

North Kensington Feasibility Study For London's Waterway Partnership

An appraisal of the canal environment, results of local
consultation and proposals for future development



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on behalf of North Kensington Environment Forum (nkef)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The report investigates a mile-long stretch of the Grand Union Canal, on the boundary between North Kensington in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea and North Paddington in the London Borough of Westminster.

Through observation, research and analysis of questionnaires given to canal users and local people, the report aimed to discover

- what are the problems with the canal at the moment?
- what improvements would be meaningful to local people?
- how can local people become involved in future developments?
- particular issues for blind and partially sighted users?

The notable positive characteristics of the site are good connections to transport links, the benefits of recent regeneration investment, a good location to benefit from current SRB funds, and the presence of existing strong communities such as residential boaters.

On the negative side, the canal suffers from being on the edge of two Boroughs, and like many other parts of the London canal system it suffers from neglect. Many visitors perceive it as being unsafe with poor access, and maintenance often fails to combat the levels of litter, dumping and vandalism.

The report contains a detailed site survey, information about the consultation undertaken and comprehensive analysis of the results of these consultations.

From meetings with residents and staff of the RNIB's Garrow House next to the canal we discovered that the canal is hardly used at all by local blind and partially sighted people. Many do not use the local neighbourhood at all, and were cautious about the opportunity. But the consultation meetings revealed some interesting ideas and practical approaches to improving access for this user group.

Fifty-seven questionnaires were returned, and many respondents showed a keen interest in the canal. Many people saw value in the canal as it is, as an escape from the city, and particularly traffic. A majority wanted improvements in basic safety, cleanliness, maintenance and accessibility. There were numerous suggestions for ideas and projects.

Recommendations and proposals focus on a practical framework for investing the area with an integrated program of improvements from a base of informed community involvement.

We propose a three point plan:

- | | | |
|-------------|-----------|------------------------------------|
| A) GROUP | people | Stakeholders - the 'Splash Group'. |
| B) PLAN | framework | The Local Plan - the 'Splash Plan' |
| C) PROJECTS | action | Specific projects |

Specific projects, of various scales, are suggested within a framework of six major themes, to show how this multi-layered plan may take shape.

INTRODUCTION

Kensal Green Gas Basin to North Paddington was identified by London's Waterway Partnership Board as a 'node' where improvements could be concentrated, with specific reference to 'value for the local community from intensive development'. This research aimed to discover the community's ambitions for the future of the canal and what the community would perceive as 'value'. We aimed to find out how the canal is used at the moment, what people perceive as problems, and to propose appropriate ways for considering development in consultation and partnership with the local community.

The site for this study covers the length of canal between Sainsbury's at Ladbroke Grove (to the west of the Kensal Green Bridge) and Harrow Road Bridge at the eastern end of Meanwhile Gardens. The distance covered is a little over a mile and takes around 15-20 minutes to walk from end to end. Scrubs Lane to the west and Little Venice to the east are easily reached on foot from the study area.

Between the bridges at Ladbroke Grove and Great Western Road the canal runs along the boundary between the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC) and the Borough of Westminster. The towpath on the south side of the canal is in Kensington. The north bank is in Westminster. To the west of Ladbroke Grove the canal, and part of the Kensal Green cemetery, are within RBKC.

The study incorporates consultation with staff and residents at the Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB) Garrow House. At Garrow House, a residential and educational facility run by RNIB, a community of blind and partially sighted people and their colleagues live and work next to the canal at the centre of our study area, and many others visit the facilities. For these people the canal is a greatly underused resource.

The Garrow House consultations were intended to give some insight into a sector of the wider community with particularly demanding requirements for the accessibility of the external environment. Through this we hoped to find creative solutions that would increase accessibility and pleasure in the waterside space for all visitors.

Consultation with others in the community was achieved through distribution of a questionnaire through local groups and an exhibition at the Venture Centre, a community centre in North Kensington. In particular we aimed to encourage responses to the issues of strategic links, the safety of the physical environment, the navigational environment and the recreational amenity of the Canalside.

This stretch of canal has much to recommend it as a site for a pilot study to develop the potential of the canal as a successful, accessible public space. Among other reasons, there is the possibility of funding from two fledgling Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) projects to the north and south of the canal. Golborne SRB in Kensington and North Paddington

SRB in Westminster are seven-year programmes of investment.

In the past few years a number of new waterside buildings and projects have been completed, and several major canalside developments are proposed for the south side of the canal. There are clear signs of investment and regeneration which can be built upon.

Authorship and Acknowledgements

The study was carried out by Natasha Nicholson and Pamela Charlick on behalf of North Kensington Environment Forum (nkef). Consultations were carried out in 1999, and further research carried out during 2000 and 2001.

We are grateful for the support offered by RNIB Garrow House, the Venture Centre, Meanwhile Gardens Community Association, Meanwhile Gardens Under 5's playgroup, The North Paddington Society, North Kensington Law Centre and members of North Kensington Environment Forum (nkef) in conducting this research. Thanks also for support offered by staff from London's Waterway Partnership and British Waterways.

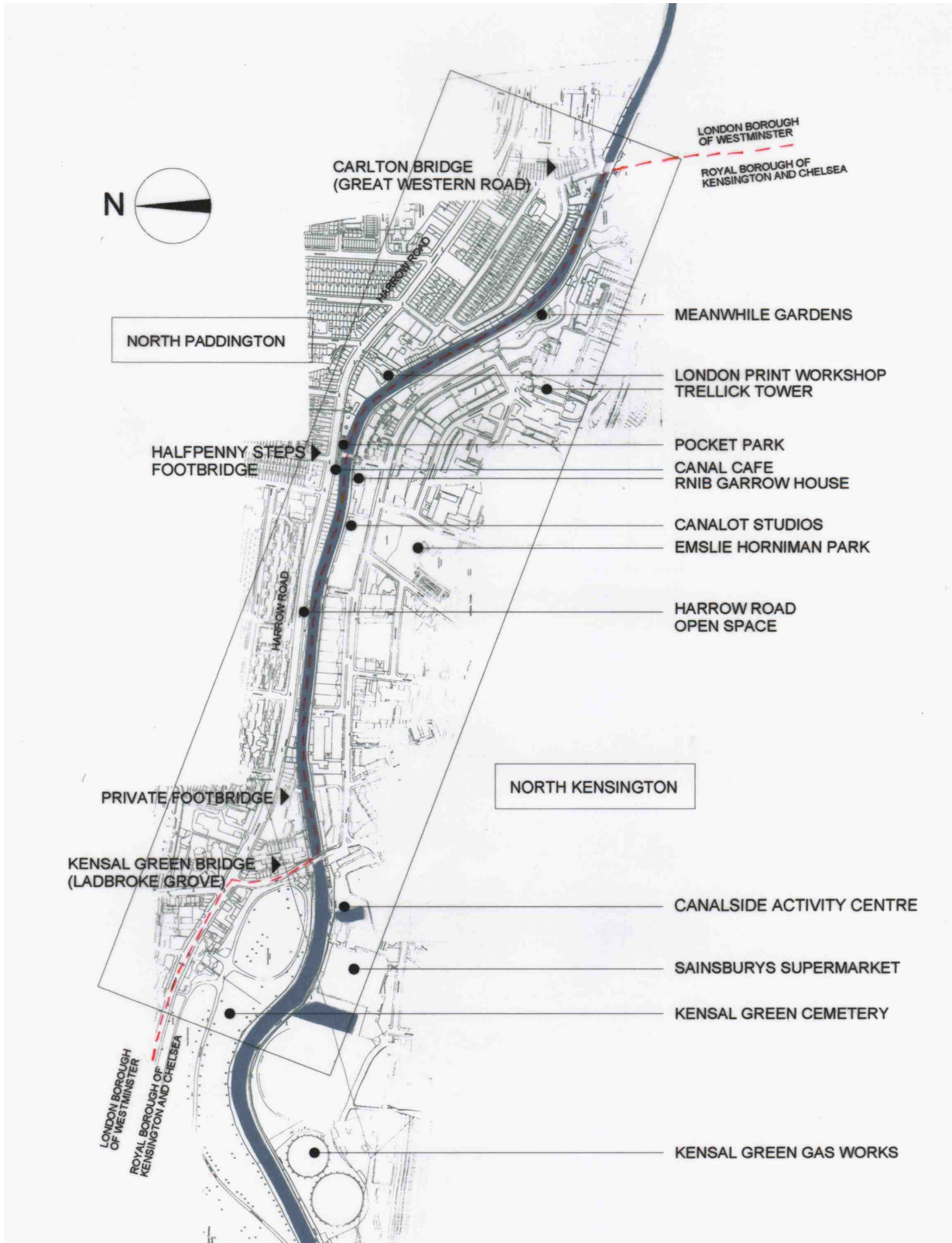
This project has been funded by London's Waterway Partnership.

North Kensington Environment Forum (nkef)

North Kensington Environment Forum (**nkef**) was set-up for North Kensington residents and organisations with help from City Challenge in 1995. It is a platform for LA21 initiatives and has links with LA21 forums in adjoining boroughs, and the London 21 sustainability network. **nkef** members include local residents and representatives of local community groups. Its main objective is to promote the environment in North Kensington using sustainable development as its guiding principle. Its members have a broad range of skills and expertise around ecology, environmental issues, planning, design and the local environment.

P1 : STUDY AREA

showing borough boundaries
and landmarks



SECTION 1 - RESEARCH

1.1 SITE STUDY

The site was studied and photographed to assess its existing condition, and to identify opportunities for improvements. This is the basis for assessing the potential for implementing ideas resulting from consultations.

1.1.1 General characteristics

This stretch of canal meanders through a busy and densely populated part of London. Within the study area, there are a mix of industrial and residential buildings next to the canal; light industrial workshops, housing blocks, green open spaces, derelict sites, a large supermarket and gas holders. Although as a visitor walking on the towpath you are usually within sight of an overlooking window, often you will be unable to see any other people. Depending on your point of view, the canalside can be a refuge from the city or a place of vulnerability.

