

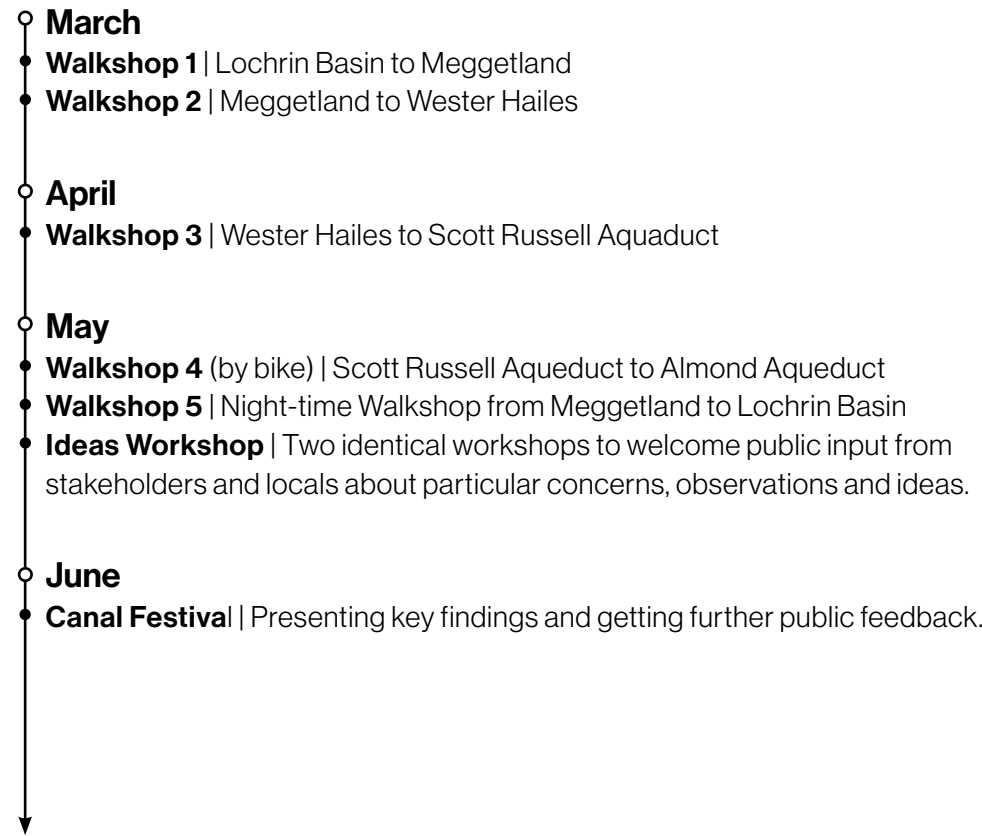


02 | Research and Consultation

Research

Study Process

The study included using a variety of methods for collecting data and information about the current use and conflicts along the towpath. The study began in March 2017 with a set of 'Walkshops' along the towpath conducted by the project team, as well as desktop research and two 'Ideas Workshops' with local stakeholders and the general public at the beginning of May. The key findings were presented at the Edinburgh Canal Festival in June 2017 with an aim to get further input from users before finalising the study in the end of June.



Walkshops and site visits

The walkshops were held by representatives from the project team. The walkshops were divided into five individual sections to be able to study the whole length of the towpath; four walkshops were conducted during the day, and one was held in the evening:

- Walkshop 1 | Lochrin Basin to Meggetland
- Walkshop 2 | Meggetland to Wester Hailes
- Walkshop 3 | Wester Hailes to Scott Russell Aqueduct
- Walkshop 4 (by bike) | Scott Russell Aqueduct to Almond Aqueduct
- Walkshop 5 | Night-time Walkshop from Meggetland to Lochrin Basin

Daytime Walkshop

While walking along the towpath, the team took notes, photographs, and discussed the width of the towpath, desired routes (routes in the grass and through hedgerows), options for alternative routes and general access improvement, along with opportunities for further improvement for placemaking and wayfinding along the towpath. The width of the towpath, in particular, was seen as a key issue, combined with the possibility of guiding cyclists along alternative off-road routes (quiet routes) to ease the pressure on the towpath.

