

ENVIRONMENT AGENCY

**Fens Waterways Link
Implementation Plan**

Supporting Report 6: Planning Issues

FINAL

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

<i>Term</i>	<i>Meaning / Definition</i>
CTZ	Community Travel Zone
CWS	County Wildlife Site
FWRSG	Fens Waterways Regeneration Strategy Group
EIP	Examination In Public
ITWP	Integrated Transport White Paper
LPA	Local Planning Authority
LSNCI	Local Site of Nature Conservation Interest
LTP	Local Transport Plan
NKDC	North Kesteven Borough Council
PPG	Planning Policy Guidance note
RPG	Regional Planning Guidance
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SAM	Scheduled Ancient Monument
SHDC	South Holland District Council
SKDC	South Kesteven District Council
SPA	Special Protection Area
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest

1 Executive Summary

Where appropriate international, national, regional and local planning and transportation policies relating to the Fens Waterways project and its route have been assessed.

The proposals are generally supported by development plan and local transport plan policy. The relevant policies can be broken down into four key areas:

- ◆ Tourism, economy and recreation
- ◆ Protection of the natural and heritage environments
- ◆ Flood protection and water quality
- ◆ Site specific policies

1.1.1 Tourism, economy and recreation

A number of development plans contain policies that actively promote water based recreation or the use of watercourses for recreational purposes. The development plans and the local transport plans both promote increased walking and cycling or increased access to the countryside – the latter being policies that could be supported by the inclusion in the proposals of waterside towpaths.

The local transport plans also support the increased use of waterways to transport freight. It is possible that a better linked network of waterways such as that proposed could stimulate the increased use of water based transport for non perishable, bulk goods such as household waste or aggregates.

It is considered that the proposal will generally assist in promoting tourism in the area with local authorities in Lincolnshire referring to other, similar, waterways that they wish to see utilised to increase tourism such as the River Witham and the River Slea. It is considered that the proposal will assist in the aspiration of the Cambridgeshire authorities that tourism development be more dispersed within the county, especially to the north, rather than being concentrated around Cambridge itself. However ancillary development such as marinas may be resisted on the Great Ouse section of the proposed route. Ancillary development may also be resisted along other sections of the route outside main settlements, especially in the Fens area.

The route passes through Chatteris and March which are identified in the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan as having weak economies.

1.1.2 Protection of the natural and heritage environments

There are a number of general policies that refer to the protection of the natural environment and to the enhancement and protection of areas designated for nature conservation and of landscape and visual amenity, the protection of high grade agricultural land, and the protection of statutorily protected species. However it is considered that generally the impact of the proposal is likely to be minimal and those effects on the general landscape will generally be ameliorated through good design.

The development plans all contain policies which seek to protect historic features such as designated Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAMs) and archaeological areas. There are likely to be requirements along those sections of the route which are expanded or new watercourses for justification of works which will affect SAMs or important archaeological sites.

1.1.3 Flood protection and water quality

Most development plans contain policies stating that proposals should not affect the quality of watercourses and fisheries, nor should they intensify the flood risk or affect the flood protection function of the watercourses. Again, it is considered that any effects could be ameliorated by good design. The support of the Environment Agency is likely to be required to reassure local planning authorities that the proposals will not increase flood risk in the area.

1.1.4 Site specific policies

There are currently no development proposals contained within the development plans that will affect the proposed routes, although the route along the Car Dyke on the eastern fringe of Peterborough will form the boundary to some of the development areas.

There may be issues related to the safeguarding of the proposed route in connection with proposals to improve transport infrastructure to the east of Peterborough and in the Boston area.

There are specific parts of the route that may be affected by statutory designations such as the Scheduled Ancient Monument status of the Car Dyke or where the route passes through or very close to areas designated as sites of nature conservation interest such as the SSSI and Ramsar designations which apply to the Old Bedford River at both Earith and Salter's Lode. If the project were to affect these designations in particular, a sound justification for the project would be required.

2 Introduction

2.1 Introduction

In 1997, as part of a Millennium Project Initiative a new navigation ring through the Fens Waterways of eastern England was proposed by the Fens Waterways Regeneration Project. The main purpose of the Fens Waterways Link would be to provide a navigable north-south link in the Fens area and link this system to the rest of the UK. Through the construction of new channels, and the renewal of existing systems, an entirely new navigational ring will be formed.

The Waterways Division of the Environment Agency is a partner to the Fens Waterways Regeneration Strategy Group (FWRSG). The FWRSG is a partnership of the Environment Agency, Fens Tourism, Middle Level Commissioners and the East of England Tourist Board and their objective is to promote and develop the Fens Waterways Link Project.

The Implementation Plan has attracted funding from the FWRSG and obtained financial support from the East of England Development Agency, the East Midlands Development Agency, the Government Office for the East Midlands, and the Environment Agency. Financial support was also obtained from Boston Borough Council, Cambridgeshire County Council, East Anglian Waterways Association, Fenland District Council, South Holland District Council and the Inland Waterways Association.

3 National Policy

Government policy on waterways stems from the Integrated Transport White Paper (ITWP) published by the government in 1998 and a follow up document Waterways for Tomorrow published in 2000. This policy feeds into planning policy guidance notes (PPGs) which in turn, informs development plans and decisions on specific planning applications.

3.1 Integrated Transport White Paper

The ITWP identified waterways as a means of moving goods sustainably, assisting in reducing the volume of freight travelling by road. The ITWP also acknowledges that inland waterways have an important role to play in providing leisure and tourism opportunities and can provide a catalyst for urban and rural regeneration and expected that local authorities in their development plans will be expected to consider opportunities for new development which are served by waterways.

3.2 Waterways for Tomorrow

This document is intended to provide more detail of government policy on waterways. It identifies a number of areas where navigable waterways can contribute such as:

- ◆ Leisure and recreation - almost all the waterways system is used for leisure. This includes boating of all kinds, angling, sport, and informal recreation. Towpaths and other waterside paths provide local and long distance walking and cycle routes, and access to the countryside.
- ◆ Freight - the inland waterways still carry some freight but only a small amount in national terms. Most freight traffic is found on the tidal inland waterways. On the non-tidal system, freight carrying survives on only a few waterways, mainly river navigations, and the Manchester Ship Canal.
- ◆ Water supply and drainage - the waterways provide both a source of water and a means of supply. They also play a significant land drainage role. Many canals have become an integral part of the land drainage system and some take storm-water discharges from roads.
- ◆ Heritage and the natural environment - the waterways system is rich in historic buildings and examples of innovative civil engineering. It is also an important environmental and ecological resource providing wildlife corridors and habitats for several species listed as national priorities under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan.
- ◆ Regeneration - the waterways provide an important catalyst for urban and rural regeneration. The improvement and restoration of waterways is enhancing the environment and bringing life back to deprived areas.
- ◆ Innovation - the waterways are increasingly being used in innovative ways. Towpaths are being used as routes for telecommunications cables, and proposals for water transfer using canals are being developed.

According to Waterways for Tomorrow the government sees inland waterways as an important asset for future generations to enjoy and is keen to see them maintained and developed in a sustainable way so that they fulfil their social, economic and environmental potential. The government wants to ensure that the many benefits and opportunities they provide are used to the full.

3.3 Planning Policy Guidance Notes

3.3.1 PPG1 General Policy and Principles (February 1997)

PPG1 sets out the Government's general policy framework for land use planning. It highlights the themes of sustainable development (para 4-7), mixed use (para 8-12), design (para 13-20), and sets out key policy objectives for transport (para 23), rural areas (para 28-31) and conserving the historic environment (para 32).

