



The Kennet & Avon Canal

Canal Heritage Lottery Fund Partnership
(HLFP)



Annual Report
April 2023 to March 2024

Executive Summary

This report summarises maintenance and operation expenditure on the Kennet and Avon Canal, as divided by Local Authority Area, for business year 2023 to 2024. The report sets out information that fulfils the Trust's reporting obligations as outlined in the HLF (Restoration of the Kennet and Avon Canal) agreement.

Role and Objectives of the Canal and River Trust

The canal is managed by the Canal & River Trust, a charity which looks after and brings to life a network of more than 2000 miles of stunning canals and rivers runs through our landscapes. From our countryside to our bustling cities, canals are a place for everyone to connect with nature and our past.

However you use them, we all deserve open spaces where we can feel happier and healthier, and where wildlife can thrive. But the future of canals and the habitat they support is threatened by changing temperatures, unpredictable rainfall and the tests of time.

As the UK's largest waterways charity, our role in protecting and revitalising our nation's canals never stops. And we couldn't do this without people like you. It takes many hands and hearts to keep our 250-year-old bridges, locks, reservoirs and towpaths in working condition, and many more to help nature, wildlife and people thrive. Together, we can make sure they continue to be here for tomorrow and beyond.

Our work involves not only looking after our waterways but promoting them widely to the eight million plus people who have waterways on their doorstep so that many more people benefit from our free, accessible and local source of wellbeing.

Approximately 30 permanent staff are dedicated to the K&A Canal, supported by 30 regional operations staff and central expertise and resources. Full-time employees are supported by contractors and volunteers. The canal is also supported by the South West Regional Advisory Board.

The Kennet & Avon

The Kennet & Avon navigation is made up of three waterways: the River Kennet, the Kennet & Avon Canal and the River Avon, and has achieved Green Flag status across the entire length. The through route, from Reading to Hanham, covers 87 miles. It was completed in 1810 and built to link the two biggest ports - London and Bristol - via the Rivers Thames and Avon. The waterways pass through vibrant towns and glorious countryside, including the North Wessex Downs AONB and several SSSIs.

The easterly point of the waterway is Kings Reach Foot Bridge in Reading; east of here the navigation is managed by the Environment Agency. The westerly point is Hanham Lock. The Port of Bristol is the Navigation Authority west of Hanham. The navigation has 104 'wide beam' locks, including the famous Caen Hill Locks in Devizes, the longest flight of wide locks in the country. It is listed as a Scheduled Ancient Monument as the highest level of heritage designation due to its outstanding significance.

Most of the towpath side of the waterways is under the direct control of the Trust. However, in places, due to the historic nature of the rivers, the Trust does not own either bank. In these cases, we are the Navigation Authority only. The marinas along the waterways are under private ownership and are not included in the scope of this report.

Approximately 30 permanent staff and two seasonal staff are dedicated to the K&A Canal, supported by 30 regional operations staff and central expertise and resources. Full-time employees are supported by contractors and volunteers. The canal is also supported by the South West Regional Advisory Board.

Key Statistics

Canal length in each area		Kilometres
Reading	River Kennet: London Street to Fobney lock	3
Reading	Fobney Lock to the boundary	2
West Berkshire		43
Wiltshire		65
BANES	Boundary to the River Avon	9
BANES	River Avon to Hanham Lock	18
Total		140 km

Assets	BANES	Wiltshire	West Berks	Reading	Total
Locks	12	57	34	3	106
Bridges	42	90	78	12	222
Aqueducts	2	8	2	0	12
Tunnels	2	3	0	0	5
Reservoirs	0	0	0	0	0

	BANES	Wiltshire	West Berkshire	Reading
Conservation areas	5	8	8	0
Non-statutory wildlife sites	Entire canal corridor	c. 10	c. 14	4
SSSI	5 (in or adjacent)	3	6	0
Permit holder moorings	26	41	36	2
Visitor moorings	17	28	12	0
AONB	Cotswolds AONB	North Wessex Downs AONB		
Heritage Sites	1 WHS, 5 grade II*, 2 historic parks and gardens, 6 grade II, 1 scheduled and grade I Aqueduct	1 scheduled lock flight, 1 grade I pumping Station, 1 historic battlefield, 1 grade II*, 9 grade II	1 scheduled lock, 2 scheduled and listed locks, 7 grade II, 1 grade II*	

Funding and Finance

Funding streams remain as reported in previous reports. Income is derived from the following sources:

- individual donors, fundraising, and corporate sponsors;
- commercial income including revenue from the licensing of boats, moorings and angling; and revenue from property and utilities;
- grants from the other organisations e.g. HLFP; and
- an eleven-year contract with government.