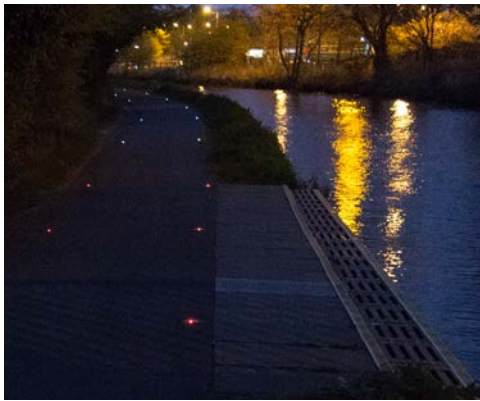
Night Time Walkshop

At the walkshop, the project team were taking photographs and illuminance readings periodically along the route, and noting observations of the characteristics of light, measuring the LUX (the level of brightness) along the path from Meggetland to Lochrin Basin. The main observations were a huge contrast between the lighting level at the general towpath, the bridge holes and the blinding of pedestrians caused by front mounted lights on passing cyclists. Because of the time of year (May) on the day of the night-time walkshop it was not dark during rush hours, the walk took place after 9pm to ensure darkness. The project team, therefore, has advised a second night-time walkshop should take place during the winter months, in order to register issues and conflicts for when the path is dark and busy in rush hour.

Key Findings

The series of walkshops can be summarised into six key findings, which have been taken forward into the study and used as the base for the topics for the ideas workshop.

- **Towpath width**
A general issue along the towpath, especially in the region within the Edinburgh Bypass. The pinch points along the towpath are creating a series of issues that need to be addressed.
- **Surface improvements and drainage**
To prevent puddles and uneven surfaces.
- **Lighting**
To even out the lux-level along the path to prevent pedestrians being blinded by cyclists.
- **Conflict areas**
The different user groups, their individual speed level and purpose for using the path.
- **Improve accessibility**
Covering access from the surrounding areas and making the towpath accessible for different user groups.
- **Water activities**
Union Canal has a series of groups using the water space, who mainly have access to the water from the towpath.





Consultation

Ideas Workshop

The Ideas Workshop was held on May 11th 2017 at Polwarth Parish Church. Attendees was invited via email, Eventbrite, posters along the canal and in local shops and the event was futhermore share via Facebook and target emails by stakeholders.

The workshop was an effective way of gaining insight into key areas of canal user interests as well as acquiring input and involvement from the local community and stakeholders of the Union Canal Towpath. The workshop was split into two sessions, which stakeholders could attend and take part in several discussions and explore issues and ideas surrounding the use of the canal towpath. The workshop was formatted into six roundtable discussions which were facilitated by members of the project team. The members of the project team were only facilitating conversation allowing the free flow of ideas and were not experts in the particular field of discussion.

Roundtable discussions

A series of roundtable discussions provided platforms for attendees to raise their concerns, issues, ideas and suggestions about each topic. Attendees took part in a total of four discussions during the workshop. At the end of the roundtable discussion, a summary from each table was shared via a short presentation of the main discussion points.

The topics of the tables were:

1. Towpath widening

2. Surface improvements

3. Lighting

4. Conflict areas

5. Improve accessibility

6. Water Activities

Attendees and ongoing involvement

At the end of the workshop, attendees were provided with a leaflet which detailed a direct project email; this was with the aim of encouraging those who attended to share any further ideas, suggestions or interest with the project team. The workshop provided a strong starting point for further discussion, and the project team is pleased to have received additional input to the study since the workshop.

There were 78 attendees in total between both workshops; these included various stakeholders with individual interests, as well as those representing groups and organisations. Their input have been followed up by a series of emails from both public and private organisations and a public consultation and display of the suggested strategies for improving the usability of the towpath at the Edinburgh Canal Festival.

Representatives from the following organisations attended the Ideas Workshop, been intouch via emails, meetings and/or attended the Union Canal Towpath Stall at the Edinburgh Canal Festival:

- Sustrans

▪ Heriot Watt University Rowing Club

▪ Canalside Community Hall

▪ Watson Crescent Residents

▪ Spokes

▪ Historic Environment Scotland

▪ Scottish Natural Heritage

▪ George Watson's College Rowing Club

▪ WSP Engineers

▪ 7N Architects

▪ Re-Union

▪ Edinburgh Schools Kayak Club

▪ City of Edinburgh Council

▪ The Green Party

▪ Scottish Canals

▪ Police Scotland

▪ Corstorphine A.A.C

▪ Fountainbridge Canalside Initiative

▪ Edinburgh Canal Society

▪ Scottish Rowing

▪ Polwarth Church

▪ Leamington Boats

▪ George Heriots School Rowing

▪ University of Edinburgh

▪ Handcycling Edinburgh

▪ and individuals and local residents



EDINBURGH UNION CANAL TOWPATH

Ideas Workshop - All Welcome

When
Thursday 11th May 2017
2.30 pm - 4.30pm or
5.30 pm - 7.30pm

Where
Drennan Hall
Polwarth Parish Church
Maxwellton Road
Edinburgh EH10 4JH
1016@parish.edinburgh