The 25-storey Trelick Tower dominates the eastern end, and despite the greenery of Meanwhile Gardens you are unmistakably in the heart of the city. At the western end, passing Sainsbury's on the way to Scrubs Lane the landscape becomes remarkably rural.

1.1.2 Use of the canal

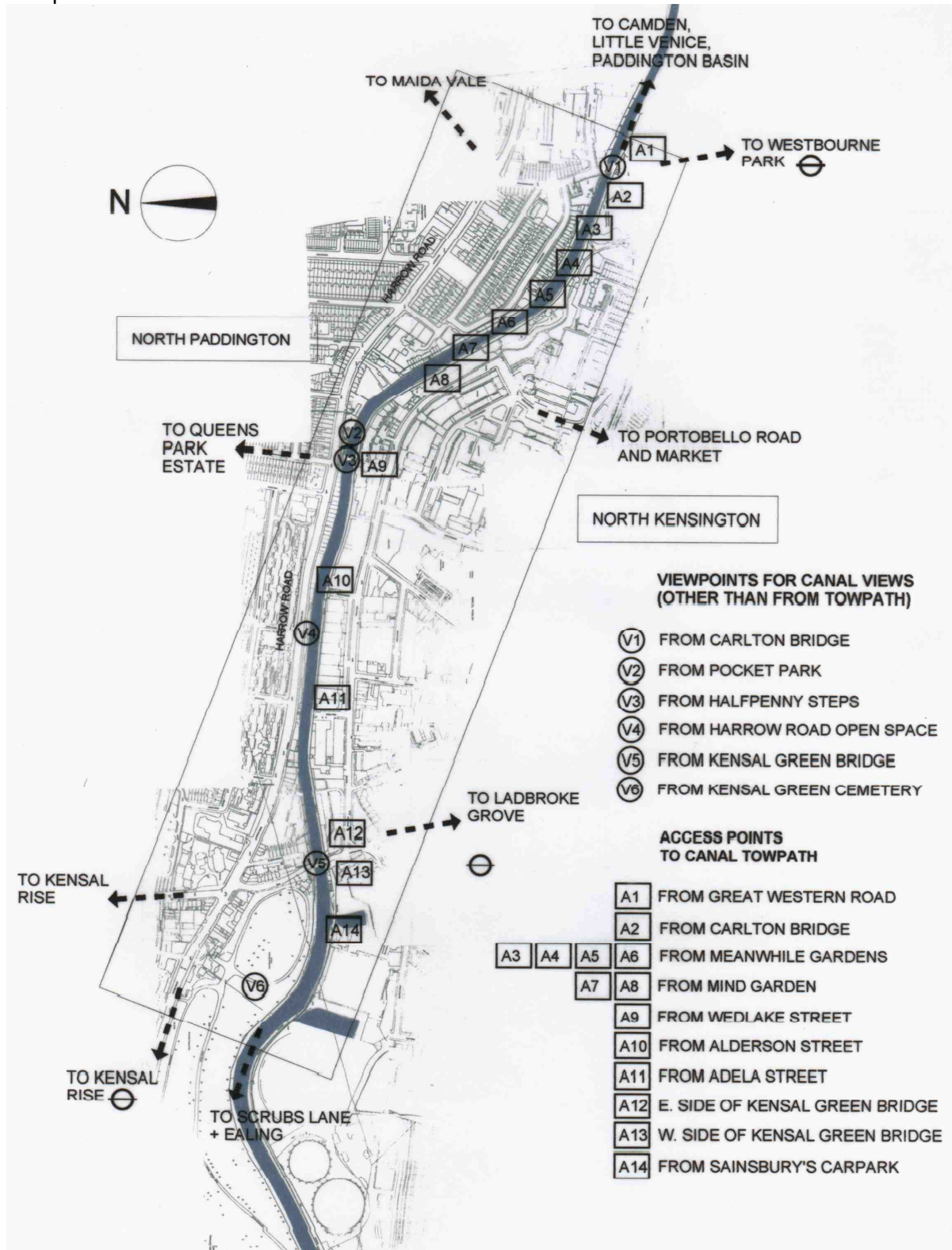
A diverse mix of activities take place on and around the canal throughout the year. The Canalside Activity Centre hosts canoe and watersports activities. Cyclists use the towpath for leisure and high-speed commuting. Fishing is allowed under permit from the London Anglers Association, and anglers often can be seen on the quieter stretches. The waterway is used for narrowboat transport and there are residential and visitor moorings outside Sainsbury's. The towpath is a local shortcut, and frequently it is used by people returning from Sainsbury's with shopping bags. An annual community festival takes place in Meanwhile Gardens.

Apart from the anglers, people don't tend to linger on the towpath, except in the busier places. Outside Sainsbury's people will spend time feeding birds, sitting or eating a sandwich. People will also sit on benches alongside Meanwhile Gardens, where parents with young children, skateboarders and others enjoy the park.

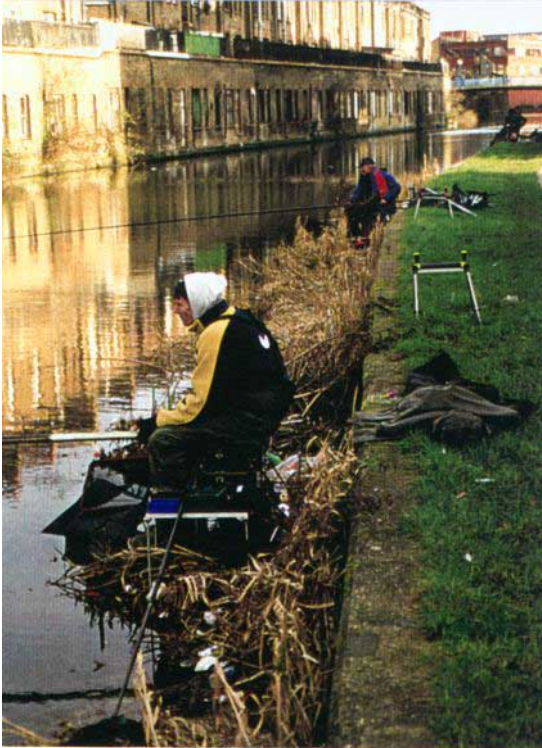
The strongest visible community is the close-knit boating community at Kensal Green moorings, and formerly on Kensal Green Gas Works Basin. There are many others with a passion and commitment for all aspects of the canal; the wildlife, canal history, water transport, restoration, community boats. A good source of information is the UK Waterways Webring website<<http://www.ukwaterways.net>>.

P2 : STUDY AREA

showing access points,
viewpoints and links



P3 : STUDY AREA PHOTOGRAPHS 1



Use of Canal

1. fishing outside Canalot
2. the Canal Cafe
3. Kensal Green moorings

1.1.3 Physical Environment

The towpath passes a variety of buildings and open green spaces on both sides of the canal. Many buildings on the towpath turn their back on the canal, presenting high, windowless walls sometimes topped with barbed wire. These highly defensive strategies have an effect on the surrounding environment. Where modest attempts are made to provide activity and visual links at ground level, such as at Sainsbury's Café or the Canalside Activity Centre the ambience is improved. The water-side balcony at the Canal Café, with mooring posts for passing boats, is very successful. New developments should consider how they can contribute positively to the canalside environment, by providing visual connections, lighting, facilities alongside the canal and improvements to the publicly accessible space.

The towpath is screened on the south side by tall buildings in many places, and so does not get much sun during the middle of the day. The most attractive places to stop are either those which do get some sun, being next to open space, such as Meanwhile Gardens, or those where there are particularly good views such as from Sainsbury's towards Kensal Green Cemetery and the narrowboat moorings. Around the base of Trellick Tower there can be wind turbulence and gusting. New barrier planting in Meanwhile Gardens aims to alleviate this.

1.1.4 Towpath

The typical towpath alongside the canal consists of a line of concrete paving stones, laid over the electricity cable run, to form a narrow path with a grass verge of variable width on both sides. This type is in evidence in low activity areas, where no 'improvements' or development have taken place. On this stretch there are also variations on the typical towpath. From Meanwhile Gardens to Halfpenny Steps the towpath has been relaid with hoggin, as part of the recent refurbishment of the Gardens. Outside Sainsbury's there is hard landscaping with various brick pavers and bollards.

The towpath varies a lot in width. The narrowest widths occur under the bridges - a minimum of 2.3 metres (under Halfpenny Steps). Alongside Meanwhile Gardens the towpath is a constant 3.7 metres wide. The greatest width occurs outside Sainsbury's. Pedestrians, cyclists and anglers can co-exist on the widest stretches. London Cycling campaign recommend a width of 2.5 to 3 metres for a mixed-use path, and a minimum of two metres. 1.8 metres is the recommended width for a two-way cycle path. This would be attainable on some stretches, but not everywhere because of obstructions and restricted width or headroom.

There is no consistent surface treatment along this stretch, and nothing to indicate proximity to the water's edge for a blind or partially sighted visitor. Often the surface is irregular underfoot. Occasionally a barrier is placed at the edge of the towpath, for safety and leaning on. There are metal railings outside Sainsbury's and there are short lengths of railing opposite the access points at Wedlake Street and Meanwhile Gardens

P4 : STUDY AREA PHOTOGRAPHS 2



Access Points

- clockwise from top left:
1. Wedlake Street
 2. E. Kensal Green Bridge
 3. W. Kensal Green Bridge
 4. Sainsbury's
 5. Adela Street

1.1.5 Access to the canal

There are fourteen pedestrian access points for the canal towpath:

- A1 from Great Western Road
level access adjacent to bus depot
- A2 from Carlton Bridge
spiral staircase
- A3-A6 from Meanwhile Gardens
ramped or stepped access
- A7-A8 from Mind Garden
ramped or stepped access
- A9 From Wedlake Street
ramp next to Garrow House
- A10 From Alderson Street
stepped access
- A11 From Adela Street
stepped access
- A12 From east Side of Kensal Green Bridge
ramped access
- A13 From west Side of Kensal Green Bridge
stepped access by Electricity substation
- A14 From Sainsbury's carpark
level access across grate

The access points are quite frequent, but many of them fall short of providing safe and convenient access for all. Many would be improved with ramped or level access and by ensuring good visibility of the towpath before you step onto it.