The PPG notes the importance of urban regeneration in delivering sustainable development (para 7) and encourages good quality design (para 13), rural development appropriate to the countryside (para 28) and effective protection of the historic environment (para 32). These issues may be relevant to development proposals related to inland waterways.

3.3.2 PPG7 The Countryside - Environmental Quality and Economic and Social Development (February 1997)

PPG7 provides advice on managing the countryside in a sustainable way - that is meeting current needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs. This entails accommodating necessary change in rural areas while maintaining and where possible enhancing the quality of the environment for local people and visitors (para 1.3).

The PPG explains that it is a government priority to find new ways of enriching the quality of the whole countryside whilst accommodating appropriate development (para 2.14). New development should be sensitively related to existing settlements and to historic, wildlife and landscape resources (para 2.3). The PPG notes that towpaths are one of the resources that increase opportunities for people to enjoy the countryside (para 3.13).

3.3.3 PPG9 Nature Conservation (October 1994)

PPG9 provides advice on the treatment of nature conservation issues in development plans and sets out criteria for development control. It also describes the three main designations under domestic and international law - Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs); Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs); and also lists other statutory controls and non-statutory local and informal designations.

Paragraphs 16 and 23 draw attention to the Habitats Directive which requires Member States to endeavour to encourage the management of landscape features which are of major importance for wild flora and fauna. These are features which, because of their linear or continuous structure, or their function as stepping stones, are essential for migration, dispersal and genetic exchange. Rivers and their banks are mentioned as an example.

3.3.4 PPG11 Regional Planning (October 2000)

PPG11 provides advice on the preparation, scope and content of Regional Planning Guidance (RPG) (chapters 1-3). It places greater responsibility on regional planning bodies to resolve planning issues at the regional level through the production of draft RPG; and strengthens the role and effectiveness of RPG by advising on, for example, the need for greater regional focus concentrating on strategic issues, and the incorporation of an integrated regional transport strategy. It makes the process more transparent and subject to rigorous testing through the introduction of a Public Examination conducted by an Independent Panel.

The PPG also explains how RPG should take account of Regional Development Agencies' work in identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to the regional economy (para 4.2-4.5). It sets out the regional approach to implementing national policy on subjects including transport (chapter 6), retail and leisure uses (chapter 7), culture (chapter 8), rural development and countryside culture (chapter 9) and biodiversity and nature conservation (chapter 10) all of which could be relevant to development proposals related to inland waterways.

Chapter 6 stresses the importance of the regional transport strategy (RTS) as an integral part of RPG. Regional Planning Bodies should consider including in their RTSs the regional priorities for transport investment and management across all modes and offer guidance on measures to increase transport choice (para 6.3).

3.3.5 PPG12 Development Plans (December 1999)

PPG12 sets out government advice on the role, scope, content and preparation of development plans and includes guidance on the importance of integrating sustainable development and transport and land-use policies in development plans. It explains how the planning system can help achieve the objectives of sustainable development in protecting the natural environment and maintaining economic growth and employment (chapter 4).

Chapter 5 advises local authorities when preparing development plans:

- ◆ To have regard to regional transport strategies and the local transport plan so that the development plan underpins the land use issues arising from the transport plan (para 5.3-5.4);
- ◆ To include specific policies and proposals on the overall development of the transport network and related services, including public transport interchange facilities, inland waterways and harbours (para 5.16); and
- ◆ To include an indication of the timescale and priorities for proposed transport developments reflecting the specific priorities and timescale set out in the local transport plan. Plans should only include proposals which are firm and with a reasonable degree of certainty of proceeding within the plan period. They should be identified as such in the local transport plan (para 5.17).

The PPG also states (para 5.22) that planning authorities wishing to safeguard land for a future transport scheme such as a restored canal should do so through a proposal in the Local Plan, where there is a reasonable degree of certainty of the scheme proceeding within the plan period. It also makes clear that protective polices can be appropriate for waterway connections to existing or proposed manufacturing, distribution, and warehousing sites adjacent or close to the inland waterway network and to coastal ports and that local authorities may wish to safeguard sites for transport related development which might otherwise be lost to other development, such as wharves alongside waterways and ports (para 5.23).

PPG12 proposes that local authorities should consult relevant organisations and individuals in relation to specific issues early in the plan preparation process (para 2.10-2.13). There are no longer statutory consultees for local plans and unitary development plans, although they remain for structure plans. However the PPG lists recommended consultees for development plans, advising local authorities to consider the need to consult British Waterways, canal owners and navigation authorities on all matters relating to inland waterways and adjacent land (Annex C).

3.3.6 PPG13 Transport (March 2001)

PPG13 seeks to integrate land use planning and transport at the national, regional, strategic and local level, in order to promote more sustainable transport choices and reduce the need to travel. It advises local authorities to:

- ◆ In relation to freight, encourage development which is, or can realistically be, served by water and with goods, though where possible indirect, access to trunk roads, and allocate appropriate sites (para 45);
- ◆ Promote opportunities for freight generating development to be served by rail or waterways by influencing the location of development and by identifying and where appropriate protecting realistic opportunities for rail or waterway connections to existing manufacturing, distribution and warehousing sites adjacent or close to the rail network, waterways or coastal/estuarial ports (para 45);
- ◆ On disused transport sites consider uses related to sustainable transport first, before other uses (para 45);
- ◆ Enable the carrying of minerals and spoil by rail or water wherever possible (para 47);
- ◆ Seek to re-use disused wharves and basins, to retain boatyards and other services used in connection with water-based recreation, and to protect and enhance the waterway environment, where these are viable options (Annex B para 12); and

- ◆ Identify and where appropriate protect disused waterways (by allocating the land in development plans and ensuring sites and routes are not severed by new development or transport infrastructure) where there is a reasonable degree of certainty of a restoration project proceeding, in whole or in part, within the development plan period (Annex B para 13).

PPG13 encourages local authorities to work with everyone involved in the inland waterways industry to develop the potential of inland waterways. In general, proposals for waterside development should enhance the use, enjoyment and setting of the adjacent waterway. Development proposals, local plan policies, or new and improved infrastructure, such as road proposals, should not affect inland waterways adversely.

3.3.7 PPG15 Planning and the Historic Environment (September 1994)

PPG15 sets out the Government's policies for the identification and protection of historic buildings, conservation areas, and other elements of the historic environment (para 1).

Paragraph 2.2 describes the role that development plans play in conserving the historic environment, noting that by including suitable policies in their plans, local authorities can encourage the satisfactory reuse of neglected historic buildings. Paragraph 2.8 advises that plans should also include a strategy for the economic regeneration of rundown areas, and in particular seek to identify the opportunities which the historic fabric of an area can offer as a focus for regeneration. These provisions may be relevant to development proposals related to inland waterways

The PPG provides advice on development control, noting in paragraph 2.12 that it is generally preferable if related applications for planning permission and for listed building or conservation area consent are considered concurrently. Paragraph 2.14 emphasises the importance of ensuring that new buildings are well integrated with historic ones. Paragraph 2.15 stresses the importance of assessing the archaeological importance of development proposals before applications are determined.

