new life for Rotherham’s rivers and waterways
strategy and action plan

August 2009
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1.1 The brief

The Rotherham Waterways Strategy was commissioned and funded jointly by Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council and the Environment Agency. A consultant team led by yellow book ltd was appointed to carry out the study.

The purpose of the study was:

To provide a framework for the improvement and conservation of Rotherham’s rivers and canals, and the creation of clean, safe, attractive and popular waterside environments throughout the Borough.

The key objectives of the study were:

- to enrich the quality of life of people who live and work in Rotherham, and to improve the experience of visitors
- to promote nature conservation and biodiversity, and
- to stimulate investment and regeneration.

1.2 Work programme

In the early stages of the work programme it was agreed that the scope of the study should be extended to include lakes and ponds. For convenience we have continued to use the term “waterways” to cover all the water bodies in the borough.

The work programme comprised three stages. In Stage 1, the consultant team carried out an extensive programme of research and analysis including:

- a comprehensive desk review of policy documents, development proposals and other material
- briefings and consultations with officers of Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council, the Environment Agency, British Waterways, Sheffield & Rotherham Wildlife Trust and the Chesterfield Canal Partnerships
- a series of site visits to locations throughout the borough, to assess landscape quality and other assets and to document the key locations
- analysis of GIS data supplied by the Council and the production of a series of maps.

In Stage 2 the consultant team designed and facilitated a stakeholder workshop, which was attended by representatives of Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council, the Environment Agency and British Waterways. The objectives of the workshop were:
- to review and test the consultant team’s analysis
- to explore the implications of the analysis, identifying strengths and weaknesses and opportunities for change
- to discuss the priorities for action, taking account of the resource implications and the likely risks and rewards.

An interim report was produced at this stage, which documented progress to date and mapped out a strategy, including recommended priorities for action. The interim report received a positive response and the third and final stage focused on the development of the strategy and action plan, including recommendations on delivery, performance management and stewardship. A draft version of this report was presented and discussed at a second stakeholder workshop in May 2009.

1.3 Structure of the report

The report is in 7 sections:

- Section 2 describes the policy context and highlights major projects under development or planned which are likely to have a significant impact on Rotherham’s waterways.
- Section 3 includes a short history of Rotherham’s waterways and describes their landscape setting; it includes a series of thematic maps based on GIS data and concludes by describing 7 character areas.
- Section 4 draws on the outcomes of the stakeholder workshop; it sets out an appraisal of the contribution (and potential) of the waterways, focusing on quality of life, diversity and regeneration impacts.
- Section 5 sets out the proposed strategy including a vision statement, objectives and priorities for action; it also describes some examples of best practice which could serve as sources of inspiration for future regeneration efforts.
- Section 6 sets out the recommended action plan, which is based on 5 key themes; it also offers guidance on delivery, collaboration and performance management.
- Section 7 contains a summary of our conclusions and recommendations.
- The appendix lists documentary sources consulted for the study.
2.1 The policy context

The consultant team has undertaken a wide-ranging review of the policy context, both regional and local, as it relates to Rotherham’s waterways. The review has embraced land-use and transport planning, regeneration, biodiversity, recreation and other policy areas. This section highlights key points from policy documents on these topics and the potential issues and implications for the waterways strategy. A full list of the documents and projects reviewed is contained in the Annex.

This section also identifies a number of major projects – current and planned – that are likely to have a significant impact on Rotherham’s waterways.

2.2 Regional planning

The Regional Spatial Strategy for Yorkshire and the Humber was published in May 2008. The strategy highlights the importance of the environment and its contribution to the quality of life. The aim is to make Rotherham an attractive place to live, work and visit, and the strategy makes specific reference to a new riverside in Rotherham with high quality architecture and design.

The RSS contains a suite of policies on environmental issues, including:

- promoting biomass planting
- alleviating flood risk
- increasing and enhancing urban planting
- promoting greenspace and biodiversity networks
- safeguarding and harnessing industrial heritage

RSS mini-reviews are currently being carried out. The infrastructure review includes a focus on green infrastructure, and the Yorkshire and Humber Assembly has commissioned research on the evidence base. Rivers and floodplains are identified as “strategic opportunity corridors”.