Access by public transport is good. There are many bus routes nearby, and three local tube stations: Westbourne Park, Ladbrooke Grove and Kensal Green. The closest is Westbourne Park, three minutes walk from Meanwhile Gardens.

There are many unexploited pedestrian links from the canal to local attractions like Portobello Road Market. Using the canal towpath is a good quick route to Little Venice, Camden or Ealing by foot or cycle. By water there are greater possibilities. The Paddington Branch of the Grand Union Canal leads via the Regents Canal to the rivers Lee, Stort and Thames, as well as the Hertford Union Canal. From Paddington Basin to Bull's Bridge Junction are 13.5 lock free miles, and beyond lies Birmingham. Trip boats from Camden turn around at Little Venice, but potentially they could extend their route to Kensal Green.

Some of the best views of the canal are from the bridge crossings. Three crossings are accessible to the public. There are two bridges for cars and pedestrians, at Ladbrooke Grove (Kensal Green Bridge) and Great Western Road (Carlton Bridge), and one pedestrian-only bridge, Halfpenny Steps, at the centre of the study area.

P5 : STUDY AREA PHOTOGRAPHS 3



Historical Interest

1. canalside building
2. horse ramp

1.1.6 Information Landscape / Navigational Environment

There are two British Waterways information panels at Sainsbury's and Halfpenny Steps, once describing wildlife and history of the waterway, but now rather faded and often obscured by graffiti.

There is a complete absence of navigational signage to say, for example, where you are, distances to nearby places or the nearest exit, directions to tube or bus connections. Signage should not be overdone but the right amount of information contributes greatly to the accessibility of a place.

Lighting helps with navigation and wayfinding, though few people use the canal after dark. There is some lighting under Kensal Green Bridge and at Sainsbury's, and now some new lighting posts in Meanwhile Gardens.

1.1.7 Sound survey

We carried out some sound surveys of the route, to see if this would reveal navigational pointers we had missed from our visual survey. The sound of traffic and the railway was very apparent on the tapes. To some extent it was possible to tell from the sound recording where you were located on the route by the direction and volume of traffic and railway noise.

There are stretches of the route which are much quieter, the traffic noise recedes, and the particular sounds of the canal can be heard. These sounds enhance the experience of being by the canal - the sound of a narrowboat passing, the sound of people talking as they walk past, the sound of bird calls, or geese landing on the water.

1.1.8 Wildlife

The casual visitor will frequently see birds such as heron, swan, mallard, coot and Canada geese. A great variety of marginal plants can be found clinging to banks and walls. The grass strip next to the towpath supports a range of mostly common grassland and ruderal plants, which attract butterflies in summer. The canal also provides important habitat for damsel flies and dragonflies. Bream, roach and skimmer are the main target species for local anglers.

The canal system in London has a strategic importance for wildlife and ecology, as a habitat for species and as a wildlife corridor. The wildlife value of the site is well established. This stretch of the canal is classed as an SMI (Site of Metropolitan Importance) in the Schedule of Sites of Nature Conservation Importance of the UDP (Unitary Development Plan) of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. SMI's contains "the best examples of London's habitats" and are "of the highest priority against loss or damage.." The London Bat Group class the site as of Local Importance and report that the Daubenton's Bat (*myotis daubentonii*), which flies low above open water, can be seen on Grand Union Canal in West London.

[Refer to Appendices C, D and E for extracts from the London Ecology Unit- Borough Ecological Survey 1994, RBKC Mammal Borough Survey 1997 and RBKC Borough Breeding Bird Survey 1997]

1.1.9 Historical Interest

The Paddington Branch of the Grand Union Canal is one of the oldest branches, having opened in 1801. There are a few visible traces of the canal's history in this area. There is a horse ramp on the canal edge, next to Kensal Green Gas Works, and the narrowboats are a living reminder of the canal's past. There are some interesting historical fragments in, for example, some of the waterside buildings and the solid cast iron construction visible underneath the Carlton Bridge. There are also stories that are not apparent. For example, Halfpenny Steps takes its name from the toll-bridge that used to stand on the same site.

1.1.10 Maintenance

When we surveyed the area in 1999 the basic level of maintenance was poor. There was a lot of graffiti, litter on the towpath and in the water and large amounts of dog faeces. There was evidence of larger objects, such as shopping trolleys and prams, being dumped in the water, particularly around Meanwhile Gardens. Lifebelts were displaced or missing. On regular visits since then, there has been considerable variation in the amount of litter and vandalism from one visit to the next. Clearly this issue requires ongoing attention.

The canal water often looks dirty, particularly when water-borne litter collects at the margins, and water quality is a concern for anyone spending time around the canal. It is difficult to get up-to-date information about local water quality. From the Environment Agency website we found that the nearest monitoring site is further west (Bulls Bridge to Canal Feeder).

1.1.11 Ownership

For a visitor, it is difficult to ascertain who owns and maintains the canal and towpath. Some new signage informs about the role of British Waterways and Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC). There is no clear indication of who to contact for information, or who to alert about a particular hazard such as broken glass or used syringes.

The canal is under the control of several agencies. British Waterways own and manage the canal. Most of this stretch of canal runs on the boundary between RBKC and the Borough of Westminster. The towpath is under the responsibility of RBKC who subcontract to a commercial cleaning company. The Environment Agency are responsible for regulating water quality, and London Electricity are responsible for the maintenance of the cable running under the towpath. The strip park on the north bank, Harrow Road Open Space, managed by Westminster council, helpfully has a sign giving a contact phone number for queries or complaints.

P6 : STUDY AREA PHOTOGRAPHS 4



Maintenance

1. submerged pram
2. rubbish in water margins

1.1.12 Development during 1999-2001

There has been investment in capital projects in this period with the opening of the 'Canal Cafe' with its waterside terrace, and the redevelopment of the Print Workshop on Harrow Road as part of a new mixed use housing scheme. Meanwhile Garden's major refurbishment completed in 2000 included renewal of the skateboard facilities, new lighting and landscaping, and this year the new children's Playhut was completed. All these developments benefit the canal environment, and help to combat the atmosphere of neglect.

A concerted campaign by local community members stopped a proposal to develop the western corner of Meanwhile Gardens next to the canal, for housing. This was taken to appeal but refused planning permission.

Where new development is occurring on the canal it is important that it is sensitive to the potential for improving the public space of the canalside. The 10 acre site at the former Kensal Green Gasworks is being developed by Peabody Trust, as a mixed-use project including affordable housing. There will be a new Ecology Park on the Kensal Green gas works site which will provide a valuable 'reserve' for wildlife. Sainsbury's have proposed an expansion of their store. Meanwhile Gardens plan to develop their own offices on the canalside. A scheme to extend Canalot Artist's Studios has been proposed for the large vacant site next to Garrow House.

1.2 COMMUNITY CONSULTATIONS I : LOCAL AREA

1.2.1 Introduction

For three weeks in May 1999 a tactile map of the site, was displayed in the Venture Centre on Wornington Road W11. A photographic display was used to illustrate some of the key issues at the canal: ground surface treatment, navigational landmarks, stopping places, existing signage, safety, hazards and obstructions. Questionnaires and a comments book were used to get feedback from visitors. The Venture Centre is home to the Venture Community Association, the Notting Hill Adventure Playground, the Venture-Care Scheme, the Venture Playgroup and Glissando Steel Orchestra. It has a public ground floor café, and rooms used for a wide range of activities by local groups.

The tactile map, measuring 1.44 x 0.70 metres, was made to aid discussion about the canal for all users including blind and partially-sighted. The high-contrast yellow and black colour scheme denoting the street pattern gives maximum legibility. A bright green, roughly textured material denotes green spaces. Bridges across the canal are indicated with tactile bumps.

A request to Sainsbury's to hold further consultation at their Ladbrooke Grove Store was refused.

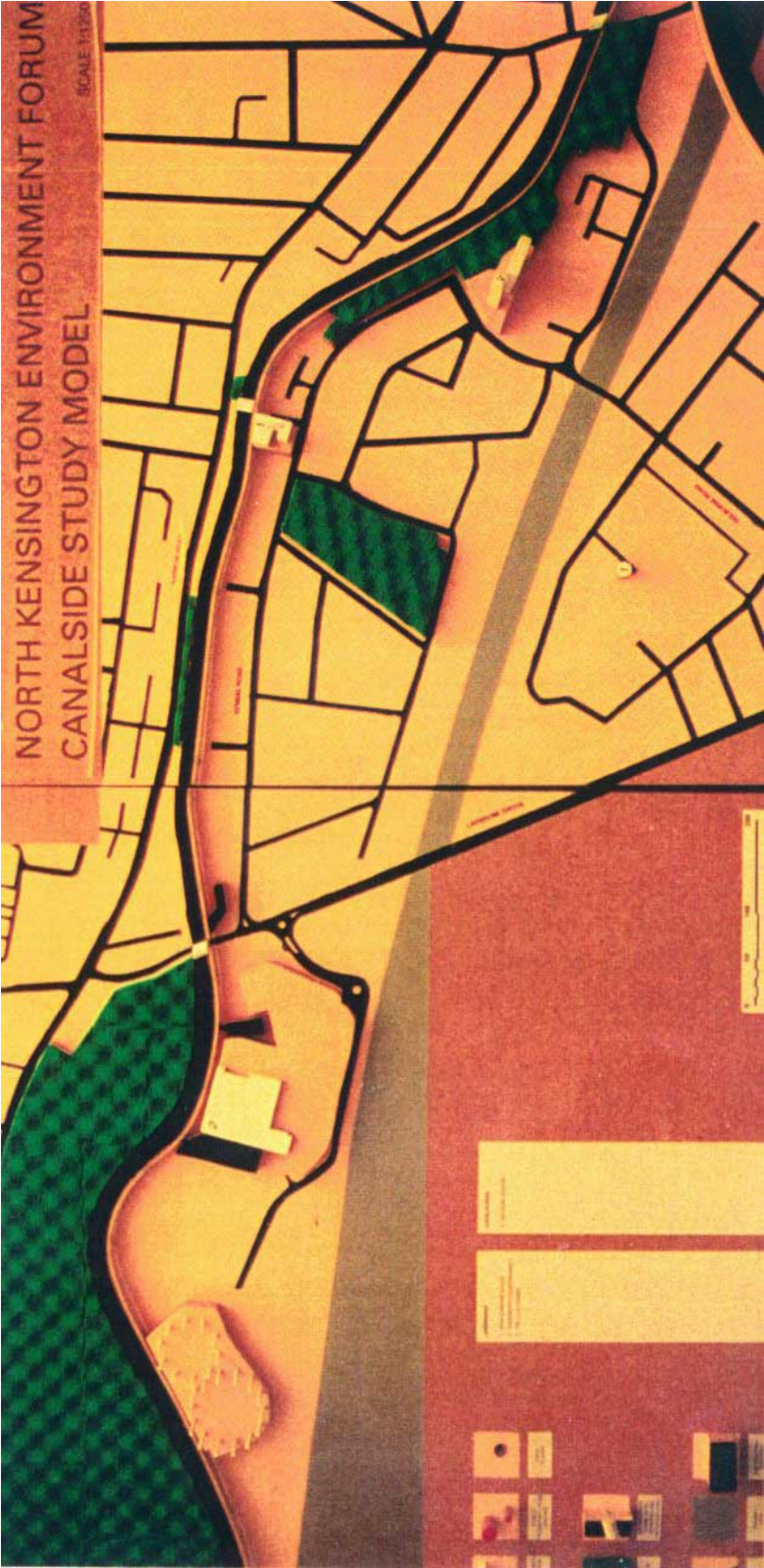
Additional questionnaires were distributed to individuals, and through the following groups and organisations: Meanwhile Gardens Under 5's playgroup, The North Paddington Society, North Kensington Law Centre and North Kensington Environment Forum.

