

# Canal Link

The North Sea Region's network of navigable inland waterways – canals, rivers and lakes – was originally developed for the transport of goods. In recent years, tourism and recreation on the waterways has grown in importance through yachting, pleasure boat activity and angling on the water and walking and cycling on the banks. Inland waterways are becoming increasingly recognised for the economic, social and environmental benefits that they give rise to.

The **Canal Link** project aims to investigate how the region's network of navigable waterways can be further developed, based on the cultural and environmental heritage of these canals, rivers & lakes.

**Canal Link** is approved under the European Union Community initiative **Interreg IIIB (North Sea Region)**. It aims to promote the development of tourism and recreational waterways in the North Sea Region by developing and expanding:-

- tourism linkages across the North Sea between the Region's inland waterways;
- the Region's inter-connected network of canals, rivers and lakes; and
- local economic and business activity alongside the waterways.

The **Canal Link** partnership consists of eight partners from six European countries (Belgium, Germany, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden & UK), under the leadership of British Waterways (UK). British Waterways is the national authority responsible for much of the inland waterway system in the UK. Other partners in the project are mainly regional and local authorities in the partner countries. The total value of **Canal Link** is Eur 5.1 million and the project will run until 2006.

Through **Canal Link** we hope to demonstrate the importance of a European wide approach to tourism and recreation on inland waterways, which can contribute to the development of the system for other purposes – including transport, water supply, land drainage and flood control.

Strategic actions within **Canal Link** will:-

- Develop a recognised recreational waterway network within the Region;
- Promote yachting links between canals across the North Sea;
- Investigate some of the environmental impacts of recreational boating;
- Develop techniques for assessing the economic and social impact of waterway projects; and
- Create networks of local businesses to stimulate activity by exchanging ideas both locally and throughout the North Sea Region.

The strategic actions are supplemented by a number of pilot projects in each partner area, aimed at exploring different approaches to improving the waterway network and stimulating economic activity.

Some activities are well under way or completed. These include;

- The development of links by road trailer to transport boats between isolated lengths of canal, river and lake in Norway and Sweden.
- The creation of a safe buoyed and marked channel for recreational craft across the northern side of Lake Vanern in Sweden.
- The establishment of a multi-activity base in Falkirk, Scotland for boating and cycling on the Lowlands Canals between Glasgow and Edinburgh.

**Note:**

**Interreg** programmes are designed to strengthen economic and social cohesion in the European Union by promoting transnational co-operation in spatial planning.

**Interreg IIIB** is aimed specifically at developing co-operation between national, regional and local authorities and a wide range of non-governmental organisations.

Under **Interreg IIIB**, the European Union has been split into a number of transnational programme areas, which have common problems and issues. The **Canal Link** project has been approved under the **North Sea Region** programme area.

**Lead partner:-**

UK                    British Waterways

**Other project partners:-**

Belgium           Province of West-Vlaanderen

Germany           Freie Hansestadt Bremen

Netherlands      Province of Noord-Holland

                         Municipality of Langedijk

                         Stichting Recreatietoervaart Nederland (Dutch Waterways Foundation)

Norway            Telemark County

Sweden            Varmland County

British Waterways (BW) acts as Lead Partner for Canal Link. This involves managing the partnership to ensure activities are carried out as stated in the project action plan and bringing partners together to facilitate the exchange of good practice and expertise. It acts as project auditor and banker.

**Further Information**

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