At the point of writing, the Trust also receives £70,000 + VAT from Wiltshire County Council as part of an ongoing maintenance agreement. This council funding is incredibly important and enables us to carry out critical maintenance work, and improve towpaths and structures for the benefit of the local communities and visitors to the waterway within Wiltshire.

Many individuals and organisations support the Trust on both local and national levels. With respect to grants and contributions from other organisations, the Trust is similarly continuing to explore new opportunities all the time.

The Trust is proactive in utilising its property assets and joint venture vehicles to bring forward land to deliver regeneration, wider benefits to the community and to attract private sector investment. As a charitable trust, all net rental income and capital receipts generated from our property estate and other commercial activities are used to maintain the waterways.

Expenditure – Kennet & Avon, April 2023 to March 2024

The Trust has undertaken an analysis of what was defrayed on the Kennet & Avon in the 2023/24 financial year, on activities ranging from lock repairs and vegetation management to bank and weir maintenance, as well as pumping resilience. In 2023/24, the cost to the Canal and River Trust of operating and maintaining the Kennet and Avon Canal was **£6.7 million**. Of this spend, £4.3 million was spent within Wiltshire.

The Trust continues to seek reductions in spend where practicable and to secure funding to support the ongoing care and maintenance of our waterways to a high standard. This has proven particularly challenging to achieve in recent years due to the steep increase in inflation, as it put under further threat by the reduction in Government Grant support from 2027 onwards. Therefore, Wiltshire Council's contributions to maintaining the K&A Canal remains vital in helping us continue to deliver essential maintenance and projects.

Maintenance works along the canal are prioritised every year, taking account of factors such as public safety, structural condition, amenity and usage. This being the case, the proportion of total expenditure in each Local Authority area varies from year to year, depending on current priorities.

The figures below have been taken from the Canal and River Trust's accounting system and summarise the breakdown of the year's spending in each local authority area:

	West Berkshire (£)	Wiltshire (£)	BANES (£)	Total K&A (£)
K&A Work Orders	990,104	471,034	106,182	1,567,319
CSI Projects	8,546	12,918	5,366	26,829
Enterprise Projects	1,014,737	0	0	1,014,737
Total	2,013,386	483,951	111,548	2,608,886

K&A Overheads	701,363	1,060,200	440,391	2,201,953
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Priority Projects				
K&A Pumping Resilience	33,767	51,044	21,203	106,014
Avoncliff embankment 95 subsidence		25		25
Weston Lock approach dredging			-841	-841
Culvert 56 CCTV investigation		900		900
Crofton pumping station Phase 2		868,487		868,487
Caen Hill PS Vibration damage arising		308,056		308,056
Seend culverts investigation		10,000		10,000
Locks access road Devizes survey		3,000		3,000
Caen Hill Flight heritage assessment		6,000		6,000
River Avon locks dredging			196,816	196,816
Spot dredging (east)	90,000			90,000
Bridge 48 Bulls-Bridge 35 Cromwells	10,600			10,600
Fish pass screening Bath Deep Lock			3,776	3,776
Fish pass screening Claverton pumping station			3,522	3,522

Limpley Stoke leak emergency		8,312		8,312
Limpley Stoke Lining repair		269,031		269,031
Culvert CCTV inspection Prog 23-24		1,448		1,448
Culvert CCTV inspection Prog 23-24		2,599		2,599

Total	134,367	1,528,902	224,476	1,887,746
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Visitors & Users

The Kennet & Avon is one of our busiest waterways for boats, annually attracting about 3,000 boats. Bradford on Avon is one of the top three busiest locks nationwide, operating c. 8,000 times a year. The K&A attracts approximately 150,000 visitors (16.7 million visits) per annum. The canal attained Trip Advisor’s ‘Travellers’ Award 2022’, along with some of its primary destination sites such as the Caen Hill Flight.