2.3 Local planning

The Council’s Unitary Development Plan was adopted in 1999 and is now becoming dated. Most policies were “saved” in 2007 and so continue to form part of the statutory development plan. Although some aspects of the UDP have been implemented and others superseded, it nevertheless forms part of the development plan and offers some useful policy pointers for the waterways strategy. Key points include:

- the potential role of canals and towpaths for recreation and tourism, including an aspiration to restore canals within the borough
- continued establishment of woodland planting, access and recreation
opportunities and visitor facilities in the South Yorkshire Forest

- protection and enhancement of Rotherham’s **natural and built heritage** and **greenspace**
- promotion of **footpaths, towpaths, cycleways and bridleways**, linking them to urban greenspace, country parks and the countryside
- encouraging an increase in **freight traffic** on the Sheffield and South Yorkshire Navigation, and protecting potential sites for industrial wharfs
- improvement of the **water quality** in the Don and Rother.

A consultation draft of the Rotherham Local Development Framework **Core Strategy: Preferred Options** was issued in 2007. Although the draft Core Strategy has not yet superseded the adopted Unitary Development Plan, it provides an up-to-date summary of the Council’s land-use planning aspirations. In relation to waterways, the document generally carries forward and updates the policies contained in the existing adopted UDP. It also reflects the Housing Market Renewal proposals and Community Strategy objectives described below.

### 2.4 Rotherham Renaissance

Since 2004, a series of documents has been published setting out plans for the regeneration of Rotherham town centre under the **Rotherham Renaissance** banner. These documents – vision, masterplan, design code and public realm strategy – call for the rivers and canal to be treated as key **drivers of regeneration**. **Mixed use waterfront developments** will improve **connections** to the town centre, enhance **public spaces** along the waterfront and **remove barriers** such as the Centenary Way road bridge. **Placemaking and good design** are key themes of the documents.

This body of work is now being embodied in the statutory development planning framework, notably the Strategic Development Framework and Public Realm Strategy for Rotherham town centre.

The Rotherham Renaissance **Strategic Development Framework** (The Black Book) is a key document. The document is currently the subject of formal consultation to become statutory planning policy. Key proposals include:
• civic, cultural, residential and mixed use developments on waterfront sites throughout central Rotherham
• the relocation of Centenary Way bridge
• placemaking through improved public realm and active frontages along the waterfronts
• improving connections and access to and along the canal and river.

2.5 Public realm strategy

Rotherham’s Public Realm Strategy sets out proposals to reclaim the riverside, based on a framework which will deliver:

• continuous riverside access
• riverside destinations and icons, and
• a river connected to the town centre.

The strategy identifies seven river zones in the area between the Centenary Way bridge and St Anne’s, identifying challenges and possible solutions in each. It also provides guidance on riverside treatments, including proposals to transform the river wall into a “canvas for public art”.

2.6 Transport policy

Encouraging walking and cycling for local journeys is an important strand of the transport policy agenda. The waterways strategy has a part to play, by promoting the use of canal and river banks as part of walking and cycling networks.

The scope for this is very clear in Rotherham town centre, where the Rotherham Renaissance programme puts an emphasis on developing public access to and along the river and canal banks. Elsewhere in the borough, improved pedestrian/cycling links also provide scope for better links between communities and greenspace.
The potential to promote freight traffic on the Sheffield and South Yorkshire Navigation (SSYN) is recognised in both the transport and land-use planning frameworks. Ports and waterways are identified in the Yorkshire and Humber Regional Economic Strategy as requiring significant investment. The South Yorkshire Local Transport Plan calls for an increase in canal freight to take traffic off the roads. The UDP aims to protect waterside development sites where it may be possible to provide wharfs.

