

7.0 CONCLUSIONS

Currently the St Helens Canal is an abandoned and discontinuous waterway, although most of the surviving lengths have been recently enhanced to provide local amenity features. The ecological and land use implications of a restored waterway are very different from those of a disused one. Additionally, the restoration of the canal will clearly constitute development as defined in the 1990 Town and County Planning Act, and Planning Permission will need to be obtained. Before this can be granted, the local planning authorities will need to convince themselves that canal restoration is an acceptable development from all view points.

Despite its short length of approximately 15 miles (24.5 km) and its isolated nature, with access only possible via the tidal estuary of the River Mersey, restoration of the canal would produce a number of benefits. When fully restored to navigable standard the canal would be capable of attracting both formal and informal visitors and would offer benefits to the local community in terms of leisure facilities, environmental enhancements, nature conservation and development opportunities and in preservation of the country's industrial heritage.

As a restored navigable waterway, the canal would have twelve locks including two double locks and two locks connecting to the River Mersey. The world's first double lock would be preserved and the first true canal to be constructed in England would be reinstated through the arches of the Sankey Viaduct carrying the worlds first passenger carrying railway.

The canal corridor would form a linear park providing a route for walking, cycling and horse riding and provide a link between various visitor attractions, currently totalling eleven, within each reach of the canal.

Within or close to the canal corridor there are a number of existing or potential nature conservation sites that are important because of their isolation and which would be sensitive to disturbance. Careful management of these areas will be required to balance the needs of navigation, public access, leisure pursuits and nature conservation.