3.3.8 PPG16 Archaeology and Planning (November 1990)

PPG16 sets out the Government's policy on archaeological remains on land, and how they should be preserved or recorded both in an urban setting and in the countryside. The PPG provides advice on the handling of archaeological remains and discoveries under the development plan and control systems, including the weight to be given to them in planning decisions and in the use of planning conditions; and sets out the separate controls which exist for scheduled monuments under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 (para 1).

The PPG notes that detailed development plans should include policies for the protection, enhancement and preservation of sites of archaeological interest and their settings. The proposals map should define the areas and sites to which the policies and proposals apply (para 15). Paragraph 16 states that archaeological remains identified and scheduled as being of national importance should normally be earmarked in development plans for preservation. Paragraph 18 confirms that the desirability of preserving an ancient monument and its setting is a material consideration in determining planning applications whether the monument is scheduled or unscheduled.

3.3.9 PPG17 Sport and Recreation (July 2002)

PPG17 defines open space to mean all open space of public value, including not just land, but also areas of water such as rivers, canals, lakes and reservoirs which offer important opportunities for sport and recreation and can also act as a visual amenity.

It sets out what is required from local authorities in terms of assessing needs and opportunities within their districts, gives guidance on the setting of local standards and sets out general principles on enhancing existing open space and on planning for new open space.

3.3.10 PPG21 Tourism (November 1992)

PPG21 outlines the economic significance of tourism and its environmental impact, and therefore its importance in land use planning (cover page). It states that the planning system should facilitate and encourage development and improvement in tourist provision, while tackling any adverse effects of existing tourist attractions and activity in a constructive and positive manner (para 2.4).

Chapter 4 expects structure plans and local plans to play their part in protecting key tourism assets (para 4.11 and 4.12) and to identify ways in which tourism can contribute positively to other objectives such as economic development, conservation and urban regeneration (para 4.11 and 4.14).

4 Regional Planning Policy

Regional Planning Guidance notes (RPG) set out the overarching planning policy guidance for the specified region. Local planning authorities take into account policies within their relevant RPG when formulating their development plan and local transport plan (LTP) policies.

4.1 RPG 6 - East of England Regional Planning Guidance

RPG 6 covering Cambridgeshire, Norfolk and Suffolk was published in November 2000.

Policy 26 wishes to see increasing opportunities for more sustainable travel modes, with one strand of the policy being to increase the opportunities on long distance footpath and cycle paths with links to major settlements, such as those that could be provided in association with this scheme.

Policy 30 is concerned with sustainable distribution and says that development plans and LTPs should identify and protect, where appropriate, existing and potential sites and facilities for waterborne freight.

Policy 31 refers to the impact of transport links on the environment and says that LTPs should give priority to maximising energy efficiency and minimising emissions by promoting sustainable travel opportunities and to only propose or support new proposals where they respect the countryside, valued landscapes and natural habitats.

Policies 52 to 56 all relate to water resources, and are concerned with the protection of water resources, liaison with appropriate bodies such as the Environment Agency.

The RPG identifies the waterways around the Fens as one of East Anglia's tourist attractions. Policy 62 states that development plans should include policies to encourage the maintenance, improvement and diversification of the regions tourism infrastructure in ways that avoid or minimise any detrimental effects on the natural and built environment. It also states that measures should be taken to encourage a shift to more sustainable forms of transport.

Policy 72 identifies waterborne freight as a potential method of transportation of minerals and aggregates and recommends that development plans should where appropriate make provision for wharves for receiving and distributing imported aggregates.

4.2 RPG 8 - East Midlands Regional Planning Guidance

RPG 8, covering Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire, Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire, Rutland and Leicestershire was published in January 2002.

Under policy 19 RPG8 states that development plans should promote the continued diversification and further development of the rural economy, where this is consistent with sustainable development considerations and environmentally sound management of the countryside.

Policy 29 has the stated aim of protecting and where possible enhancing the East Midlands environment and sets out five environmental principles that should be applied when assessing the effect of development on natural and cultural assets including:

- ◆ Protection of important aspects of the environment including individual features, special sites and landscapes;
- ◆ Recognition of regional and local distinctiveness;
- ◆ A broad based concern and awareness of biodiversity and other environmental issues integrated into site based approaches;
- ◆ Restoration as far as possible of damaged environmental features; and

- ◆ A common approach to landscape, biodiversity and character issues that cross local planning authority boundaries.

Policy 35 contains a commitment to preserve and enhance the region's cultural assets and their physical settings.

Policy 36 encourages local authorities to promote tourism growth with access from non car modes whilst policy 37 seeks to encourage the contribution of recreation, sport and leisure to the health, economic and social wellbeing of the community.

Under policy 44 RPG8 seeks to encourage the protection and enhancement of river corridors including the Nene, the Witham and the Welland, and seeks to maintain and enhance their ecological and landscape value whilst optimising access for education and recreation. Policy 45 wishes to encourage the recreational use of existing and new waterways and lakes.

Finally, RPG8 seeks to encourage freight movement by inland waterways under policy 76.

4.3 Draft Revised RPG 8 - East Midlands Regional Planning Guidance

A consultation document relating to the revision of RPG 8 was published in April 2003. The following draft policies are considered relevant to the Fens Waterways Link.

- ◆ Draft policy 2 promotes the sustainability of development and the accessibility of development by non car modes;
- ◆ Draft policy 24 promotes diversification within and further diversification of the rural economy whilst maintaining the region's best and most versatile agricultural land whilst draft policy 26 states that development plans should identify areas of potential for tourism growth whilst minimising adverse impact on the local environment and local amenity;
- ◆ Draft policy 33 sets out a regional approach to the water environment and seeks to protect the water resources of the area from over utilisation; and
- ◆ Draft policy 34 seeks protection via development plans of the natural and cultural environment of the regions river corridors. This draft policy seeks to maintain and enhance the multi functional importance of these river corridors for wildlife, landscape, townscape, economic diversification, regeneration, education, recreation and managing flood risk.

4.4 RPG14 - East of England Regional Planning Guidance

RPG for the East of England (RPG14) (including Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire and Essex, as well as Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire) is currently under production. RPG 14 will replace RPG6, and parts of RPG9, 9a & 9b (guidance for the south east), bringing the area covered by Regional Planning Guidance in line with the rest of the Government Office. RPG14 is due to be adopted in 2004, key dates are highlighted below (may be subject to change):

- ◆ September 2002 - Consultation on Options
- ◆ June 2003 - Draft RPG submitted to Secretary of State
- ◆ December 2003 - Public Examination
- ◆ Mid 2004 - Publication of final RPG

5 Relevant Local Authorities

5.1 Local Authorities

The local authorities along the proposed Fens Waterways navigation are detailed in Table 5-1, as is the status of the relevant development plan, or plans for that authority.