Many of the borough’s existing industrial areas lie adjacent to the Navigation, but the volume of freight traffic remains low compared with, for example, the Ouse and the Aire & Calder. There is a modest trade in oil, steel, timber and other commodities, but our understanding is that, once the costs of maintaining navigation for larger vessels are taken into account, this is a loss-making enterprise for British Waterways. An independent assessment of present and potential future demand is needed, together with a comprehensive cost-benefit analysis.

A key issue for the future is the need to reconcile aspirations to increase freight traffic with demands for residential development, recreational facilities, greenspace and other uses.

2.7 Community Strategy

The Community Strategy, which was prepared by the Rotherham Partnership, focuses on five key themes: Rotherham Achieving, Alive, Learning, Proud and Safe. We have reviewed related documents including the Council’s Corporate Plan, Public Health Strategy, Local Area Agreement, Regeneration Plan, Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy and Housing Market Renewal proposals.

Closely integrated with the Local Development Framework, these documents support the concepts of:

- environmental and economic sustainability
- the creation of high quality living environments and public spaces, urban and rural
- access to recreational and cultural facilities and services
- support for local communities to be involved in activities and help shape their own regeneration priorities.

2.8 Housing market renewal

Linked with the Community Strategy and its associated documents are the plans being taken forward by Transform South Yorkshire, the sub-regional housing and regeneration partnership. These proposals
could be regarded as bridging between the borough-wide regeneration strategies and the statutory land-use planning framework. The Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder does not cover the whole of the borough, but focuses on neighbourhoods in the Don Valley priority regeneration area. The approach to regeneration is housing-led, but includes proposals to support the creation of sustainable neighbourhoods such as improving access to canals, rivers and wetlands, and using the rivers and canals to provide an attractive setting for new development.

2.9 Flood risk management

The Don and Rother Catchment Flood Management Plan (2008) outlines the Environment Agency’s future policy for flood risk management in the study area. It states that building new flood defences to defend all areas against flooding is not sustainable, and contains a series of proposed actions which reflect a new approach, based on working with the natural processes of the rivers.

Rotherham is already leading the way. Under the Rotherham Renaissance banner, the £14m first phase of the Riverside Flood Defence Scheme, between Templeborough and the town centre, has been completed and is already recognised as an example of good practice. The scheme creates a flood compensation area as well as strengthening existing defences. Ultimately, it will provide safety from flood risk for about 30 ha of brownfield and development, and protection for road and rail infrastructure. A new community wetland has been provided, which will be managed by the Sheffield Rotherham Wildlife Trust.

The Environment Agency will monitor local authority performance on flood risk management, using Comprehensive Area Agreement National Indicator 189.

2.10 Biodiversity

The Yorkshire and Humber Regional Biodiversity Strategy (2009) states that:

“Sustainable water management should deliver adequate water resources, high quality water, effective flood risk management and opportunities to restore the natural environment and enhance biodiversity. Healthy water and wetland habitats...are areas rich in biodiversity and also provide ecosystem services...[such as] storage of carbon to mitigate against climate change, moderation and storage of the flow of water leading to reduction of flood peaks, and natural filtration and treatment of pollutants”.

The strategy highlights the need for action by national, regional and local partners, including:
highlighting the benefits of **ecosystem services**

- protecting floodplains from **unsuitable development**
- using catchment flood management plans to **restore floodplain wetlands**
- promote large scale **habitat restoration**
- incorporate **sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS)** into all new developments.

The **Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP)** identifies flood plain grazing and wet woodlands (often found along watercourses) as priority habitats. Their extent has diminished rapidly through industrialisation and, more recently, flood defence works. Action plans propose increasing the extent of these habitats wherever possible.

The **Rother Valley Wildlife Strategy** dates from 1994 but is still a useful source of information about the wildlife interest of the Rother. Despite pollution and canalisation, the river and its associated wetlands are of great wildlife importance, particularly for their ornithological interest. Key issues for the future include water quality, the impact of new development (including opencast mining) on habitats, and pressure on resources as recreational demand increases.