The Trust promotes our activities on the K&A via a number of channels and provides information for visitors through local signage and interpretation, printed materials, our [website](#) and social media: [@CRTWalesandSW](#); [Facebook](#); [Twitter](#); [Instagram](#); and [YouTube](#). Another example of this is our ‘[Places to Visit](#)’ maps which carry local information and facts about each key destination site.

We have a [dedicated website section](#) for our boating customers, where they can find information on everything from licensing, navigation, stoppages, water points and events. We also support boaters in need of assistance or who may be considered vulnerable through our [licence support officers](#) and/or assistance from volunteer waterway chaplains.

The Trust aims to inspire more people to enjoy the Kennet & Avon and support our work. We offer all our stakeholders opportunities to provide us with feedback on a regular basis and ensure visitors and users can contact us. We provide visitors with information about the canal, its history and visitor mooring facilities.

Our website also promotes the ways in which we can all help [fight climate change](#), and our [climate change pack](#) offers people activities they can do at home or outside in a blue/green



space, either by getting together with other people, or through a visit to your local waterway.

The Great West Way

The Trust is a member of the Great West Way partnership (led by Visit Wiltshire), which aims to create one of the world's premier touring routes and will be the first of its kind in England and the only touring route in the world to be multi-modal, focusing on the waterways. It is helping the Trust develop and distribute engaging contents, drive domestic and international visits and connect us with key GWW influences.

Sharing the Resource

Canals and rivers can be very lively spaces, used by cyclists, walkers, boaters, anglers, kayakers and even horses pulling boats along the water. Our [Towpath Code](#) encourages everyone to be more aware when using the towpaths. This is supported by our national '[Share the Space. Drop your Pace](#)' campaign to help everyone feel safe on our towpaths.

Asset Management

Infrastructure on the K&A is extensive and widely varied in its scope with some assets which are over 300 years old. The Trust's asset/infrastructure management and maintenance work encompasses both the canal and its associated structures (bridges, locks, etc.). We also operate a maintenance regime to ensure all operational plant and equipment satisfies our legal obligations and is fit for purpose.

Our aim is to ensure that none of our assets present a risk to our users or our staff, and that we keep maximum free passage of the network. We take a risk management approach where asset condition is combined with an assessment of the consequence of failure to generate an overall risk score. It is this aspect that drives our work prioritisation and our budgetary process.

The Kennet & Avon Inspection programme is undertaken by a dedicated team of certified inspectors and engineers. Safety and Service inspections are undertaken bi-monthly. The purpose of the inspection is to ensure the waterway is safe and customer service standards are being met. A total of 132 inspections will be delivered in 2024.

General Inspections monitor the asset condition and provide up-to-date information for work plans. These are delivered on either a two- or four-year cycle depending on the type of structure; 313 inspections will be delivered in 2024. Principal Inspections are a comprehensive inspection and written report addressing condition, maintenance, compliance, and risk. A total of 10 inspections were delivered in 2023.

Our current standard for maintaining the asset Planned Preventative Maintenance 2016 (PPM 2016) defines maintenance requirements and responsibilities for the PPM of fixed and moveable operational infrastructure. PPM 2016 provides the framework for a formal maintenance process and ensures adherence to consistent maintenance standards and specifications. It identifies the level of resource and expenditure required to carry it out effectively, and to enable effective monitoring of the maintenance regimes. On the Kennet

8 Avon Canal PPM is undertaken by a combined Trust and volunteer team. In the order of 1000 visits were undertaken in 2023-24.

Community Engagement & Involvement

Community engagement and volunteering is at the heart of everything we do on the K&A. To attract new audiences and expand our wellbeing offer for the local community, the Trust hosts a range of events, develops volunteering opportunities and puts on themed activities such as boat trips, fishing taster days, hedge laying courses, tree planting and photography lessons for people to get involved in. Volunteers continue to support the work the Trust carries out with a range of different tasks and demonstrate their dedication to keeping the canal maintained and supporting the wellbeing of our local communities.