Planning authority	Date development plan adopted	Local plan review – current schedule
Lincolnshire County Council	Structure Plan - 1981	Deposit draft 1998, notice of intention to adopt Nov 2000. Issues regarding accessibility and housing allocation have held adoption up. Currently working to interim document "Policies proposed for adoption November 2000".
Boston Borough Council	Local Plan – 1999	Issues paper 2000, deposit draft due winter 2002/03, strategic flood risk & urban capacity studies due summer 2002. First deposit consultation draft due autumn 2003.
South Holland District Council	Local Plan – 1998	Deposit draft 2001.
South Kesteven District Council	April 1995	1st Deposit draft – 2002.
North Kesteven District Council	Feb 1996	1st Deposit draft – 2002. Consultation on second deposit draft held summer 2003.
Peterborough City Council (Unitary Authority)	Structure Plan – joint with Cambridgeshire CC - adopted 1995	Deposit draft April 2002, EIP due November 2003 (see Cambridgeshire CC).
	Local Plan – Peterborough City Council Local Plan adopted 1996 plus part Huntingdonshire Local Plan 1995	2nd deposit March 2002. Adoption programmed for Spring 2004.
Cambridgeshire County Council	Structure Plan 1995	Deposit draft April 2002, EIP due November 2003.
Huntingdonshire District Council	Adopted 1995	Local Plan Alteration 2002. Consultation on issues held summer 2003.
Fenland District Council	Adopted 1993	1st Deposit draft due autumn 2003.
East Cambridgeshire District Council	Adopted 2000	Begin review 2003.

Planning authority	Date development plan adopted	Local plan review – current schedule
South Cambridgeshire District Council	Adopted 1993	Response to Inspector’s report on consultation Dec 2002.
Norfolk County Council	Adopted 1999	Adopted. Review yet to commence.
King’s Lynn and West Norfolk District Council	Adopted 1998	First of 2 review issues papers published in 2001.

Table 5-1 Relevant local planning authorities and development plan status

The detailed analysis of the relevant development plans is set out in the next chapter.

5.2 Local Transport Plans

There are four relevant local transport plans which are relevant to the proposed route. These are the Lincolnshire Local Transport Plan (LTP), the Cambridgeshire LTP, the Peterborough LTP and the Norfolk LTP. An analysis of the policies contained within these LTPs is contained within section 4.

6 Development Plan Analysis

6.1 Development Plans

The development plan for most areas is currently split into two sections, the Structure Plan and the Local Plan. Structure Plans are intended to set out strategic development policies for a large area, usually a county, whilst Local Plans are more detailed development plans produced at district, borough or city council level.

6.2 Lincolnshire Structure Plan

6.2.1 Development plan status

The currently adopted Lincolnshire Structure Plan was adopted in 1981 with a plan life until 1991. Subsequent alterations extended policies related to population, housing, settlement, employment and shopping until 2000. A deposit draft for a replacement was published in 1998. However, due to ongoing issues regarding housing allocation figures, adoption has yet to take place. Consequently the county council is currently working to the document "Lincolnshire Structure Plan: Policies Proposed for Adoption" published in November 2000 which contains the remaining policies agreed for adoption. The Structure Plan is due for adoption by January 2004 at the latest as this is when policies have to be adopted if they are to be carried forward through the Government's changes to the strategic planning system.

6.2.2 General policies

Policy 45 of the Lincolnshire Structure Plan contains an aspiration to limit the environmental impact of freight by facilitating a shift of freight movements from road to other modes including water. It wishes to see allocations of sites and the positive consideration of proposals for freight handling facilities that would make use of movement by water.

Policies 48 to 50 relate to the protection of sites of nature conservation interest and to protection and retention of species, habitats and trees, woodland and hedgerows.

Policy 56 contains a presumption against development where it will adversely affect water resources or water quality, including inland navigations, whilst policy 56 is a presumption against development that would be likely to cause a flood risk.

Under policy 57 Lincolnshire seeks to protect the conservation and landscape value of river corridors by protecting these from development, except where the proposals will seek to conserve, restore or enhance such areas.

Through policy 63, there is a presumption against proposals that will adversely affect any archaeological site of national importance.

Policy 67 encourages provision to be made to allow tourism development in the county consistent with the need to protect the environment, heritage, landscape and character of Lincolnshire.

Under policy 72 encouragement is given to the development of visitor attractions and activities which make suitable use of the natural features of the county provided that it would not harm agriculture, nature conservation or visual or residential amenity, whilst policy 73 encourages provision for sport and recreation, subject inter alia to compatibility with the area in which it is proposed and effects of the proposal on areas of historic, archaeological wildlife or landscape value. Policy 74 seeks to encourage informal recreation in the countryside.

Policy 77 specifically includes provision for water based recreation subject to effects on residential and countryside amenity, the interests of nature conservation including protection of wildfowl, and the protection and enhancement of the body of water and their landscape setting. This policy is qualified

that proposals should only include ancillary features which are directly related to serve the needs of the development.

6.3 Boston Borough Council

Boston Borough Council covers the section of the route along the currently non-navigable South Forty Foot Drain between The Haven and a point approximately 2km to the west of Swineshead Bridge.

6.3.1 Development plan status

Boston Borough Local Plan was adopted in 1999. The Borough is currently undertaking a review of the plan and an issues paper was published in 2000. A deposit draft plan is due in winter 2003. The following policies are taken from the adopted Local Plan.

6.3.2 General policies

The Boston LP contains a general development policy (G4) that planning permission would not be granted for developments which will have an adverse effect on the water environment. It also states that planning permission will not be granted for developments which threaten the effectiveness of land drainage systems or river defences (G5). It also has a general presumption against development which affects the best and most versatile agricultural land (G9) unless there is a strong case for the development which overrides the need to protect such land.

Whilst not specifically related to the South Forty Foot Drain, policy R4 is a presumption in favour of development associated with water based recreational activities where the proposal will not, inter alia, conflict with established uses, harm the amenity of surrounding land users or lessen the nature conservation value of the area. The council believes that there would seem to be considerable opportunities for further development of the Witham as a recreational resource which would have a significant impact on tourism, generation of employment and financial input into the Borough. To this end policy R8 is a presumption in favour of development for formal recreation, sport or leisure facilities in the countryside where the development is of a water based nature.

Policy C18 presumes against development which will significantly and adversely affect the nature conservation value of habitats of major wildlife value unless the proposal is of benefit to the community or cannot be located more sensitively and provision is made for the replacement or reinstatement of the affected features.

Finally, policy CO1 is a general presumption against development in the countryside unless it is supported by other Local Plan policies.

6.3.3 Site specific policies

Adjacent to the South Forty Foot Drain at the town of Boston's western boundary is, on the south bank, an area of land designated as a proposed industrial / commercial area, adjacent to an existing retail area at Chain Bridge, also on the south bank of the drain. Also on the south bank, approximately 1500m to the west of Chain Bridge, adjacent to Holland Park, is an area designated for housing.

There are two designated development areas on the northern side of the drain one of which is a proposed business park, opposite Chain Bridge, and another one which is area designated as housing land, just to the north west of Holland Park. However, development on the northern side of the drain is separated from the drain itself by the Boston to Grantham railway line.

6.4 South Holland District Council

South Holland District Council covers the section of route shared with South Kesteven that follows the currently non-navigable South Forty Foot Drain between Eau End Farm and Guthram Gowt. Also within South Holland is the route along currently navigable and tidal watercourses that follows the River Glen northeast to Surfleet Seas End, and then follows the tidal River Welland south west to Spalding, where it follows the non tidal stretch of the River Welland towards Peterborough.

6.4.1 Development plan status

The currently adopted Local Plan was adopted in 1998. 1st deposit draft Local Plan was published in 2001. The following policies are taken from the deposit draft.

6.4.2 General policies

Policy GEN1 is a presumption in favour of development that, inter alia, safeguards or where possible enhances amenity, nature conservation or landscape interests, maintains or enhances the integrity of flood protection measures or maintains or enhances the quality of the water environment in the surrounding area.

