THE STUDY

The Union Canal Towpath Study is a project aimed at improving the usability of the towpath along the Union Canal. The study involves various strategies to address issues such as towpath width, pedestrian safety, and accessibility. The project team has recognized the importance of these issues and has identified a need for further developments to enhance the towpath's usability.

TOWPATH WIDTH

The study has shown that the width of the towpath is a critical issue for many users. It is advised by Sustrans that a non-segregated path should be a minimum of 3.0 metres wide. However, at long stretches of the route, the path is not wide enough to provide a safe environment and often pedestrians have to stand on the verge to give room for others.

The project team are recognizing that this is not possible throughout the entire length of the path. In some sections, the water space being a minimum of 4 m wide: the towpath width will, therefore, be to sensible to widen the path in order to accommodate pedestrians and cyclists.

Soft widening is one of the strategies identified in the study. It involves retaining existing hedgerow and verge to create a wider path. Intrusive widening, on the other hand, involves extending the path into the water space through decking platforms.

The study of the towpath has shown that additional access opportunities to/from the towpath to the local and nearby infrastructure is necessary.桥孔沿路径狭窄和/或视线受阻，需要额外的访问机会。

Overall social improvements strategies include:

- Educational user strategies with focus on hierarchy and use of existing infrastructure.
- A balance between artistic/alternative and functional lighting.
- User-friendly surfacing along the entire towpath.
- Additional access opportunities to/from the towpath to the local and nearby infrastructure.
- Bridge holes along the towpath.

The feedback and information gathered from our research, consultations, and stakeholder findings. These key findings will influence impending design proposals.

Alternative Routes

The study has identified possible alternative route opportunities, social and behavioural strategies, etc. to make the usability of the towpath wider. The project team is considering the feasibility of these strategies as part of the study.

The feedback and information gathered from our research, consultations, and stakeholder findings. These key findings will influence impending design proposals.

The project team is considering the feasibility of these strategies as part of the study. In the future, when funding becomes available, Scottish Canals will look to implement the strategies identified in the study.

The Union Canal Towpath Study aims to improve the usability of the towpath along the Union Canal, ensuring a safe and enjoyable experience for all users. The project is a collaborative effort involving various stakeholders and aims to address the needs of pedestrians, cyclists, and other users of the towpath.
BRIDGE HOLES
At many of the bridge holes, especially the original bridges, the towpath going through is narrow and/or sightlines are compromised, creating a pinch point and a hazard for all types of users going through. Often the path under the bridges is made of an uneven laid cobblestone or a combination of a wide hard stone edge and a winding path, which can be slippery when the winding material is upon the stone.

The study has highlighted a general issue of pinch points at the bridge holes from Viewforth Bridge to the west of Hailes Quarry Park and that the path through bridge holes West for Scott Russell Aqueduct often have the combination of hard edge and winding path.

There are a series of opportunities to address the pinch point issues at bridge holes through widening the towpath either physically or visually with respect for the width of the water space, being a minimum of 4 m wide:

- Soft widening
- Hard widening
- Intrusive (structural) widening
- Visual widening

PLACEMAKING
The aim of introducing placemaking along the towpath is to break up the linear interpretation of the towpath and create nodes which can stimulate a more dynamic experience while travelling along the towpath.

Placemaking can have a different level of detail, and where there are opportunities to make placemaking at key areas, it can also be effective to combine placemaking with wayfinding and to add significant elements, like seating, throughout the length of the path.

There are significant areas, such as west of Harrison Park, between Leamington Lift Bridge and Viewforth Bridge, and at the green stretch at Wester Hailes, where significant placemaking strategies could be developed. In other cases, such as at aqueducts and west of Yeaman Place Bridge, the implementation of seating could be impactful in placemaking.