Over the last year we have refreshed the variety of community engagement activities on offer along the canal. We continue to reach out to new audiences, such as local refugees, as well as developing existing relationships including through our community payback programme for People on Probation, in partnership with the Ministry of Justice. Our Newbury team is working closely with volunteers from West Berkshire Action for Refugees. Our Let's programme of wellbeing activities continue to be delivered at key sites along the canal. Corporate volunteering days were successful in 2023 with the teams involved significantly contributing to the maintenance of the canal.



We regularly record the number of visitors to our activities and events, including children and young people. We encourage those who visit and use the canals to develop into more committed supporters through our Friend's scheme or through our programme of volunteering, adoptions and events.

Our Vision

Our priorities for the waterway are to:

- Develop a stronger sense of community ownership and responsibility through delivering in partnership.
- Develop youth opportunities to empower young people and keep our waterways relevant for their generation and beyond (see our [youth development programme](#)).
- Provide places for people by continuing to make them safe, accessible, enjoyable and available for community projects.
- Grow volunteer support through new volunteering opportunities and community adoptions.
- Engage with local schools and youth groups, embedding critical water safety messages where they're needed most.

- Delivering community projects, events and activities along our network to engage new audiences and provide opportunities for health and wellbeing within local communities.

We want to develop deeper relationships with our partners, volunteers and the communities in which we work. The Trust strives for long-term sustainable relationships which deliver quality outputs and measurable benefits for the waterways and the communities who live around them. We also aim to provide individuals and communities with opportunities to work alongside our people to gain a better understanding of the Trust and our cause. Expanding our 'Friends' scheme is key to achieving this and will encourage regular support and financial donations to the Trust.



By 2025 we aim to have significantly increased the number of volunteers who will be fully integrated as 'one team' alongside colleagues and contractors. Our volunteers will contribute one million hours of their time and 85% will be fully engaged with the Trust. They will continue to contribute to waterway management, conservation, promotion and restoration.

Find out more about our [volunteer opportunities on our website](#).

Youth Engagement

For the first time in 2023, we introduced a new Youth Volunteer Leader role, which is growing youth engagement on the eastern end of the K&A, through new volunteer roles, projects and events which provide opportunities for skills development and learning.

In partnership with the Scouts, we deliver waterway-based activities with local groups, including creating wildlife habitats, vegetation management and lock painting.

We continue to deliver youth wellbeing activities in and around Jubilee Wood, in partnership with Wiltshire Wildlife Trust, Splash Wiltshire, Young Carers and others to introduce young people from disadvantaged backgrounds to the waterway and the opportunities it offers. Activities include boat trips, junior lock keeping, fishing; our Let's Fish activities, taster days and rod making, photography taster days and making bug hotels.

Our Explorers education team provides materials for events and school holiday activities, as well as with youth groups including the National Citizen Service to deliver social action projects around the arts, fundraising, gardening and marketing along the waterway.

Sustainable Growth

Through our work on the K&A we aim to make a significant contribution to local economies in urban and rural areas through sustainable growth of waterway-related tourism and leisure. We continue to make links with tourism outlets and have established partnerships with Visit Wiltshire and England's premier touring route, the Great West Way, to promote the multi-modal route from London to Bristol. The K&A runs through the heart of the route.

Case Studies

Education

Our Explorers Team on the Kennet & Avon Canal have been doing fantastic work throughout the year, focusing on key sites at Newbury and Devizes. Waterside visits will include school weeks based on school curriculum areas such as rivers, habitats, local history and STEM topics (mainly 7–11-year-olds). These are the topics most frequently requested by teachers and work well on our key K&A sites. We also deliver water safety, outreach and virtual sessions to schools and uniform groups within a mile of the canal. Virtual sessions can accommodate schools outside of that radius.