Policy NE1 seeks to protect areas designated as being of nature conservation value and sets out criteria for assessing development that affects these areas. Policy NE3 is a presumption against development which would affect statutorily protected species, although in exceptional circumstances permission may be granted if there are measures for the protection of these species and their habitats in situ, or measures for the rescue and transference of the species to similar habitats elsewhere in the locality. Policy NE4 presumes against development which would destroy the integrity of wildlife corridors. Policy NE9 seeks to protect the capacity of floodplains and flood storage washes and the integrity of flood protection measures.

The council has a presumption in favour of the development of leisure, recreation and tourist facilities, including water based and water side facilities (policy LT1) provided that they are compatible in terms of scale, character and design with the area in which they are proposed, the effects on residential and countryside amenity are acceptable and the effect on other interests such as archaeological, wildlife or landscape value are acceptable.

Under policy LT4 the council sets out its wish to continue to protect public rights of way, and the use of river corridors and other waterside areas, including drains, for recreational and nature conservation purposes.

6.4.3 Site specific policies

At Surfleet Seas End an area approximately 200m long and up to 100m wide is designated as flood plain or flood storage wash. This designated area is located upstream from the existing sluice between the River Glen and the tidal River Welland and currently contains approximately 40 dwellings.

The banks of the River Welland through Spalding are designated as a recreational route (policy LT4).

The wash areas either side of the River Welland south of Spalding are designated as flood storage areas and flood storage wash (policy NE9).

6.5 North Kesteven Local Plan

North Kesteven District Council borders the route along the currently non-navigable South Forty Foot Drain between Swineshead Bridge and Donington High Bridge. The responsibility for planning matters related to the South Forty Foot Drain is split between these points between North Kesteven District Council to the west and Boston and South Holland Districts to the east.

6.5.1 Development plan status

The currently adopted Local Plan was adopted in 1996. The 1st deposit draft Local Plan was published in 2002. A second draft was put on deposit in summer 2003. The following policies are taken from the deposit draft.

6.5.2 General policies

The NKDC Deposit Draft Local Plan contains a core policy (C2) stating that development in the countryside will be resisted unless it is necessary to sustain the social or economic well-being of the rural community and does not adversely affect the character or appearance of its surroundings.

Policy C5 is a presumption against proposals that will adversely affect the amenities enjoyed by other land users to an unacceptable degree.

Policy C3 is a presumption against development affecting best and most versatile agricultural land.

Policy C10 states that there is a presumption against development that will either be at an unacceptable risk of flooding or would unacceptably increase the flood risk elsewhere.

Policy RST4 states that planning permission will be granted for proposals that will increase public access to the countryside citing the limited publicly accessible areas and the somewhat restricted network of footpaths, bridleways and byways, particularly in eastern parts of the district.

Under policy LW1 the council seeks to protect the landscape from proposals that will adversely affect (or fail to enhance, where feasible) the quality or natural beauty of the landscape, or the particular character or appearance of the locality.

Although outwith the scope of these proposals, the Plan contains a wish for the River Slea to be restored, a similar scheme to that proposed.

6.5.3 Site specific policies

A SAM is shown on the proposals map as being located at Eau End Farm, north of the Spalding to Grantham rail line.

6.6 South Kesteven Local Plan

South Kesteven District Council borders the route along the currently non-navigable South Forty Foot Drain between Donington High Bridge and Guthram Gowt. The responsibility for planning matters related to the South Forty Foot Drain is split between these points between South Kesteven and South Holland Districts.

The route also enters South Kesteven briefly where it follows a currently navigable section of the River Welland between Crowland and Peterborough.

6.6.1 Development plan status

The currently adopted Local Plan was adopted in 1995. The 1st Deposit Draft Local Plan was published in 2002. The following policies are taken from the deposit draft.

6.6.2 General policies

The SKDC Deposit Draft Local Plan contains a general policy (CP1) regarding the conservation and enhancement of the visual quality and amenity value of the environment of the plan area and states that development proposals will only be permitted where they maintain, inter alia, existing wetland and other wildlife habitats and watercourses and other natural features.

In the recreation and leisure section of the SKDC LP policy REC9 refers to proposals for recreational facilities in the open countryside and states that they will be permitted only where the development relates to proposals normally requiring a rural location associated with water based recreation.

Under the environment policy section policy EN1 is a general policy stating that planning permission will not be granted on any scheme that would adversely affected the quality and character of the countryside, citing, in this case the distinct character of the flat, open landscapes of the fens.

Policy EN6 is a presumption against development affecting the best and most versatile agricultural land.

Although outwith the scope of the current proposals, the plan implies support for similar waterways projects through containing a wish for the Grantham Canal to be restored.

6.6.3 Site specific policies

SAMs are shown on the proposals map as being located adjacent to Fen Farm, south west of Donington High Bridge, Forty Foot Farm, on Pointon Fen, and on Ripplindale Fen, west of Casswell's Bridge.

A Site of Special Scientific Interest is noted at the Deeping Gravel Pits on the north west side of the River Welland.

6.7 Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan

6.7.1 Development plan status

The currently adopted Local Plan was adopted in 1995. The 1st Deposit Draft Structure Plan was published in 2002. The following policies are taken from the deposit draft.

6.7.2 General policies

Under Policy P4/1 the Structure Plan states that new tourism, recreation and leisure development should maintain or increase employment opportunities, meet the needs of local communities as well as visitors, be accessible by a choice of sustainable transport modes, protect or improve the local environment, landscape and residential amenity, and strengthen and diversify the local economy, particularly in Peterborough and North Cambridgeshire.

Policy P4/2 promotes informal recreation in the countryside and states that major new developments adjoining the countryside will include proposals for informal leisure and recreation, including country parks and routes for walkers, cyclists and horse riders and that such proposals should be accessible to the main centres of population and reached by a choice of means of transport. Provision will form part of a network of safe routes in the countryside and will be suitable for use by people with disabilities.

The Structure Plan sees the waterways of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough as an important resource for recreation and tourism as well as providing areas for wildlife and nature conservation. It states that Local Planning Authorities should encourage proposals for using waterways for tourism and leisure uses, particularly on the River Nene, including the use of river systems to provide a sustainable mode of transport. However it goes on to say that the capacity of waterways is an important factor in considering whether development proposals should proceed. The Structure Plan considers that the Rivers Cam and Great Ouse are overloaded and that Local Plans should assess the extent to which water recreation, and associated facilities, should be restricted in these locations.

Under policy P4/4 the Structure Plan says that the use of waterways for appropriate recreation, tourism and economic development will be supported in Peterborough and Cambridgeshire, and states that a strategy to develop the recreational and tourism potential of the Nene Valley will be drawn up in conjunction with adjoining Local Planning Authorities and other bodies.

Policy P8/2 implementing sustainable transport in new development states that new development will be required to make provision for integrated and improved transport infrastructure to increase the ability to move by cycle, public transport and on foot.

Policy P8/8 relating to encouragement of walking and cycling, seeks to increase the capacity, quality and safety of walking and cycling networks to promote their use, minimise motorised travel and to realise health improvements.

Policy P8/11 relates to the movement of freight and includes the aspiration that the transfer of freight from road to rail or water will be encouraged, although the supporting information refers only to the Port of Wisbech and to the potential of the River Nene.

Under policy P9/6 the Structure Plan states that Chatteris will be given priority for economic regeneration in the Cambridge Sub-Region and further housing allocations will be dependent on improving job prospects. Chatteris has a relatively weak economy and will therefore be the focus for measures to improve economic prosperity and where possible accommodate jobs relocated from Cambridge.