1.2.2 Response

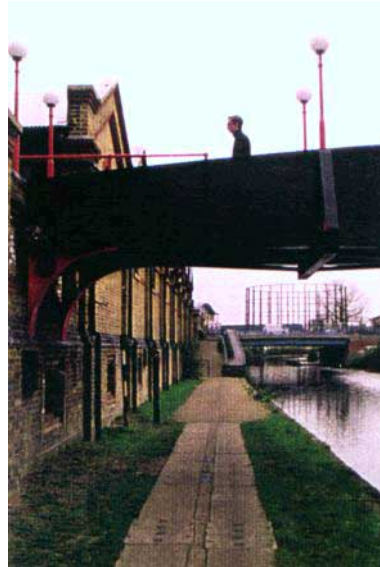
We had most success at the Venture Centre when we were present, and could start up conversations with people about the display. The Venture Centre is well used by parents with young children, and many come from outside the local area. It was apparent that many people did not know about the canal, although it is only a few minutes walk away, or do not think of it as place they would want to visit. Our photographs gave an honest portrayal of the canal, showing graffiti etc. to provoke responses about what could change. Some people found them off-putting. In a future display we would add some ducks and sunshine, for inspiration.

In total, 57 questionnaires were returned. 33 respondents gave contact details and could be approached about a canalside group.

P7 : TACTILE MAP

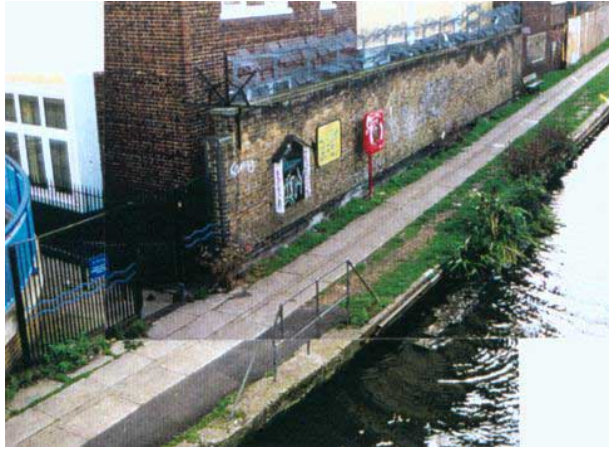


P8 : VENTURE CENTRE DISPLAY 1



**NAVIGATIONAL
LANDMARKS**

P9 : VENTURE CENTRE DISPLAY 2



DEFENSIVE EDGES



HAZARDS AND OBSTRUCTIONS

P10 : VENTURE CENTRE DISPLAY 3



STOPPING PLACES



**EXISTING
SIGNAGE AND
SAFETY**

P11 : VENTURE CENTRE DISPLAY 4



GROUND SURFACE TREATMENT

P12 : NKEF: CANALSIDE QUESTIONNAIRE

North Kensington Environment Forum have prepared this questionnaire as part of a consultation process to find out what people in the local area think about the stretch of canal and the towpath between Meanwhile Gardens and the Sainsbury's store at Ladbroke Grove. We want to find out how the canal is used at the moment, what the problems are and what improvements can be made.

The information gathered from the questionnaires and from discussions with local groups will be submitted in a report to the London's Waterway Partnership. We will use the results of the questionnaires to establish a brief for strategic improvements to the canalside. The intention is to use the findings of this study to support a bid for funding to implement proposals.

Please answer as many of the questions as you can, and return the questionnaire to nkef c/o 36 Cambridge Gardens W10 5UD. Thank you.

1. Whereabouts do you live? (tick one box) North Kensington
North Paddington
Elsewhere.

2. Do you travel into the area during the day e.g. for work or study? **Yes / No**

3. If yes, whereabouts do you travel to? (tick one box) North Kensington
North Paddington

4. How often do you use the canal towpath?

5. Which journeys do you make using the canal towpath?
 And what is the purpose of the journey? e.g. shopping, taking a walk, route to work, cycling

From:		To:		For:	
From:		To:		For:	

6. Would you use the towpath more often if : **Yes / No**
 It was well lit in the evening **Yes / No**
 More people used it **Yes / No**
 It was cleaner **Yes / No**
 There was more signage and information **Yes / No**
 The towpath had a regular and even surface **Yes / No**

7. Do you mind that cyclists use the towpath? **Yes / No**

8. Would you prefer it if there were a clearly marked cycle route and a clearly marked pedestrian route? **Yes / No**

9. Are you concerned about the water quality of the canal? **Yes / No**

10. Are you concerned about your safety when you use the canal towpath? **Yes / No**

11. How do you think safety could be improved?

12. Do you ever stop anywhere along the towpath - for example, to fish or to sit? **Yes / No**

13. If yes, where do you think are the best places to stop and why?

14. What do you think are the good things about the canal? (tick the ones that apply)

The nature and wildlife

The boats

The buildings

The peace and quiet

Anything else?

15. Would you like to see more boat moorings along the canal?

Yes / No

16. Are towpath entrances convenient and easy to use?

Yes / No

17. How could entrances be improved?

18. How could the canal be made more attractive?

Please could you answer the following questions:

19. Are you

male / female

20. Your age group:

16 – 29

30 – 44

45 – 60

over 60

Please write your name and contact details if you would like to:

Please add any other comments or suggestions:

NORTH KENSINGTON ENVIRONMENT FORUM

For more information about the group or this project, please write to:

nkef c/o 36 Cambridge Gardens London W10 5UD or Email: nkef@lineone.net

This project is supported by The London's Waterway Partnership SRB. If you would like more information about London's Waterway Partnership (LWP), please contact:

Helen Woolard on 0171 922 1230 or Web: <http://www.lwp.org> or Email: enquiries@lwp.org

1.2.3 Summary of Findings from Questionnaires

74% of respondents live in North Kensington or North Paddington, so we would expect a good level of local knowledge. The informed nature of the responses suggested that most respondents know about the canal, even though they may not go there often. 52% identified themselves as female, and 28% as male. Over half were between 30 and 44 years old, 30% between 45 and 60 years old. Only 7% were under 30.

The majority suggested they would use the towpath more often if improvements were made. Better lighting, increased use, cleaner environment, more signage and a regular, even surface to the towpath were all seen as valuable improvements. The most positive responses were in favour of good lighting and a cleaner environment.

Lighting was a popular answer but many of the people we spoke to, female and male, felt uneasy about using the towpath at all outside daylight hours. 70% of those who answered the question said they were concerned about their general safety when using the canal towpath. Better lighting may be reassuring at dusk and in the early morning, but it seems unlikely that improved lighting would lead to increased use of the towpath into the night, except in localised areas of activity. Light pollution can be problematic for wildlife.

People were asked how frequently they used the canal towpath. Of those who answered the question, only 12% answered never. 60% used the towpath at least once per month, and 42% used the towpath at least once per week. 10% used the towpath daily. These results show a high level of use, suggesting that many respondents are well-informed about the canal environment.

A lot of local journeys cited Sainsbury's or Meanwhile Gardens as a destination. A majority (55%) of specified journeys began or ended outside the study area. Little Venice, Wormwood Scrubs/ Scrubs Lane and Camden were mentioned most frequently in non-local journeys, but Ealing, Acton and Horsenden Hill were also mentioned. Slightly over half the journeys had an exercise-related purpose, whether walking, cycling or dogwalking. A quarter of all journeys using the canal towpath were for shopping, mostly local journeys to Sainsbury's. 10% of journeys were made by people using the canal for travel to work. For many respondents, these were regular journeys where use of the canal formed a valued part of routine journeys made on foot or cycle.

Most respondents (75%) didn't mind that cyclists use the towpath, but would prefer it if there were clearly marked routes for pedestrians and cyclists. Many people liked to have cyclists passing, to know there are other people around, and quite a few were cyclists themselves, but pedestrians were often concerned about cyclists appearing without warning. One cyclist suggested a code of conduct for cyclists, with notices to tell them to ring their bell and slow down when passing pedestrians.

A lot of people use the canal simply as a route from A to B, and don't consider it a place where they would want to stop. But, of our respondents, a majority stopped. The "best places to stop" included those with a "sense of countryside" (Meanwhile Gardens and outside Sainsbury's), with long views (the bridges), with views of birds, boats and green spaces as well as sunny places and benches with litter bins. Several commented on the freedom from traffic and pollution at the canal. Asked to identify preferences from a choice of four potential good things about the canal, the two top choices were peace and quiet (79%) followed by the nature and wildlife (77%). Boats were quite popular, and buildings were only selected by about a quarter of people. A substantial majority said they would like to see more boat moorings along the canal.