sponsored by
Scottish Canals
www.scottishcanals.co.uk
sustrans
join the movement



UNION CANAL

Distributed invitation for the Ideas Workshop



Key Findings

Towpath widening

- Impact of waterway uses.
- Ecological and natural impact.
- Widening at pinch points.
- Awareness of increased speeding.
- Heritage impact.
- Cantilevered structure at aqueducts.
- Second bridge holes.
- User zoning.
- User changes.
- Sightlines forward visibility
- Safety at pinch points.
- Increasing visual length with mirrors.

Surface improvements

- Alternative off-road routes for commuters/ bike users.
- Improvement could increase users.
- Use cobblestones as a feature and not as a general surface material.
- Heritage impact.
- Retain green verge between canal and towpath.
- Remove chicanes/speedbumps.
- Articulate urban/rural contrasts through surface material.
- Signage of surfaces.
- Consider children, elderly and disabled.
- Solar reflecting coating.
- Smoothen uneven surfaces.
- Improvement of drainage.

Conflicts

- Code of conduct for all users.
- Public walking on private land/gardens.
- Speeding (cyclists).
- User conflicts.
- Communal awareness.

Lighting

- Lighting within the city bypass.
- Lighting on the towpath could decrease blinding by wearable lights.
- Cats eyes and solar powered lights.
- Ecology impact.
- Vandalism and antisocial behaviour.
- Lights at pinch points/ key areas.
- Artistic lighting.
- Lighting at rural access points.
- Reflective strips/ white lines.
- Balance between design and functionality.

Improve accessibility

- Improve signage and wayfinding.
- Street/road names on bridges.
- Landownership and access routes.
- More access points to the water.
- Access from water to the towpath (visitor moorings).
- Consider who is impacted by more access points to the towpath.
- Places to rest along the route.
- Access points to be considered within the wider context.
- All access points do not need to be fully accessible.

Water Activities

- Reduction of water space not an option.
- Access via towpath.
- Health and wellbeing.
- Important to keep the canal active.
- Turning point to be retained.
- More information on who can use the water space without a permit.



Key findings from research and consultation

The feedback and information gathered from our research, consultations, and stakeholder correspondence thus far has been recorded, collated and analysed to develop a series of key findings. These key findings will influence ongoing design proposals.

- **Bridge Holes**
Bridge holes along the towpath are narrow and/or sightlines are compromised creating a pinch point and a hazard for all types users going through.
- **Access Improvements**
Additional access opportunities to/from the towpath to the local and wider context.
- **Alternative Routes**
Paths leading cyclists off the towpath and along partly existing parallel paths.
- **Placemaking**
To break up the linear nature of the towpath and create nodes which can stimulate a more dynamic experience while travelling along the towpath.
- **Towpath Width Strategy**
Sensible widening of the towpath to 2.5m - 3.0m.
- **Surface Improvement Strategy**
Userfriendly surfacing along the entire towpath.
- **Lighting Strategy**
A balance between artistic/alternative and functional lighting.
- **Landmark Opportunity Strategy**
Creating attractions like other structures along other canal networks in Scotland, e.g. Falkirk Wheel and the Kelpies.
- **Wayfinding & Signage Strategy**
Giving the users an opportunity to navigate within the nearby infrastructure.
- **Code of conduct strategy**
Educational user strategies with focus on hierarchy and use of shared path, for all users and not just for cyclists, as currently exists.



Bridge Holes



Access improvement



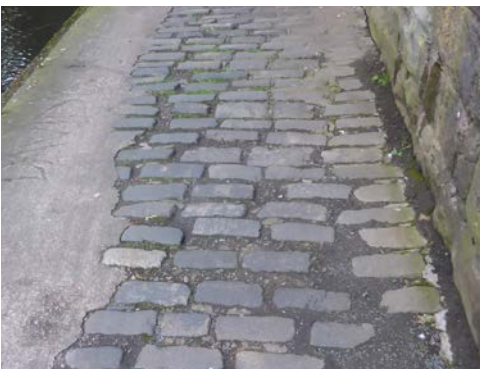
Alternative routes



Placemaking



Towpath width strategy



Surface improvement strategy



Lighting Strategy



Towpath width strategy



Wayfinding & Signage strategy



Code of conduct