Through policy P10/3 - Market Towns - Peterborough and North Cambridgeshire, March is identified as a key market town within North Cambridgeshire. The policy states that one of the measures to consolidate its role will be through encouraging the dispersal of tourism/leisure opportunities from the Cambridge area.

6.8 Peterborough Local Plan

The route within the Peterborough City Council area runs along the Catswater Drain from Nene Terrace to Flag Fen where it joins the River Nene.

6.8.1 Development plan status

The currently adopted Local Plan was adopted in 1996. The 2nd Stage Deposit Draft Local Plan was published in 2002. The following policies are taken from the 2nd Stage Deposit Draft.

6.8.2 General policies

The Peterborough 2nd Stage Deposit Draft Local Plan contains a number of relevant general policies. Under policy LNE8 the landscape, nature conservation and amenity value of the Nene Valley will be safeguarded and development will not be granted for development which would prejudice its value for these purposes. This policy does however qualify this with the statement that in exceptional circumstances, planning permission will be granted for recreation development that takes advantage of a riverside location if the development makes appropriate provision to minimise any adverse local impact. Policy LT14 supports this by stating that the City Council will permit a range of provision for recreation, with a general emphasis on low impact, informal activities in the rural area of the valley.

Policy LT16a states that the council will give favourable consideration to planning applications for the development and improvement of tourism opportunities which are consistent with the city council's tourism strategy and without detriment to environmental sustainability.

Policies CBE1 & CBE2 refer to the safeguarding of areas of archaeological remains, the former regarding areas of national importance, whilst the latter regarding other areas of importance. Under policy CBE1 development would not be granted for any development which may adversely affect the preservation or setting of scheduled or other nationally important archaeological remains. Policy CBE2 states that proposals affecting significant archaeological remains will be assessed on their merits having regard to the importance of the remains, the measures necessary to safeguard the remains and the need for the proposed development.

Policy LNE1 states that development in the countryside will be restricted to that which is demonstrably essential to the effective operation of local agriculture, horticulture, forestry, outdoor recreation or public utility services.

Policy LNE2 states that there is a presumption against any development that would reduce the degree of physical separation between settlements. There is a substantial green wedge designation between Peterborough and Eye Green.

Policy LNE3 is a presumption against development affecting best and most versatile agricultural land.

Under policy LNE15c there is a presumption against development which will have an adverse effect on a Local Site of Nature Conservation Importance (LSNCI).

Policy LNE15d refers to the protection of general wildlife habitats and the promotion of biodiversity in determining development whilst policy LNE17 states that planning permission will not normally be granted where the development will have an adverse impact on legally protected species.

Policy LNE18 states that planning permission will not normally be granted for development which would destroy the integrity of features of the landscape which are of major importance by virtue of their linear and continuous structure. This is qualified by a list including rivers, ditches and banks.

Under policy U2 the city council will only grant planning permission that would discharge surface water into a watercourse if it is satisfied that increased flows would not increase the risk of flooding in the immediate vicinity. Policy U5 states that development will not be granted that would adversely affect the integrity of tidal or fluvial defences, whilst policy U6 includes a provision that no new

development should be within 4.5m of a watercourse to allow adequate access for maintenance purposes.

6.8.3 Site specific policies

To the north of Eye the proposed route for the realignment of the A1073 Eye to Spalding Road crosses the new watercourse, safeguarding of which is included under policy T15a.

At the southern limit of the Catswater the proposed route bounds the eastern industrial area, which includes two more areas designated for future industrial development. The route then passes around Flag Fen along existing minor watercourses, parts of which are designated as LSNCI (policy 15c as discussed above). It then meets the River Nene which at this point is covered by the River Nene policy area, which is covered by policies LNE18 and LT14 as discussed above.

6.9 Huntingdonshire Local Plan

The route within Huntingdonshire is in two sections. The first is a currently navigable section of the Old Course of the River Nene between Benwick and Well's Bridge where the route joins the Forty Foot (also known as Vermuden's Drain) towards Chatteris. The second part of the proposed route runs south-westwards for approximately 3km from Chatteris along the currently non-navigable Fenton Lode (also known as the Twenty Foot Drain). From this point the proposed scheme requires a new navigable channel to run generally southwards towards Earith, running to the east of Somersham close to existing gravel pits to join the Old Bedford River just to the east of Earith. The route then runs south along the Old Bedford River for a short distance until it meets the river Great Ouse which it then follows eastwards into East Cambridgeshire.

6.9.1 Development plan status

The currently adopted Local Plan was adopted in 1996. A plan alteration related to housing issues was adopted in 2002. Consultation on issues to be included in a new plan was undertaken during the summer of 2003. The following policies are taken from the adopted plan.

6.9.2 General policies

Policy R2 states that the council will consider planning applications for recreation facilities on their merits bearing in mind the effects of the development on a variety of factors including, inter alia, landscape, visual amenity, nature conservation, archaeological traffic and residential areas. Policy R13 expands on this by saying that the council will support the provision of facilities for informal countryside recreation subject to the criteria in policy R2.

Policy R15 supports the improvement of access to the countryside including modifying, extending and improving the rights of way network, where appropriate – the supporting text quotes the Ouse Valley way riverside walk as an example.

Under policy R16 the council wishes to encourage the use of former gravel workings and clay pits for public recreation. The proposed route is close to a number of sand and gravel working to the north and east of Somersham.

Under policies En14, En15 and En16 frontages and open spaces which have intrinsic environmental qualities in themselves or by virtue of longer distance views which they allow are protected from development which would impair their visual contribution. There are several such designations along the proposed route.

Policy En17 restricts development to defined settlement environmental limits except where it relates to that which is essential to the efficient operation of, inter alia, outdoor recreation.

Policy En21 is a presumption against development which would adversely affect the character of an area of best landscape, whilst En22 is a requirement that applications for development take appropriate account of the interests of nature and wildlife conservation.

Policy En23 states that development which is within or which adversely affects an SSSI, National Nature Reserve or which has a significant adverse effect on the interests of wildlife in an area of

special importance for wildlife conservation will not normally be permitted. The proposed route passes through an SSSI and a Ramsar site at Earith.

With respect to tourism, policy To1 generally supports tourism development which is not detrimental to the environment and does not disrupt community life.

6.9.3 Site specific policies

The banks either side of the Forty Foot drain at Ramsey Forty Foot are designated as open spaces and gaps for protection as is the frontage either side of Bridge house, on the north bank of the river (policy En14, En 15 & En16).

The eastern bank of the Old Bedford River at Earith also is also designated an open space / gap for protection.

Also at Earith the Hundred Foot Washes at the junction between the Old Bedford River and the river Great Ouse are designated as an SSSI and a Ramsar site, and contain a scheduled ancient monument.

The section of the proposed route between Somersham and Earith passes through an area designated as being of best landscape (policy En21).

6.10 Fenland Local Plan

The route within Fenland is in two sections. The first is a currently navigable section of the Old Course of the River Nene between Upwell south-westwards through March to Benwick. The second part of the proposed route is a navigable section that runs eastwards along the Forty Foot drain from the Huntingdonshire boundary to Swingbrow where it then runs south eastwards along a navigable section of the Fenton Lode (also known as the Twenty Foot Drain) to Chatteris. It then runs from the Fenton Lode into Fillenham's Drain and along the east side of Chatteris, again in navigable drain, until it reaches a non navigable section approximately 500m before it crosses again into Huntingdonshire.