Placemaking can as an example be in forms of:

- Seating
- Urban playground
- Lighting features
- Picnic areas
- Surface changes

DO IT YOUR WAY - HAVE YOUR SAY
SEND YOUR SUGGESTION TO 17015@HARRISONSTEVENS.CO.UK
FIND THE STUDY REPORT VIA WWW.SCOTTISHCANALS.CO.UK
UNION CANAL TOWPATH STUDY
EDINBURGH UNION CANAL | JUNE 2017

ALTERNATIVE ROUTES

Alternative routes are paths leading cyclists off the towpath and along partially existing parallel paths. The alternative routes are mainly to guide commuting cyclists off the towpath to a parallel path, but they will also be designed for mixed and accessible use.

The opportunity for having alternative routes are mainly present at bridges West of Scott Russell Aqueduct, where existing paths are unofficially leading cyclists above the bridge and East of Scott Russell Aqueduct at connections to parks, e.g. at Harrison Park and Redhall, where desire lines and existing infrastructure/paths create the base for alternative routes.

Alternative Routes can also go to a wider extent and include good cycle facilities on the parallel main roads. These could particularly be along Dundee Street/Slateford Road/Lanark Road, but also to some extent Gorgie Road and Colinton Road, to provide good and safe alternative routes for commuter cyclist off the towpath. Feasibility study and proposals for alternative routes have been done by Urban Pioneers in 2014 and presented via the report Union Canal Towpath - Edinburgh - Proposal for Improvements & Supplementary Cycle Routes.

Alternative routes can be introduced through:

- Signing to existing alternative routes
- Surface changes to lead the cyclists off the main towpath in a smooth curve for further on returning to the main towpath
- Intrusive structural changes

ACCESS IMPROVEMENT

Access improvement opportunities are points along the towpath where it is desired to have an additional access opportunity to/from the towpath to the local and wider context. These can be new access points and/or improvement of existing access points to make these more accessible and convenient for the towpath users.

Locations of access improvement opportunities are based on observed desire routes in the landscape e.g. at Harrison Park and at Wester Hailes and/or requested by stakeholders via consultation, e.g. at Yeaman Place.

One of the aims of additional access improvement is to guide the public to use these paths to avoid conflicts when people access the towpath via private gardens.

Access improvements can have different forms and could be:

- Ramps to connect to existing paths
- Steps to connect to existing road/bridge
- Upgrading desire lines and minor paths to official paths by resurfacing
- Wheeling ramps at existing steps
- Ramps to existing footbridges and bridge crossings
TOWPATH CODE OF CONDUCT

The number of users of the canal and the towpath has increased over the years as the towpath offers space for a series of good outdoor activities. Unfortunately, many of the users are not aware of the current Towpath Code of Conduct by Scottish Canal and/or not aware of how to approach and show respect for other users while using a shared non-segregated path.

The issues occur especially at access points to the towpath, at situations where different user groups want to pass each other and at bridge holes where sightlines are restricted.

A Towpath Code of Conduct should educate and advise on how to react, behave and respect other towpath users. It should focus on the hierarchy of users and general use of shared paths and not just one user group. The strategy should be positive and focus on information and the 'right thing to do' in certain situations. The strategy could be combined with changes in surfaces material to indicate the code of conduct at e.g. pinch points and access points.

A Code of Conduct for the use of shared paths could be combined with a wider strategy for shared non-segregated paths. The project team, therefore, advise that a code of conduct is to be developed and implemented wider than just concerning the Union Canal Towpath. The towpath will though offer a great opportunity as a test area for social improvement strategies.

WAYFINDING & SIGNAGE

Wayfinding and signage were raised as key issues during the consultation mainly about how the towpath links up to the different local neighbourhoods. It was suggested that these elements were a combination of stand-alone signs and alternative wayfinding strategies, e.g., coloured surfaces and text directly on the path.

At the Edinburgh North Cycle Path every crossing bridge has signed with the name of the road on either side of the bridge hole, giving the users an opportunity to navigate within the nearby infrastructure.

It is suggested by the project team that this signage strategy is incorporated along the canal as well to give consistency and as a part of an overall Wayfinding and Signage strategy for the towpath.