Only two thirds answered the question, "Are towpath entrances convenient and easy to use?". Although the majority answered yes, there were lot of suggestions for improving them. The main points mentioned concerned visibility of entrances (including cutting back planting), ramps rather than steps, removing obstructions for cyclists and buggies, improved signage and better lighting. Some wanted more entrances, and wider gates. Some people were concerned about the entrances being locked when they weren't expected to be, and requesting consistent opening / closing times or leaving them open at all times.

There were a few suggestions to encourage use of the canal by younger people, such as 'free fishing for under 18's, subsidise young canoeists, link with a local secondary school to adopt a stretch', "boat trips for children" and "school projects to do with canal conservation". Safety was a priority for people wanting to bring children to the canal.

Suggestions for improving safety focussed mainly on encouraging natural surveillance through greater use on and off the water, more facilities for the community such as café's and children's play areas, improved lighting and towpath surfaces and the provision of cycle lanes. Some suggested wardens or patrols and an increased police presence. SOS call points and CCTV were also mentioned. Several were concerned about falling into the canal and suggested more lifebelts, a "low wall along the edge" and clean water. 88% said they were concerned about water quality.

More boats, regular cleaning, maintenance and removal of rubbish, more planting, provision of café and toilets and were the most popular suggestions for making the canal more attractive. Others comments included "wheel chair access", "protected areas for nesting birds", "picnic areas" and "making the water clean enough to swim in". There were also concerns about too much development: "It should be looked on as a whole: to be used for walking, fishing, cycling, running; i.e. a healthy leisure interest as well as a route to work but not to beautify it at the expense of its wildness and quietness."

Refer to Appendix A for a full breakdown of the results.

Refer to Appendix B for a full listing of comments from questionnaires.

1.3 COMMUNITY CONSULTATIONS II : GARROW HOUSE

1.3.1 Approach

Next to Halfpenny Steps on the south side is Garrow House, a residential building for the RNIB (Royal National Institute for the Blind), also housing Outreach and Education services.

Garrow House has 31 flats, in near to full occupation. In addition there are 5 bed and breakfast rooms. Accommodation is let on three year assured shorthold tenancy agreements, though tenants are not forced to leave at the end of that period. In January 1999, there were thirty RNIB staff of whom five were visually impaired and 1 hearing impaired.

An initial meeting with Christine Petch, Manager of Garrow House, established her support for the consultation project. She offered to provide support by translating information we supplied into large print or braille as required, and distributing this to Garrow House residents. We were given the use of meeting rooms at no charge. We planned to hold initial meetings with staff and residents, and hold further meetings with residents to develop some specific ideas. This would involve blind and partially sighted users, and those who work with them.

We made a sound recording of a walk along the towpath from end to end. This began to develop ideas of a landscape of sound which could be developed further. The aural highlights were the sounds of geese landing in the water, birds in the trees at Meanwhile gardens and the sound of a narrowboat engine. The more distant sounds of the traffic on the Westway and trains on the Great Western Line gave a more constant sense of location.

We also looked at the visual landmarks which could be aids to navigation and sense of place, such as Trellick Tower on the large scale, and the shape of lamps on a bridge. These ideas were discussed in the meetings with the tactile model and photographs.

1.3.2 Response

We held 3 successful consultation meetings with residents and staff in Garrow House in March and April 1999, and walked along the towpath with a Garrow House resident, who had never done this before. Three staff members from the Outreach department attended the first meeting, and six staff members attended the second. Two Garrow House residents attended the third meeting.

Additional attempts to arrange meetings with the residents of Garrow house were unsuccessful. On two occasions, we arrived at Garrow House for a pre-arranged evening meeting to find that no one knew about the meeting.

1.3.3 Summary of Findings

At the moment the canal is perceived by most residents and staff as a dangerous place. Residents had been advised not to use the canal towpath, or Elkstone Road, to return from the tube but rather go round by Harrow Road. Many Garrow House residents had never used the canal towpath. We were fortunate to find several people willing to participate in a conversation about the speculative transformation of an unfamiliar environment, and this has helped to formulate a realistic brief for future proposals.

Some people reported bad experiences around the canal. One of the staff members had been attacked on the towpath. Several of the staff did not feel safe in the area. A member of staff was followed from the tube. The Education Resource Unit wished to leave Garrow House, and move back to offices in Great Portland Street.

The width of the towpath was identified as a particular problem, and bikes passing close by were a concern, because they tend to approach suddenly and without any audible warning. A few people mentioned the use of surfaces that make a noise when a bike goes over them. The new surfacing to the towpath by Meanwhile Gardens is effective in this respect.

Some people were undaunted by these kind of concerns and used the towpath to shop at Sainsbury's regardless. We learnt that long steep slopes like the one by the Electricity Substation are difficult to negotiate for partially sighted people. And the sound of a flock of birds taking off, that we had identified on the sound recording, can be distressing to some blind people. For partially-sighted people, landmarks like Trellick Tower or the Meanwhile Gardens tower are important aids to navigation: "Trellick is unmistakable". There was interest in the idea of using colour for navigation and orientation as well as sound, particularly if this could involve participation.

We walked with a resident, 'C', from Garrow House to Meanwhile Gardens and back. With one person on each side of him there was no doubt that he was safe, but the irregular surface of the pavings was still hard for him to negotiate.

There was an unmistakable sense of vulnerability in the Garrow House community. In spite of the CCTV cameras around Garrow House, the building itself is sometimes targeted by vandals. One of the residents, 'R', said that the previous Christmas someone removed the payphone from inside Garrow House. He said it was quite easy for someone to follow a resident into the building unnoticed.

'R': "Most of the people here have a very restricted sense of the community. Don't know Portobello Road. Like being in prison...living in the community, but don't know the community life. People like hearing the sound of life going on and identify it. They want to be a part of it."

'R': "Most of the shops at Sainsbury's and Harrow Road are very popular to people who live here. I think its nice if people can use it [the canal]. Mostly they probably only go to one of two places. If they want to go any further than that they have to accompanied by a guide. Some people order by phone. They have to pay a cab to bring their food."

However for the Garrow House residents, and other partially sighted people in the community the canal potentially offers a valuable amenity away from traffic. Christine Petch, the Manager, said she would like to see the canal used more as a resource.

1.3.4 Conclusions drawn from consultations at Garrow House

It was apparent that many residents had very little contact with the local area, as they were either using the facilities at Garrow House or transported by car to another location. This seemed to be the result of a lack of appropriate knowledge or information about the neighbourhood, and a lack of confidence that it would be safe to investigate. There is an opportunity to expand the possibilities and choices for Garrow House residents, and others in the wider community.

At the moment the canal is not a safe place for a blind or partially sighted person to negotiate unaided.

The principle concern that emerged from the consultations was for personal safety, and an understandable wish not to expose oneself to unnecessary difficulty or danger. In our meetings we found on the whole a cautious and defensive approach, though this was not held by everyone. There was a real interest in possibilities which were felt to be safe or close to known routes, such as boat trips and Canal Café with a waterside terrace, just on the other side of Halfpenny Steps.

In areas which are close to known and populous places, such as Halfpenny Steps or Sainsbury's, a more carefully designed accessible environment would provide a feeling of safety and allow more independence to a blind or partially sighted person. Provision of level surfaces on the towpath, and improved accessibility at access points would enable a blind or partially-sighted person to walk comfortably with a sighted companion.

The meeting with residents was not well attended, though the two who attended were keen to participate. We felt that more trust would need to be built up with other residents before they would offer to get involved in a substantial consultation process, and that it may be helpful if the consultation was more focussed on a specific project. This would be a valuable process if the residents were involved through to the conclusion of a practical project, and stood to gain directly from the results.

1.4 CONSULTATIONS III - RNIB JOINT MOBILITY UNIT

A meeting was held with Yvonne Howard and Geoff Lewis from the Joint Mobility Unit in Great Portland Street. The Joint Mobility Unit is a pan-disability group funded by RNIB and the Guide Dogs for the Blind. The Joint Mobility Unit evaluate and advise individuals, organisations and local and central government on, public buildings and housing, the pedestrian environment, transport systems, information systems and research and development. They are also involved in several technical projects aimed at making access to the built environment easier for blind and partially sighted people including OPEN, MoBIC and RNIB React. They would be happy to get involved in a project, but would charge a fee.

There are approximately 1 million blind and partially sighted adults in the United Kingdom, and approximately 5% of these have no sight at all. The remainder have varying degrees of residual sight which may enable them to function visually to different degrees. (DETR) The RNIB needs survey 'Blind and Partially Sighted Adults in Britain' showed that 20% of visually impaired people had not been out at all in the preceding week.

The Joint Mobility Unit provided information and several useful publications including copies of the RNIB journal 'Insight'. We discussed different strategies for this site, the use of paving surfaces, and tactile signage. There is no tactile paving surface to denote water specifically, but there are surfaces to denote general hazards and obstacles. The DETR guide "Guidance on the use of Tactile Paving Surfaces" includes guidance on combining pedestrian paths with cycle paths.

There are many examples of programs and technical solutions for improving access for blind and partially sighted people.

The RNIB React information system, which is being pilot-tested in UK cities at the moment, broadcasts information from 'talking-posts' on main city routes, when a person carrying the React transmitter approaches. The system tells the user directions and distances to transport and facilities, and the user can choose one of several languages for receiving the information. The response from people testing the system has been very positive.

The 'European Cities within Reach' program to promote travel and culture for blind and partially sighted people in Europe initiated projects to improve access to London, Paris, Venice and Turin including a series of 'Walks of the Five Senses' through the Latin Quarter in Paris, and tactile maps and guides.

RBKC run a Talking Newspaper Service.

Another source of useful information is the Centre for Accessible Environments in London.

1.5 CONSULTATIONS IV - CRIME PREVENTION OFFICER

We met with Kathleen Auberleck, the Crime Prevention Officer at Notting Hill Police Station (0208 246 0169), at the canal.