Experienced volunteer Sally Hodnett helped to develop a new team which has allowed us to expand our education delivery. Following a visit in Thatcham, Cold Ash Primary School class teacher, Nicky feedback the following: *'Please can you pass on our gratefulness to everyone involved. The children and staff thoroughly enjoyed our trip and the children even commented on the passion that the volunteers have for their work'*.

Over the winter we do a lot of water safety and outreach work and in 2024 we will launching a new Little Explorers programme, building on our existing Toddler Water Safety materials and storybook, which began in 2023.



Paddling

We have developed a new paddling hub with support from expert lead volunteer, David Palfrey at Tyle Mill on the eastern Kennet & Avon. This is enabling us to grow our Let's Paddle programme significantly. Paddle sport delivery requires lots of dedication and training, and as such we were able to trial some events in the autumn, which will be expanded into a full paddle programme in 2024.

Volunteer Development

We held lots of new Welcome Sessions along the canal in 2023, including at Devizes and. Some of these sessions in the spring were all listed on the Big Help Out website, celebrating the King's Coronation with volunteering. Two of our volunteers, Liz Hollis, Sally Hodnett and

their partners were lucky enough to receive tickets from the Trust to attend the King's Coronation Concert at Windsor.

Volunteer Maintenance



Along the canal corridor we have more than 200 active Trust volunteers and nearly a dozen community partner groups who contribute towards the daily maintenance and upkeep of the 87 miles of this wonderful linear canal. Some of the many tasks they undertake include painting the locks and cill markers, greasing locks, vegetation clearance, towpath repairs and keeping the network tidy. Different

groups have different focuses such as the engineer volunteers on the eastern K&A, moving the working boats for project work and waterborne environmental clean-ups on the western K&A. Our volunteer groups do a sterling job, with some delivering 100% of the planned preventative maintenance work in their local area.

Claverton Pumping Station

Claverton Pumping Station is a rare example of late Georgian technology. Twenty volunteers have painstakingly restored the waterwheel, replacing and hand finishing more than 300 wooden slats on the actual wheel. The pumping station re-opened to the public in 2017 once the waterwheel and pumps were working. The public can see the wheel running on open days. Since starting in 2012, the volunteers have given 48,000 hours of their time to the project as well as delighting visitors with their knowledge and sharing the history of the pumping station.



Fairfield College students gain employability skills.

The Trust is entering its fourth year working with Fairfield Farm College. Every week six students, and their teacher visit the canal in and around Bradford on Avon. They are supported by either Trust staff or volunteers and carry out important work such as maintaining the car park by clearing leaves, cutting back overhanging vegetation, weeding around the fruit trees, painting, fixing fences, planting trees, cutting the grass and collecting litter. Occasionally they help with Planned Preventative Maintenance (PPM) on the locks and with the lock gate cleaning project. The group also visits other parts of the canal, such as Hilperston, Avoncliff and Caen Hill to carry out similar tasks.

The students attend college to help prepare them for employment and their tasks develop employability skills. These include time keeping and punctuality, developing social skills,

using tools and equipment and health and safety. Not only are they making an impact on the towpath, but their fantastic work is making a big impact on their career opportunities too while providing valuable work experience.

Due to the popularity of the sessions, next year we are looking at bringing additional students out to gain experience on the canal and have recently visited the school to introduce them to the Trust and the jobs they would be doing

Volunteer Lock Keepers

About 160 Volunteer Lock Keepers attend the K&A at seven locations: Bath, Bradford on Avon, Seend, Caen Hill, Crofton, Newbury, Aldermaston and Woolhampton. They assist boaters, complete minor maintenance tasks and welcome visitors to the canal as well as providing advice and information. They are the ambassadors raising the profile of the Trust with the local community and visitors from further afield.

Working in partnership with companies



For many years, the Trust has offered companies the opportunity to book a 'team day' on their local waterway. Arranged by our Business & Corporate Engagement Partner, and delivered by our Team Leaders, companies can help with a range of practical tasks including litter picks, maintenance of our locks or towpaths and improving habitats for wildlife. By working with groups in this way, we can raise awareness and generate donations. Feedback from

companies has shown the value of these days to their people, as it gives them the opportunity to work in the fresh air, get to know colleagues and make a tangible difference to their local canals and rivers.