The Link between the Nene at Peterborough and the Ely ring runs from the Old Course of the Nene at Flood's Ferry, westwards along the Whittlesey Dike to Whittlesey and the westwards along the King's Dike to the Fenland/Peterborough border where it rejoins the Old Course of the Nene before rejoining the Nene.

6.10.1 Development plan status

The current Local Plan was adopted in 1993. A first deposit draft of a replacement Local Plan is expected in autumn 2003. The following policies are taken from the adopted plan.

6.10.2 General policies

Policy R1 is a presumption in favour of recreation and leisure development where such development does not inter alia result in the loss of high grade agricultural land, would not cause problems for neighbours, would not detract from the existing character and appearance of the open countryside, and would not have an unacceptable impact in ecological or environmental terms.

Policy R9 favours new recreation provision in the countryside, provided it accords with policy R1, whilst policy R11 favours new water based recreation, albeit in this case, referring to the reuse of former mineral workings.

Under policy T1 the council will generally support the development of tourism and tourism related facilities.

Policy E4 is a presumption against development which would adversely affect SSSIs or other areas of special importance for nature conservation, whilst policy E5 presumes against development which would adversely affect important sites in the countryside which merit conservation for their historic, archaeological, nature conservation, scientific or landscape importance.

Policy E6 presumes against development which will affect important archaeological sites or scheduled ancient monuments. Policy E7 is a standard policy relating to the investigation of archaeological sites prior to development.

6.10.3 Site specific policies

There is a site allocated for residential development in March alongside the River Nene Old Course, between the river and Elwyn Road.

6.11 East Cambridgeshire Local Plan

The proposed route passes into East Cambridgeshire along the river Great Ouse at Brandon Creek. It then follows the Great Ouse in East Cambridgeshire until it reaches Elford Closes, south of Stretham. It then continues along the Great Ouse to Earith, which between these two points forms the boundary between East Cambridgeshire and South Cambridgeshire.

6.11.1 Development plan status

The currently adopted Local Plan was adopted in 2000. A review of the Local Plan is expected to begin sometime in 2003. The following policies are taken from the adopted plan.

6.11.2 General policies

Under policy 40 East Cambridgeshire sets out a presumption against development where it would intensify the risk of flooding or adversely affect the wildlife habitat of a floodplain.

Policies 51 to 54 all relate to the presumption against development that would affect areas of nature conservation protection.

Under policy 129 the council seeks to limit development that would harm the quality of fisheries on the River Ouse and its tributaries, whilst under policy 130 the council supports the creation of additional short stay moorings at points on the Old West River and Great Ouse where there are attractions or facilities and where their development would not cause damage to the environment or amenity or impede navigation.

6.11.3 Site specific policies

The River Great Ouse is designated as a county wildlife site (CWS) for its entire length through East Cambridgeshire (refer to policies 51 to 54).

6.12 South Cambridgeshire Local Plan

The proposed route forms the boundary between South and East Cambridgeshire along the River Great Ouse between Elford Closes, south of Stretham and Earith.

6.12.1 Development plan status

The currently adopted Local Plan was adopted in 1993. A review of the Local Plan began in 1997. The plan is currently at second stage review. The following policies are taken from the second stage proposed modifications to the 1999 draft deposit plan.

6.12.2 General policies

Under policy RT1, the council states that it will have regard to the need to recreation and tourist facilities and the benefits that will accrue. It sets out a list of criteria that the proposals will be tested against including irreversible loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land or the loss of ecological, wildlife and archaeological interests.

Policy RT19 states that the council will not permit extensions to existing marinas or boatyards on the Great Ouse except by the provision of cuts.

Through policy EN2 the council seeks to protect river valleys from development which will have an adverse effect upon the wildlife, landscape and countryside character of river valleys.

Policy EN9 refers to the area designated by English Nature as the Fens natural area which the River Great Ouse passes through. It goes on to say that development will be resisted where it will have an adverse effect on the ecology or nature conservation of the area.

Policy EN10 seeks to protect areas identified as being of importance in terms of their natural environment through assessment of the features of the designated site, impact and proposed mitigation measures.

Policy E61 states that there is a general presumption against development which will have an adverse environmental impact on the water environment, nature conservation, fisheries, and water related recreation.

6.12.3 Site specific policies

The River Great Ouse is designated as a County Wildlife Site (see policy EN10).

6.13 Norfolk Structure Plan

6.13.1 Development plan status

The currently adopted Local Plan was adopted in 1999. The following policies are taken from the adopted plan.

6.13.2 General policies

Under policy T14 the structure plan supports the limiting of the environmental impact of freight movements by encouragement of alternative modes including water transport.

Norfolk County Council seeks to encourage the provision of informal recreational facilities that do not conflict with nature conservation interests under policy SR2.

Policy RC4 seeks to protect the recreational, fisheries, nature conservation and landscape value of watercourses from the effects of development.

Tourism is an important part of the county's economic strategy and policy EC9 encourages new tourism development in inland parts of the county where it is in keeping with the local environment.

Under policy ENV3 the county presumes against development in river valleys except where they can be shown to conserve and are sensitive to the appearance and character of these areas. Policies ENV6 to ENV9 seek to protect designated nature conservation sites from the effects of development.

6.14 King's Lynn and West Norfolk Local Plan

The route enters King's Lynn and West Norfolk and is currently fully navigable. It follows the old course of the River Nene north-westwards through Upwell and Outwell and then turns to flow along Well Creek via Nordelph and continues towards the River Great Ouse at Salter's Lode, approximately 2km south west of Downham Market. The proposed route then passes south via the River Great Ouse into East Cambridgeshire.

6.14.1 Development plan status

The currently adopted Local Plan was adopted in 1998. A first deposit draft of a replacement Local Plan is expected in autumn 2003. The following policies are taken from the adopted plan.

6.14.2 General policies

Under policy 4/3 King's Lynn & West Norfolk seek to protect and improve the ecological interest of river corridors by presuming against development which will adversely affect associated wildlife habitats, river flows and river water quality. The proposed route follows designated river corridors.

Policy 9/15 states that recreational use of water areas will be permitted assuming it doesn't have a detrimental effect on inland navigation, water quality and wildlife.

6.14.3 Site specific policies

The watercourses used by the proposed route are all identified and covered by policy 4/3 (see above).

The Old Bedford River which adjoins the route at Salter's Lode is designated as an SSSI, an SAC and a Ramsar site.

7 Local Transport Plan Analysis

7.1 Local Transport Plans

Local transport plans (LTPs) are intended to set out the vision and strategy for transport policy within an authority for the following five years. LTPs are generally produced by county councils and by unitary authorities. The relevant LTPs for this project are:

- ◆ Lincolnshire Local Transport Plan
- ◆ Cambridgeshire Local Transport Plan
- ◆ Peterborough Local Transport Plan
- ◆ Norfolk Local Transport Plan

7.2 Lincolnshire Local Transport Plan

The Lincolnshire Local Transport Plan was produced in July 2000 with annual progress reports published in 2001 and 2002.

The Lincolnshire LTP key objectives are:

- ◆ To enable the creation of an economically successful county;
- ◆ To enable the creation of inclusive communities; and
- ◆ To improve quality of life.

The LTP seeks to improve walking and travel opportunities. This is especially so in Lincolnshire's towns where Community Travel Zones (CTZ) are being introduced in order to work with local residents and businesses to encourage community level participation in the use and promotion of sustainable transport.