She recommended the installation of as much lighting as possible as a crime-prevention measure, and suggested that vandal-proof fittings set into the ground would be desirable. She was aware that many of the Meanwhile Gardens gardeners were women. She said some had been threatened and equipment had been stolen, and therefore the CPU had issued them with personal alarms.

Garrow House residents had told Kathleen Auberleck that the police have told them not to use towpath. The towpath and Elkstone Road are perceived as dangerous. Residents are advised to use the long route around to Westbourne Park tube via Harrow Road.

She reported that the fear of crime along the towpath was greater than the actual incidence. Golborne was, and may still be, a crime hot-spot in the borough. The Halfpenny Steps bridge used to be a popular escape route, but since CCTV has been installed this has had a dramatic effect on crime reduction.

Kathleen Auberleck agreed that improvements to the towpath would improve safety because more people would use it. She suggested it should be written into the police strategy that patrols visit the towpath twice a day. She said that people complained of the lack of a visible police presence, as we found in our own research.

She mentioned colleagues at Earls Court Crime prevention unit who had installed a 'tardis' where a public-access phone booth linked to the police station to get information or to ask for assistance. The kiosk was also equipped with CCTV. (Contact: Earls Court Crime Prevention Unit : Glen Duggan and Andy Clancey)

She also suggested the following contacts:

Tollbridge Close Neighbourhood Watch (Housing Association property)

Terry Felstead - RBKC Borough Engineer - (working on lighting around Ladbroke Grove Bridge and Sainsbury's)

Christine o'Donahue - Community Safety Group (partnership between Police and RBKC)

RBKC Tenant's Management Organisation Ltd. 'Code of practice on Anti-social behaviour'

1.6 CONCLUSIONS

For this study we have taken a fragment of the canal network, which superficially looks much like any other. But on closer inspection it reveals an identity which is quite specific to this place. A similar process could be applied to other parts of the canal system.

This research shows the aspects that people value about the environment are specific to this area, and contribute to the development of a sense of place which should be valued in future development. A lot of people appreciate a sense of "the country", the freedom from cars and pollution and the escape from the city. This stretch of canal has two impressive green spaces in Meanwhile Gardens which has access from the towpath, and the Kensal Green Cemetery which can be seen across the canal, and these are popular stopping places. It is important to build on existing uses and patterns as well as inventing new ones.

The responses show strong interest in the canal, and use of it, from a diverse range of people. People are acutely aware of the atmosphere of neglect along the canal, but are full of ideas and suggestions for improvements. In developing proposals for this area, there is a potential to draw out aspects of the site which are less obvious. For example the history of the canal, and the buildings did not feature strongly in people's comments. Projects should make contemporary connections with heritage and nature, which are major strengths of the canal, and reveal these things in fresh ways. There is plenty of scope for developing creative ideas to solve problems of access, signage and developing links to surrounding areas for example.

The location of the canal on the extremities of two boroughs may well be a factor contributing to the difficulties with maintenance and lack of police presence. Building on the interest of individuals and existing groups, there seems to be a real potential to develop a canal community interest in this area. This may reinforce the local identity and link existing communities on each side of the canal. Involving local people in decision-making about the development of the canal must benefit its future, as people feel they have a 'stake' in the public space.

Most people in our survey were prepared to co-operate with other users to some extent, for example cyclists co-operating with pedestrians. However if further improvements are implemented around the canal, and usage increases, this will introduce new pressures, and this loose co-operation will be less effective. Many people favoured separate pathways for cyclists and pedestrians in principle. On this stretch of canal there are few sections where the towpath is wide enough at present to allow this. A through mixed-use pedestrian/cycle path is not possible on the existing towpath, but some kind of zoning system to allow pedestrian or cycle priority in designated areas is likely to be needed.

As visitor numbers increase, others who appreciate the tranquillity of the canal may be driven away. There is a conflict of interest in the wish to improve the accessibility and amenity of the canal environment, and the wish to preserve the special character of the place. This must be carefully balanced.

The majority of people we consulted appreciated the nature and wildlife and peace and quiet, while also favouring an increase in use of the canal, moorings and signage. Large numbers of visitors do not coexist happily with wildlife. There are potential conflicts between increased use of the waterway and preservation of wildlife habitats. In particular nesting sites can be disturbed by people and water traffic, and the marginal aquatic habitats at the edges of the canal may be threatened.

The baseline improvements proposed are of benefit to all- improved safety, cleanliness, maintenance and accessibility. This research has revealed the differences in the detailed perceptions and requirements of different groups in the community. For example, for people with reduced mobility or partial sight the speed of approach, and domineering behaviour of some cyclists, is far more disturbing than to a fully mobile, sighted person.

There is an opportunity here to create a contemporary public space for the community, that responds sensitively to the requirements of its' various members. The whole community will benefit from increased accessibility, and a baseline standard of accessibility should be adopted for all new works to the canal- from availability of information about the canal, navigation and way-finding to the physical accessibility of the canal environment and access points. It is also desirable to encourage new users to the canal - including blind and partially sighted, as well as children and disabled users - by providing suitable, safe environments and facilities. In specific areas, tactile paving, and appropriate signage should be considered to make an area fully accessible to independent blind and partially sighted users.

Based on the findings of these consultations there is a need for a range of specific solutions within the overriding concept of a new accessible public space for the city. Managing access for different users is necessary to improve access for all. For example, some users require a safe vantage point to enjoy the canal, some want to walk or cycle over long distances, others want to sit quietly and wait for fish. Organising the happy coexistence of these different functions is the key to the success and character of this project.

SECTION 2 - RECOMMENDATIONS AND PROPOSALS

This study is intended to provide a basis for an integrated approach to developing project proposals for this stretch of the canal. The objective was to investigate how greater use and involvement with the canalside space could be encouraged, and to propose strategies for the integration of the canal into the local area - socially, economically and environmentally. In response to the consultation process and research that was undertaken we have identified two main areas that can be the springboard to take the process forward.

Firstly, developing a sense of ownership, and raising awareness of the canal should be key objectives that underpin subsequent proposals. The canal can feel like a no-mans land and often its status as public space is not clear.

The proposal is to foster a more cohesive canal community for this area, building on existing networks. There are a number of disparate groups who already have an interest in the canal. A comprehensive list of stakeholders from the local community and local businesses must be identified, and those who can represent the needs of different groups in the wider community.

To combat the sense of neglect along some stretches of the canal, an ongoing maintenance and management programme must be developed in partnership with non-statutory stakeholders. It must be transparent which agencies are responsible for each aspect of maintenance and management.

Secondly, the idea of a local plan is proposed to provide a framework for change. The plan is a mechanism for facilitating interlocking practical initiatives and ensuring that a broad range of interests are represented. It gives a coherent shape to the views of local people. It will be a living document, and a benchmark for assessing the quality of proposals. It is concerned with information provision, as well as development and projects.

We propose a three-point plan to implement these initiatives:

A) GROUP	people	Stakeholders - the 'Splash Group'.
B) PLAN	framework	The Local Plan - the 'Splash Plan'
C) PROJECTS	action	Specific projects

Funding for start-up, administration and maintenance of these will be required.

A) GROUP - THE 'SPLASH GROUP'

- Research for this report has already identified thirty-three individuals and twelve local groups who could be invited to join the 'Splash Group'. Further work is needed to draw together the various communities and individuals with an interest in this part of the canal.
- It is important that the group is networked with the different agencies and statutory authorities responsible for the canal and adjacent space, including the police.
- The 'Splash Group' would function as a forum, and networking organisation. It's initial objective would be to feed ideas into the formulation of the 'Splash Plan'.
- The 'Splash Group' could be set up under the **nkef** umbrella. This group could meet four times a year, as part of **nkef's** programme of meetings. **nkef** members have been actively involved over several years in a wide range of canal issues including campaigning for the sustainable development of Kensal Green Gas Works, promoting new boat moorings, and commenting on development proposals for Meanwhile Gardens, Sainsburys and Canalot Studios.
- We propose that a web site and e-group are set up immediately. This should be a simple structure, to provide background information about the group and a bulletin-board for members to exchange ideas and information between quarterly meetings. Using the internet, an e-group can establish an active membership very rapidly.

B) PLAN - THE 'SPLASH PLAN'

- A coherent vision is needed to give an identity to this stretch of the canal, and to prevent a piecemeal approach to any project proposals. The information presented in this report can be a base for discussion in the development of the 'Splash Plan' vision.
- The plan will focus objectives and priorities for development, and can be used to stimulate ideas and interest in the canal. It can be distributed among local groups, held in the local libraries and posted on the web. As objectives and opportunities will change over time, a formal revision of the plan could be issued once or twice a year.

C) PROJECTS

- The canal is an urban street with unique qualities. British Waterways and London's Waterway Partnership must give a positive lead to think differently about its regeneration. An investigative and considered approach to this site is essential to preserve the aspects of the place that people already appreciate, and to promote appropriate innovation.
- Projects of different scales are proposed around six key themes: **public space, accessibility, information landscape, urban nature, sustainable technologies, transport**. These themes will create a positive identity for the area and are a response to the lack of amenity value found by this study. Particular projects would be implemented according to priority over a period of time, to progressively transform the physical and social environment.

T1 : PUBLIC SPACE

This is an opportunity to stimulate thinking about the use of public spaces in the city and to promote the highest quality of design for this site as an integrated part of London's network of public spaces. A combination of strategic physical improvements, better security and opportunities for use are needed. We propose adopting a partnership approach to localised improvements with owners of adjacent land, and enhancing existing patterns of use with well-designed street furniture - benches, bins etc. (see also T3 : Information Landscape).

Proposal: enhance canalside public space
Proposed site: waterside - Kensal Green Gas Works development site
 To work in partnership with the Peabody Trust, the site developers, to ensure maximum benefit for the public realm, and integration of the development with public access facilities on the canalside.

Proposal: police kiosk
Proposed site: Meanwhile Gardens or Halfpenny Steps
 As suggested by the community police officer (see p.30), a kiosk for police to stop at on their patrol, also providing information and a CCTV link to the police station. A towpath patrol could be written into the community safety plan.