There are many other ways companies can help to support us, such as through employee fundraising, gifts in kind, sponsoring projects or events, or choosing us as their Charity of the Year. More information on our corporate engagement opportunities can be found at <https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/donate/corporate-partnerships>.

Communities on the Western Kennet & Avon

The initiative's purpose is to improve conditions along the western end of the Kennet & Avon Canal (between Hanham Lock and Bradford on Avon) with a canal and towpath which is materially fit for purpose and an environment of respect and consideration exists between all communities in order to enhance the wellbeing of all. The programme is being delivered in partnership with BANES Council

Amongst the key aims of this programme is to work closely with the local authorities, police force and Julian House to monitor and resolve any issues of towpath and canal misuse, anti-social behaviour, mooring abuse and high boat density. Our Waterway Ranger is employed to assist the project and deliver a clear towpath policy, as well as ensure mooring time limits and correct cruising requirements are respected.

The project has led to a significant reduction in complaints along this stretch of waterway, particularly in relation to anti-social behaviour and misuse of the towpath or waterspace. It has also improved relationships between various waterways users, as well as local residents.



We continue to deliver our 'Let's Tidy' initiative as part of the programme, aimed at improving towpath conditions and engaging with the local community. The Let's Tidy events have proven to be huge successes and generated considerable interest. We will continue to hold these three-four times per year and aim to engage more members of the local community to take part. Events are

promoted locally with voluntary involvement aimed at supporting the local community. It has so far had a positive (visible) impact on the towpath on the western K&A.

Waterspace Partnership

We continue to play an active role in the Waterspace Partnership alongside Bath & North East Somerset Council, the Environment Agency and Wessex Water to identify and deliver enhancements to the waterway and nearby land. More information on the partnership and Waterspace Study can be found [here](#).

Our support of the Waterspace volunteer group has continued throughout 2023-24 and we are working with them to identify future funding opportunities to enable them to grow in size and responsibility. Their ongoing commitment to the Trust and Partnership is invaluable.

Heritage

Canal & River Trust's waterways are a national asset of intrinsic value, reflecting Britain's emergence as the first industrial nation. This heritage comprises the structures, landscape, setting and context of the waterways, museum collections, archives, historic vessels and associated skills.

One of the principal Charitable Objects of the Trust is 'to protect and conserve for public benefit sites, objects and buildings of archaeological, architectural, engineering or historic interest on, in the vicinity of, or otherwise associated with inland waterways.'

The Trust cares for more than 130 designated heritage assets on the K&A including three Listed at Grade II* as being of particular importance, and seven Scheduled Ancient Monuments, the highest level of heritage protection that can be awarded. These include the Caen Hill Lock Flight, regarded as the most impressive in the UK and widely attributed as ‘one of the seven wonders of the waterways.’ Also, the architectural gem that is the Dundas Aqueduct, which is designated as a Grade I Listed Building in addition to its Scheduled Monument Status.



Environment

Although our waterways were not built for nature, they form natural corridors for the movement of wildlife as well as habitat to support a wide variety of plants and animals. Some of these are quite rare, such as orchids, otters and water voles. Animals such as bats and kingfishers use canals and rivers for foraging and commuting, avoiding the perils of roads.

Waterways bring the countryside into our towns and cities, as well as some of our more intensively farmed landscapes, providing vital links in a fragmented landscape. They provide a connection to nature for millions of people and a source of wellbeing for communities.

Recent surveys show that one reason our customers consistently value canals and like to visit them is because of their diverse nature and the species they may be lucky enough to spot. Many parts of our network have been designated as protected nature sites.

The Kennet & Avon is a natural ‘super-highway’ stretching 87 miles (140 km) from west to east across England, with Bath and Reading at either end. It is considered to be a ‘rural’ canal, crossing through the open farmland of the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It travels through the chalky downs of Wiltshire, which are perfect for badgers who set up homes on its banks. Water voles flourish along the canal, helped by the Trust’s innovative bank restoration techniques, developed in partnership with ecologists and engineers.