Boston is identified as a significant port within Lincolnshire handling approximately 700 ships per year and 1 million tonnes of freight. The LTP also identifies, as important ports in the county, Fossey and Sutton Bridge at the Wash ends of the River Welland and the River Nene respectively. The facility handled 0.8 million tonnes of freight in 1999, whilst the Fossey handled 40,000 tonnes.

Section 18.15 identifies the navigable waterways network in the county as a potential route for nice freight, although recognises that the waterways are generally used for recreational and leisure purposes. The LTP contains a commitment to investigate the movement of household waste by inland waterway.

7.2.1 Specific major projects affecting proposals

The Boston southern link road between the A52 and the A16 is currently being developed to improve access to Boston port, Boston Enterprise Park and the Riverside Industrial estate.

There are other longer term projects included within the LTP and which may affect the proposed route, although these are yet to be considered in detail by the county council. These are:

- ◆ A proposed dualling of the A17, which currently crosses the South Forty Foot Drain at Swineshead Station; and
- ◆ Boston northern bypass.

7.3 Cambridgeshire Local Transport Plan

The Cambridgeshire Local Transport Plan was produced in July 2000 with annual progress reports published in 2001 and 2002.

The three main objectives are:

- ◆ To make travel safer;
- ◆ To develop integrated and sustainable transport that seeks to:
 - Reduce the impact of traffic in urban and rural areas;
 - Support the economy of the county including high technology research and development in the Cambridge sub region;
 - Maximise accessibility to jobs and services;
 - Help improve the health and wellbeing of people across the whole community; and
- ◆ To manage and operate effective transport networks to maintain and optimise the use of road, public transport, cycling and walking facilities in partnership with other stakeholders.

It focuses on providing for the needs of an expanding economy and expanding population around Cambridge, and on maintaining accessibility for the rural parts of the county. It also contains policies relating transport to environmental protection, accident reduction and health improvement.

The LTP seeks to promote cycling and walking, with an emphasis on increasing the numbers of journeys made using these modes. One of the elements of this strategy is to develop links with recreation and tourism.

Chapter 6 of the Cambridgeshire LTP identifies waterways as a transport mode to be addressed within the county. It identifies that there are some 300km of navigable waterways currently existing within the county. It notes that the majority is used for recreational traffic, and that there is now only a small amount of commercial and freight traffic on the county's inland waterways.

The LTP identifies Wisbech as the major port within the county handling around 100 sea-going ships each year, handling 85 million tonnes of cargo annually.

The LTP also notes that the county council, in partnership with the Environment Agency (EA), carries out much of the recreational waterway access work and gives as examples, the new pump out facilities provided in Cambridge and Ely.

7.3.1 Specific major projects affecting proposed route

The proposed A142 Ely southern link (over existing River Great Ouse navigation).

7.4 Peterborough Local Transport Plan

The Cambridgeshire Local Transport Plan was produced in July 2000 with annual progress reports published in 2001 and 2002.

Section 7.21 of the 2000 Peterborough LTP identifies the issues related to water transportation. In particular it refers to the limiting factors for freight traffic – shallow draft, low structures, tidal flows below the city and numerous locks. It also states that any increased river traffic should be balanced with the protection of river character and wildlife.

The 2000 LTP also identifies the current leisure uses both on and alongside the river Nene, including walking and cycling along the riverside paths, and notes that leisure cruises operate on the river from several piers.

7.4.1 Specific major projects affecting proposed route

The A47 Multi Modal Study has identified proposals for online dualling of the existing A47 road at Eye, east of Peterborough. This will impact on the proposals to improve the Car Dyke for navigation purposes where it is crossed by the A47 between Eye and the SSSI/Nature reserve site at Dogsthorpe Star Pit.

The A1078 proposed improvements may also affect the Car Dyke at the southern end where it joins the A47 to the west of Dogsthorpe Star Pit. This scheme is currently programmed for opening in 2005.

A proposal to dual the section of the A15 between Werrington and Glinton runs close to the Car Dyke.

Alongside part of the Car Dyke the proposals run alongside an element of the Peterborough Green Wheel – a network of cycle routes identified as part of a millennium project.

7.5 Norfolk Local Transport Plan

The Norfolk Local Transport Plan was produced in July 2000 with annual progress reports published in 2001 and 2002.

The LTP identifies four key themes:

- ◆ Encouraging sustainable transport
- ◆ Increasing accessibility and social inclusion
- ◆ Improving health and safety and the environment
- ◆ Supporting the local economy

In common with other LTPs there are targets related to the encouragement of walking and cycling.

Under the sustainable distribution section of the LTP the main objective noted is to increase the modal share of water for the movement of freight. The LTP notes that, although much of the Ouse and Middle Level navigation network is in theory navigable, in practice this is dependent upon the use of the waterways for drainage needs. Additionally the Forty Foot and Old Bedford River are often not navigable in the summer months. The LTP contains a commitment to develop the use of the inland waterway system.

8 Strategy for Implementation

The Fens Waterways project should be included within as many of the appropriate development plans as possible. This should be achieved by the promoter of the project making representations on consultations on each issue paper and development plan drafts produced by each Local Planning authority along the route.

The project should also be included where possible within Regional Planning Guidance. The Regional Plan for the East Midlands (RPG8) is currently at revised draft stage and the public inquiry is to be held in November 2003. There are unlikely to be further opportunities in the near future to influence regional policy through this process.

However RPG 14 – East of England Regional Planning Guidance is currently being drafted following an “issues” consultation at the end of 2002. The draft RPG is likely to be published for consultation in early 2004 at which stage it will be possible to submit representations on including positive reference to the Fens Waterways Link project. Additionally Richard Whittaker, the Environment Agency’s regional planning advisor for the Anglian Region, is a member of a task group looking at Environment Issues within the drafting of the RPG. It is considered that this would be a good route to try to establish the proposal within the RPG.

There are likely to be changes to the development plan through the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Bill currently before Parliament. This would introduce Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Documents. It is intended by the government that Regional Spatial Strategies (which would replace Structure Plans prepared by County authorities) are more strategic than current regional planning guidance and therefore it is likely that a specific project will not be included. The Local Development Documents are intended to focus on particular areas rather than being district wide. This may assist in getting policy related to the project highlighted, especially in regeneration areas. The basic format of making representations on these new development plan documents is unlikely to be altered in a major way from the current arrangements.

9 Conclusions & Recommendations

9.1 Conclusions

From the development policy documents it is considered that, with good design taking account of the existing landscape and nature conservation issues, the proposals are likely to be generally supported throughout the route, particularly for its potential to increase tourism in the areas.

However there are likely to be some site specific areas, particularly around Peterborough and the Ouse Washes, where statutory nature conservation and historic designations may affect the location of the proposed route or the design of the proposal.

9.2 Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- ◆ Early discussions are held with Local Planning authorities and other statutory bodies with a land use function such as English Nature and English Heritage. This is especially important where there may be conflicts with existing policy or other statutory land use designations;
- ◆ Chief Planning Officers, Chief Executives, Council Leaders and Chairs of Planning and/or Economic Development Committees are made aware of the proposals at an early stage;
- ◆ The Environment Agency use their representative on the East of England RPG review task group to lobby for inclusion of reference to the project; and
- ◆ Representations are made on any consultations arising over the route in respect of regional plans and structure and Local Plans.