Proposal: temporary events
Proposed site: as appropriate
 The canal and its surroundings are an inspirational site for public art events, film screenings, performance, mobile theatre etc. This is an opportunity for partnership with the many local creative and media industries, and to raise the profile of the site among local businesses and residents.

T2 : ACCESSIBILITY

Improving all aspects of accessibility is essential to encourage greater participation in public spaces, for everyone. To achieve this requires a thoughtful and specific approach to the site and its opportunities.

Proposal: zoning strategy
Proposed site: whole site
 A strategy for management of different uses and activities around the canal, translated into appropriate surface treatments. Defined routes for pedestrians and cyclists where necessary to allow specialist activity areas for different users.

Proposal: modify access points
Proposed site: Wedlake St. (by Halfpenny Steps) and Adela St.
 These two sites could be used to demonstrate the benefits of well-designed access points including ramped access, good visibility, lighting, signage, and a safe waiting area on the level between ramp and towpath.

Proposal: fully accessible waterside facility
Proposed site: Garrow House/Wedlake St. + adjacent to Sainsbury's
 To provide safe independent access for blind and partially sighted people, and others, to a purpose-designed site adjacent to the towpath for enjoyment of the sounds and sensations of the waterside. To include surface treatment, signage.

T3 : INFORMATION LANDSCAPE / SIGNAGE

The design of signage will contribute towards the character and identity of the area. We propose a less corporate approach to signage and information, such as can be seen around the Borough Market area in Southwark. Here brass letters have been set into the surfaces of pavements and buildings, or names carved into the fabric of buildings and the streetscape. The provision of information is critical to increasing use of the canal and integrating the site into the local area and the city.

Proposal: signage

Proposed site: at access points and stopping places

An overall concept for information provision will consider signage as part of an integrated design concept for street furniture. Signage should inform about distances to the access points, links to local places, canal management and maintenance contacts, and could include historical information, local stories etc. Tactile signage and talking signs should be considered.

Proposal: walk maps

Proposed site:

Local walk maps, including the canal as part of walks linking to sites of interest, promote the amenity value of the canal.

Proposal: sound landscape

Proposed site: as applicable

An interactive installation to emphasise the particular sound landscape of the canal, and reveal its special qualities. Local children could be involved in the capture of sounds for playback on the site.

Proposal: billboard installation + competition

Proposed site: billboard site at Halfpenny Steps

Halfpenny steps pedestrian bridge is a well-used crossing point at the centre of the site. The billboard site at Halfpenny Steps could be used to host an information project about the canal, to reach out to new audiences. This could be set up as a competition for local artists or schoolchildren.

T4 : URBAN NATURE

The canal environment provides an important habitat for nature in the city, and the natural aspects of the site are much appreciated by visitors. Improvements to the site must support the natural environment, maintain some areas of lesser use, and provide educational initiatives to inform visitors about the ecology of this special habitat. The interaction between city and nature in such proximity is a stimulus for new creative plans for urban landscape on this site.

Proposal: water quality monitoring

Proposed site: outside Sainbury's

Responding to peoples' desire to know about water quality, a collaborative project between the Environment Agency and an artist or designer could reveal this information to the public in an accessible way. An example of a related project, but on a larger scale, is the water tower at Shepherds Bush roundabout that responds to the level of water in the ring main.

Proposal: nature walks**Proposed site: whole site**

Led by local naturalists, these walks would extend into the adjacent Kensal Green Cemetery and along the towpath towards Scrubs Lane. To enhance peoples experience and knowledge of the surprisingly diverse species of flora and fauna that inhabit the site including bats, woodpeckers and voles.

Proposal: enhance biodiversity**Proposed site: whole site**

Identify areas that can be enhanced to promote colonisation by existing and new species, such as water margin habitat, bat boxes. Identify areas which should be preserved as quieter areas with less passing traffic and human interference..

T5 : SUSTAINABLE TECHNOLOGIES

Renewable energy technologies are a key factor in moving towards urban sustainability. The Peabody Trust development at Kensal Village is set to be the biggest 'solar village' in the UK, using solar panels as a source of energy. **nkef** initiated an ongoing campaign for the sustainable development of this site. Such a unique development is assured of attracting considerable interest, and this could be an opportunity to attract funding to promote other new technologies in this area, as well as a broad-based campaign for exemplary sustainability criteria to be adopted in all canal improvements.

Proposal: solar powered lighting**Proposed site: access points****Proposal: solar powered boats****Proposed site: see TRANSPORT****T6 : TRANSPORT**

Reducing dependence on the car is a primary objective of the new Greater London Authority, and freedom from traffic and pollution is a valued aspect of the site. Proposals should promote sustainable water-based transport, cycle routes, walking and links to public transport as part of a car-free integrated transport plan for this area.

Proposal: new waterbus-route to Camden Lock**Proposed site: waterbus stop at Meanwhile Gardens**

To link Portobello Market to Camden Lock and Camden Market. Connecting the two London markets will potentially bring more weekend visitors, with economic benefits to the area. The route could be extended to Kensal Green Basin when the Kensal Village mixed-use development is complete.

Proposal: code of conduct for cyclists**Proposed site:**

Information could be distributed via organisations like the London Cycling Campaign to encourage cyclists to be courteous when passing pedestrians on the towpath.

APPENDIX A - BREAKDOWN OF RESULTS OF QUESTIONNAIRE

The following analysis is based on 57 completed questionnaires.

1. Whereabouts do you live?

N. Kensington	56%
N. Paddington	18%
Elsewhere	26%

2. Do you travel into the area during the day e.g. for work or study?

Yes	37%
No	51%
Void	12%

3.If yes, whereabouts do you travel to?

North Kensington	71%
North Paddington	14%
void	5%
both	10%

6. Would you use the towpath more often if:

a) it was well lit?	yes	61%
	no	30%
	void	9%

b) more people used it?	yes	58%
	no	32%
	void	10%

c) it was cleaner?	yes	63%
	no	21%
	void	16%

d) there was more signage?	yes	56%
	no	28%
	void	16%

e) the towpath had a regular and even surface?	yes	52%
	no	32%
	void	16%

7.Do you mind that cyclists use the towpath?

yes	23%
no	75%
void	2%

8. Would you prefer it if there were a clearly marked cycle route and a clearly marked pedestrian route?

yes	63%
no	26%
void	11%

9. Are you concerned about the water quality of the canal?

yes	88%
no	7%
void	5%

10. Are you concerned about your safety when you use the canal towpath?

yes	61%
no	26%
void	13%

12. Do you ever stop anywhere along the towpath for example to fish or to sit?

yes	47%
no	37%
void	16%

14. what do you think are the good things about the canal?

the nature and wildlife	77%
the boats	63%
the buildings	26%
the peace and quiet	79%

15. Would you like to see more boat moorings along the canal?

yes	65%
no	21%
void	14%

16. Are towpath entrances convenient and easy to use?

yes	46%
no	21%
void	33%

19. Are you?

male	28%
female	52%
void	19%

20. Your age group

16-29	7%
30-44	51%
45-60	30%
over 60	5%
void	7%

APPENDIX B - COMMENTS FROM QUESTIONNAIRES

The source of each comment is identified as follows:

Venture Centre (VC); North Kensington Law Centre (LC); Meanwhile Gardens (MG); North Paddington Society (NP); North Kensington Environment Forum (NK); Other (O).

11. How do you think safety could be improved?

- Lights, well-maintained, police inspection (VC)
- More development e.g. new homes, projects, community focus point (VC)
- Play areas for kids and café (VC)
- More lighting, more publicity about its existence, warden patrol (VC)
- More people using it and less places to hide (VC)
- Lighting, a low wall along the edge (VC)
- More amenities and information and greening up to attract more people (VC)
- CCTV (VC)
- Even surfaces, bike lanes, lighting, SOS call points, more boats(LC)
- 'park-keeper' (MG)
- Patrols (MG)
- More life belts (MG)
- Stopping drinkers (MG)
- Woman was murdered several years ago – study crime statistics identify any patterns, canvas opinion(NP)
- Dog litter bins (NP)
- Cycle lane(NP)
- Increased police presence(NP)
- More natural surveillance more access(NK)
- Some lighting, greater use (NK)
- Tell people about the facility (NK)
- Clean water in case you fall in

13. Where do you think are the best places to stop and why?

- Meanwhile Gardens and opposite Kensal Green Cemetery – green space gives sense of countryside (VC)
- Bridges – places with views, pubs (VC)
- Benches with rubbish bins (VC)
- Sainsbury's and Meanwhile Gardens (LC)
- In the sun (MG)
- Watching barges and birds (MG)
- Opposite the cemetery - feeling of being in the countryside (NP)
- The MInd Garden at Meanwhile Gardens (O)

14. Good things about the canal - anything else?

- A different perspective on London (NK)
- It is separate from the domination of the car and lorry traffic which ruins so much of London. (NK)
- Grassy flowery banks (NK)

- Not that many people there (O)
- Very nice area despite the A40 so near (NP)
- The Westbourne Green gardening and landscaping is a plus. (NP)
- The lack of traffic, noise and fumes, pollution (NP)
- The water (NP)
- Dogs (MG)
- Change of environment (MG)
- Lack of cars (MG)
- Pleasant in summertime (LC)
- Friendlier than on streets, safer (as cyclist) (LC)
- Quickest route between some places (LC)
- The canal route (NP)
- History- industrial revolution etc, means of transport potentially (VC)
- The pubs. Canal people are a mix-great (VC)
- Really important that the fact there is nature and wildlife in the heart of London is maintained - not to beautify it (VC)

17. How could entrances be improved?

- Entrances should be obvious and clean - planting should be pruned and maintained (VC)
- Signage giving directions (VC)
- Slopes for wheelchairs and buggies (VC)
- Removing barriers that obstruct cyclists and buggies (VC)
- Make them more visible (LC)
- More even surfaces (LC)
- Cleaner (LC)
- Slopes for prams (MG)
- More of them (MG)
- Improve signage (MG)
- Brighter lights at night and more litter bins (NP)
- More connections required (NP)
- Making sure they are all open at the same time (NP)
- Ramps instead of steps (NK)
- Lighting (NK)
- Signage of routes (NK)
- Wider gaps and not locked at night (NK)
- Clear signing from pavement (NK)
- More entrances and less concealed O
- Opened when they are supposed to be O

18. How could the canal be made more attractive?

- By regularly cleaning it (VC)
- A net pulled along daily to remove the rubbish (VC)
- More flora and fauna (VC)
- Wheel chair access, toilets, tea kiosk (VC)
- Local boats for transport (VC)
- Regular cleaning of towpath and canal (LC)
- More planting (LC)
- More planting (MG)
- Flowering trees (MG)

- Making the water clean enough to swim in (MG)
- Benches, picnic areas (MG)
- Regular cleaning (MG)
- Cafe (MG)
- More boats (MG)
- Cull Canada geese, hose down urine during carnival (NP)
- More planting, benches, lighting and notices asking people to remove litter (NP)
- Protected areas for nesting birds (NP)
- Less rubbish in the water and less depressing looking buildings (NP)
- Maintenance and investment and use of the water for transport (NP)
- Reduce the speed of cyclists (NP)
- Better signage, more native planting, remove graffiti and eyesores (NK)
- More openings on to the canal between buildings (NK)
- Regular maintenance (NK)

Other comments

“It should be looked upon as a whole: to be used for walking, fishing, cycling, running; i.e. a healthy leisure interest as well as a route to go to work but not to beautify it at the expense of its wilderness and quietness.” (VC)

“Unfortunately many people don’t realise it’s there i.e. the link up between Portobello Rd. Market and Little Venice / Zoo.”