Case Studies

In 2022, the Trust partnered with The Oracle and Abbey Quarter Business District to install floating reed beds along a stretch of the canal flowing through the centre of Reading. It can be difficult for nature to thrive along sections of hard-banked canal. Installing the floating reed beds along the edge gives a foothold for nature in the heart of the city.

The reed beds provide shelter and nesting for water birds, such as mallard, coots, and moorhens. They offer wildflowers for pollinators that are under threat. A micro-wilderness of submerged plant roots provides feeding grounds and habitat for aquatic fauna. And they “soften” the engineered bank and improve the experience for visitors and locals alike.



Furthermore, the reed beds adsorb nutrients from the canal water which can become excessive and cause problems in urban environments.

This also provided a fantastic opportunity to engage with local businesses and school children. They all came together to plant up the reed beds before they were floated on the water.

In Autumn 2019, 2km of towpath and environmental enhancement work was completed along the Thatcham stretch, part funded by Thames Water. The work was carried out by the Trust's in-house construction team, with help from volunteers. It included making up the towpath to cover very prominent tree roots and smoothing out dips. They planted reeds in bare soft bank locations to increase the habitat diversity along this canal stretch.

Vegetation Management

The Trust must balance various and sometimes conflicting requirements of vegetation management for safety, conservation of the natural and built environment, and recreational activity in a cost-effective manner. We aim to respond sensitively to waterway character and level of use as well as statutory influences arising from safety, wildlife and other legislation. Vegetation management is a key interest for our visitors and we publish information on the approach that we adopt on our website. More information can be found on our [website](#).

Towpath Mowing

Our grass cutting regime is reviewed annually and feedback from our users is taken into consideration. We have a very careful balance to manage between allowing nature to flourish while ensuring the safe usability of the towpath and navigation. Our approach to towpath mowing depends upon the waterway character and the type of towpath, its location, its surface makeup, its width, the type of edging and level of use. We aim to provide safe access for boating, walking, and where appropriate other activities while optimising biodiversity interest.

Typically, in urban locations such as Bath, Devizes, Newbury and Reading, the grass is cut frequently across the full width of the towpath.

In more rural areas grass fringes may be left to grow along the front and/or rear of the towpath. This is the regime applied to most of the K&A as it is generally a rural canal in nature.

In 2020, in an effort to be more open with our users, we enabled [access on our website](#) to part of our GIS system so that people could view the mowing regime local to them. This allows people to see how frequently an area will be cut and the standard that will be applied.

Following a trial carried out on selected canals across England and Wales in 2021, a new mowing strategy was adopted in 2022. This saw the grass being cut less frequently through the growing season to allow wildflowers to bloom and provide pollen and nectar for insects. The Trust has been working closely with Plantlife, the charity for wildflowers, plants and fungi, to develop an appropriate regime that continues to provide an enjoyable experience for all of our users while allowing nature to blossom.

Our Green Plan

The Trust has developed a 'Green Plan', which you can find more information about [here](#), and our Climate Change education pack [here](#).

Carbon Trust Certification

As a recognition of our sustainability work, we are delighted to announce our re-certification to the Carbon Trust Standard.

This re-certification acknowledges our on-going efforts to reduce CO² emissions. This progress has been achieved through several initiatives, including:

- investment in energy efficient LED lighting
- fuel management software and internal speed limits on our commercial vehicles
- increasing our travel by train, rather than by car
- increased energy awareness leading to positive change
- introduction of electric vehicles and charge points

Waste

We are increasing the amount of waste that is recycled every year. In 2023 in the Wales & Southwest region, 95% of waste from customer sites, our offices and worksites was diverted away from landfill. Of this 94% was recycled and 1% was waste to energy.

- Sent to Landfill = 36 tonnes (5%)
- Waste to Energy (energy from incineration) = 8 tonnes (1%)
- Recycled = 720 tonnes (94%)

We're constantly looking at the services we provide for our customers and waste disposal is no exception. We monitor the services at these sites to make sure they offer our customers what's needed and that they provide value for money for the Trust.

We provide services to our customers along the K&A which include general waste, elsan points and pumps outs. In some locations, local councils provide recycling facilities for glass, tin and paper.