshire Canal Partnership Strategic Plan
- The Canal & River Trust's 2022 Economic modelling
- Comparative data from the fully restored 87 mile Kennet & Avon canal, with which the Wilts & Berks will connect at Semington
- The IWA report, Waterways for Today
- Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (Shelaa) reports from Wiltshire, Swindon and Oxfordshire Councils

Economic Benefits

1. Contribute to economic recovery

Canal & River Trust 2022 modelling, extrapolated for the 70-mile route of the Wilts and Berks, predicts a Gross Value Added (GVA) of **£52M pa recurring** from increased economic activity driven by the tourist attractions of a functioning canal and its associated towpaths.

Please note that the measured resultant new economic activity in the fully restored and 24% longer Kennet & Avon canal, which serves prosperous communities in Bath, Newbury and Reading is some £91M pa. This provides us with a level of confidence that our £52M pa figure is a sensible estimate.

2. Encourage increased spend in local communities

An expected 30,000 new homes along our route with an average of 3 residents spending £2k each locally eventually produces £180M pa when restoration is complete. This is a recurring benefit. For the purposes of this analysis, we have assumed that the average annual benefit during our 20 year restoration is **£60M pa recurring**.

3. Facilitate savings to the NHS and social care budgets

By extrapolation from modelling by the Canal & River Trust in 2022 we have identified **£38.5M pa recurring** of NHS savings from physical exercise taken by our walkers, cyclists, and boaters.

Natural & Built Environment Benefits

4. Enhance and improve the natural environment

Improvement of the environment along the route of the Wilts & Berks is a core component of our work. We deliver wildflower meadows, pollinator routes and habitat trails and nesting for wildlife. Every project we execute is preceded by an environmental survey which sets out the work required to achieve the maximum of environmental improvement.

5. Protect heritage for future generations, Natural & Built

The 200 year old infrastructure of the Wilts & Berks is seen as our legacy and worthy of best in class protection. Wherever possible we restore and rebuild locks, bridges, culverts and spillways to their original design, often using reclaimed bricks and timber. Where heritage structures have been lost to collapse or materials scavengers we revert to original drawings for rebuilding projects.

6. Improve sustainability and help to combat climate change

Sustainability is at the heart of our restoration project. Our work parties are active throughout the calendar keeping our towpaths clear, dry and safe. We have documented maintenance plans and the equipment required to perform the work our volunteers do in support of their local communities. Our work compounds pursue a low carbon agenda. Many of our tools are now electric and our first electric trip boat became operational in 2022.

Local Communities

7. Connect communities

The Wilts & Berks canal does exactly this. Its route was designed in the 1790s to enable trade between the communities along its route. Our restorations, particularly of towpaths, have improved walking and cycling connections between dozens of our canalside settlements

8. Provide opportunities for education and young people

The Wilts & Berks Canal Trust has an ongoing programme of education involving local schools and young peoples' organisations like the Scouts. Much of this work is focused on the improvement of wildlife habitats and trails, where young people can make a significant and enjoyable contribution.

9. Create jobs, training and apprenticeships in Local Communities

The Scott Wilson 1999 report predicted that the Wilts & Berks restoration project would produce approximately 1,519 person-year-equivalent temporary construction jobs. The financial benefit of this activity, assuming £30,000 pa as the average remuneration of the temporary workforce is a **non-recurring £45.5M**.

Canal restoration requires a range of practical skills which are highly transferable to the wider economy. Canal-based regeneration schemes throughout the UK have provided opportunities for skills development among previously excluded groups.

Improving People's Lives

10. Encourage improved physical health

The anticipated financial benefits from improved physical health are quantified, in item 3 above, at £38.5M pa.

11. Improve mental health and wellbeing

By extrapolation of the 2022 Canal & River Trust report we have **identified £100.1M pa recurring** of benefits from improved mental health and wellbeing.

12. Create better places to live Improving People's Lives

The construction of an expected 30,000 new homes adjacent to the Wilts & Berks, anticipated in Shelaar reports from Wiltshire, Swindon and Oxfordshire Councils, will deliver better places to live over the next 20 years for about 90,000 people. These will be homes either directly on or close to the restored Wilts and Berks canal. We have a showpiece site, now becoming increasingly mature, at Wichelstowe, where up to 4,000 homes will be built on the Canalside development. Canal restoration is embedded in the developer's plans and the relevant

planning consents. We see ongoing collaboration with housing developers as a key enabler for our restoration project.