“Youth hostel and club boat by Scrubs Lane- close enough to Ladbroke Grove and transport far enough to allow young people to party all night and no cars need be used.” (VC)

“The canal is a treasure.” (VC)

“I feel unsafe walking the towpath on my own as a friend was attacked in broad daylight 10.00am along by Meanwhile Gardens.” (VC)

“All I mentioned would be only ideal if safety for all is done all along the canal, but I would be happy to see this as a place for me and my kids to visit during holidays especially.” (VC)

“Canal appears to be an underused resource and could be made much more accessible.” (VC)

“If it was made clean and attractive more people would use it and less graffiti would be done. Presence of police and good lighting would ensure safety and make it more of an investment instead of a dump yard that its going towards becoming.” (VC)

“The path is very narrow under bridges and it feels quite scary walking under them and they smell of men’s wee.” (LC)

“I use the path for cycling mainly I imagine many pedestrians may not want cyclists. I think it is important both have access but that there are notices about how cyclists should use the route e.g. slow down use bell when pedestrians are about.” (LC)

“Mass voluntary clean up.” (LC)

“It will be nice if to added more point for people who want to join boat journey in the canal.” (MG)

“Boat trips for children – promenade.” (MG)

“School projects to do with canal conservation.” (MG)

“The canal should be patrolled more by the police. How often do you see the police walking along the canal? People might feel safer.” (MG)

“I miss the Narrow Boat pub where Sainsbury’s is also the pottery drop in used to be a good facility.” (MG)

“Free fishing for under 18s encourage and subsidise the young canoeists, link with a local secondary school to adopt that stretch and plan and subsidise activities encourage commercial use.” (NP)

“The canal and banksides are ecologically very delicate. I would like to see the use of weed killer banned.” (O)

APPENDIX C - FROM LONDON ECOLOGY UNIT- SURVEY 1994

4.3 SITES OF METROPOLITAN IMPORTANCE

M6 Grand Union Canal (Paddington Branch)

Grid Ref TQ 235 824 Length 0.9 km in K&C

Planning designation Area of Local Character.

Major habitats Standing water, neutral grassland (semi-improved), roughland, scrub, scattered trees, wet marginal vegetation, tall herbs, vegetated walls.

Description The Paddington Branch is part of the Grand Union and Regent's Canals Metropolitan Site, chosen particularly for its aquatic flora and fauna, breeding wildfowl and strategic importance as a green corridor spanning the city. The canal runs through the Borough for approximately 0.9km. An additional 1.1km to the east of this will come into the Borough from Westminster after boundary changes in April 1994. The northern canal verge is covered, for most of its length, with scrub and scattered trees which overhang the water. The scrub includes suckering English elm, young sycamore and bramble. Most of the mature trees are suckering grey poplar and aspen, but horse chestnut, crack willow and ash also occur. To the east the scrub is more open and there are areas of tall herbs and coarse grassland dominated by false oat-grass, cock's foot and common nettle. The southern verge, with a towpath, has a narrow strip of mown neutral grassland next to the water where cock's foot, common couch, false oat-grass and creeping bent are dominant and herbs include common bird's-foot-trefoil, meadow vetchling and frequent clumps of hard rush. A strip of scrub and roughland lies between the towpath and boundary wall. Bramble and common nettle are dominant, with occasional bushes of hawthorn. Blackthorn and hazel and a variety of all herbs such as cow parsley, hemlock and lesser burdock. The brick boundary wall is vegetated, notably with hart's-tongue.

The canal walls are constructed from concrete and steel piling for most of their length and are sparsely vegetated. A raised brick length which arches over the entrance to the eastern canal basin is an exception, with typical species such as gypsywort, buddelia and male fern and five notable species: skullcap, hemlock water-dropwort, London bur-marigold, black spleenwort and fern-grass. Some of these species occur sparingly elsewhere along this length of the canal. Emergent vegetation is limited to small stands of sweet flag and yellow iris, with great willow herb, false fox-sedge, water dock and reed sweet-grass, along the northern bank. Fennel pondweed was the only submerged species recorded, although suspended sediment made observation difficult.

The Kensington and Chelsea length may be important for breeding birds. Broods of moorhen, coot, mallard and tufted duck were recorded during the present survey. A wide variety of fish occur in the canal. Several species of butterfly and dragonfly have been recorded and bats have been seen feeding over the canal. Otherwise there are no known records for invertebrates and mammals.

Data GLC Wildlife Habitat Survey 1985/Borough Ecological Survey 1993 (site 12054), Management plan (LCS 1986).

APPENDIX D - FROM RBKC MAMMAL BOROUGH SURVEY 1997

3.1 Grand Union Canal (Paddington Branch)

3.1.1 Site Description

The canal system is strategically important ecological and landscape feature in London. Its major habitats included the standing water, scattered trees, vegetated walls, neutral grassland (semi-improved), rough land, and wet marginal vegetation. The short section in Kensington and Chelsea lies between the Kensal Green Gas Works and Kensal Green Cemetery, producing one of the largest sites in the borough for mammals, and with a corridor linking the borough to outer London boroughs.

3.1.2 Historical Records

Records of common rat were obtained on 29th March 1995 during the Borough Amphibian and Reptile Survey undertaken by the London Amphibian & Reptile Group.

3.1.3 Site Status

London Ecology Unit: Site Metropolitan Importance

London Bat Group: Site of Local Importance

3.1.4 Survey Result

A total of 15 Longworth traps were set out from behind the gas work cylinders along the vegetated wall up to the borough boundary line on 5th December 1997. The only species captured were 2 juvenile wood mice.

Although no field signs of common rat were detected, it is likely that they are still present. The Ecology Service have regularly observed rats in the vicinity of the site. Whilst typical riparian mammals, such as otters and water voles, have never been recorded from the borough, other more widespread species in London, particularly foxes and house mice, probably occur here from time to time.

3.3 Kensal Green Cemetery

3.3.1 Site Description

The cemetery grassland contains an assemblage of unusual plant species of old meadows or pasture. Habitats present include herb-rich neutral grassland, scrub, rough land, non-native broad-leaved woodland, vegetated walls and tombstones. This extensive site provides excellent cover for small mammals.

3.3.2 Historical Records

The only historical records from this site are of bank and field voles which were recorded under refugia (sheets of metal, roofing felt and wood provided for animals to shelter or bask under) used during the 1995 Borough Amphibian & Reptile Survey carried out by the London Amphibian and Reptile Group.

3.3.3 Site Status

London Ecology Unit: Site of Metropolitan Importance

London Bat Group: Site of Local Importance

3.3.4 Survey Results

This site has the highest mammal diversity in the borough. The most significant observation was a weasel, on 6th October 1997, which was photographed by Tim Freed. Also recorded by direct observation and field signs were hedgehog, common rat and grey squirrel.

The live-trapping programme using a total of 47 Longworth traps over several nights in October 1997 revealed the presence of bank vole, field vole and wood mouse.

APPENDIX E- FROM RBKC BREEDING BIRD SURVEY 1997

GRAND UNION CANAL (PADDINGTON BRANCH)

SITE OF METROPOLITAN IMPORTANCE

Grid Ref: TQ2382

Length: 1.2km (0.75miles) in RBK&C

Owner/manager: British Waterways

Number of visits: 3

LIST OF SPECIES OBSERVED

B=breeding (with number of pairs in brackets)

PB=possibly breeding M=passage migrant

CORMORANT
 GREY HERON
 MUTE SWAN
 CANADA GOOSE - B (2 & 2 nearby)
 MALLARD - B (2+)
 TUFTED DUCK - B (1)
 KESTREL
 COOT - B (5)
 MOORHEN - B (4)
 COMMON SANDPIPER - M
 LESSER BLACK BACKED GULL
 COMMON TERN - (B some distance away)
 WOODPIGEON - B (4+)
 SWIFT - M
 CARRION CROW - (B nearby)
 GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER - (PB nearby)
 GREEN WOODPECKER - (PB nearby)
 PIED WAGTAIL
 WREN - B (2+)
 DUNNOCK - B (1+)
 ROBIN - (1)
 BLACKBIRD (7+)
 SONG THRUSH
 WHITETHROAT - M (& 1B nearby)
 BLACKCAP - M (& 1B nearby)
 CHIFFCHAFF - M
 WILLOW WARBLER - M (& 1B nearby)
 LONG TAILED TIT - B (1)
 BLUE TIT - (B nearby)
 GREAT TIT- (B nearby)
 JAY - (B nearby)
 MAGPIE - (B nearby)
 STARLING - B (4+)
 HOUSE SPARROW - B (20+)
 CHAFFINCH - B (1)
 GREENFINCH - B (1)
 GOLDFINCH - B (3)

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