In terms of **protected species**, otters are present in Rotherham but a lack of secure daytime resting sites, due largely to the use of river and canal banks by anglers and walkers, limits population growth. The report suggests establishing undisturbed areas at regular intervals, for example on unused land close to the river at sewage works, factories and depots. A number of LBAP high priority species – great crested newts, common terns and pillwort – also occur along the borough’s watercourses. Existing sites should be conserved and new habitats created where appropriate.

There is an aspiration to increase **tree planting** in the borough, expressed in the Housing Market Renewal and South Yorkshire Forest proposals. There is scope for tree planting in river corridors and wetlands, with associated biodiversity benefits.

The policy review reveals the potential **tension between biodiversity and access/recreation objectives**. Undisturbed riverside sites may help to conserve habitats and promote biodiversity, but this may be at odds with the drive to increase access for leisure.

![Catcliffe Flash Local Nature Reserve](image)
and recreation uses. These interests are not irreconcilable, but accommodating both will require a balanced approach and effective management of the borough’s watercourses. The waterways strategy can provide a framework for this.

2.11 Rotherham Environment and Climate Change Action Plan

An Action Plan is currently being developed by Rotherham MBC to address climate change and wider environmental issues. The Plan will replace the existing Sustainable Development Framework, Environment Policy and Carbon Management Action Plan. It will also act as the delivery plan for the following National Indicators:

- NI 185 Reduction in carbon emissions from local authority operations
- NI 186 Reduction in carbon emissions in the local authority area
- NI 188 Planning to adapt to climate change

Many of the Council’s policies and strategies share an ambition to provide local communities with improved access to the countryside and informal recreational opportunities for walking and cycling. There is a particular emphasis on priority regeneration areas, especially in the Housing Market Renewal area. The waterways strategy offers potential to contribute to these aims through the opportunities offered by towpaths and riverside walks; and, as water quality improves, additional opportunities for water-based recreation.

The South Yorkshire Forest Plan covers a substantial part of the borough. It identifies opportunities for recreation, public access and woodland planting on underused and derelict land in urban and rural areas. The Plan notes the potential for watersports.

Thrybergh Country Park: view of the reservoir

Unexpected Rotherham
such as canoeing if water quality continues to improve. **Rother Valley Country Park’s** five year management plan seeks to balance its multiple roles as a venue for recreation and events, flood alleviation, wildlife and community enjoyment.

The **Rights of Way Improvement Plan** seeks to improve access for walkers and cyclists between urban centres, in the urban fringe, and to connect urban areas with the countryside. The Cuckoo Way by the Chesterfield Canal, the River Rother, and Rawmarsh HMR Area are identified as priorities. In addition, the southern part of the borough will benefit from a major investment in public access as part of Sustrans’ national **Connect2** programme of walking and cycling improvements, focused on the east-west link between south Sheffield, Rother Valley Country Park, the Chesterfield Canal and Worksop.

### 2.13 Tourism

The Borough’s Tourism Plan anticipates continued growth in a number of tourism markets – including:

- short breaks, business and conference tourism, visits to friends and relatives
- visits related to culture, the arts, specific events, leisure and shopping
- countryside recreation, environmentally sustainable tourism and active leisure pursuits.

Rotherham’s three **country parks** and the **canal networks** are identified as tourism assets. The waterways strategy could potentially contribute to tourism priorities including:

- sustaining an attractive and **high quality landscape**
- improved tourism/leisure signage
- an innovative **events programme**
- **countryside access** for all
- establishing a pool of **local volunteers** to assist at events festivals and attractions.
2.14 Culture

Future Perfect, Rotherham’s Cultural Strategy, was launched in 2003. The strategy notes the significance of canals, country parks and industrial heritage for the borough’s cultural life. It identifies some of Rotherham’s distinctive features:

- **work** - with its central location, natural communications network and natural resources, Rotherham has always been a hard working borough
- **craftsmanship** - from the Templeborough sculpture to Southwark Bridge, evidence of the borough’s craft skills span time and space
- **diversity** - Rotherham has residents of Celtic, Viking, Roman, Irish, Scottish, Midlands, Pakistani, Yemeni, Chinese and East European descent
- **contrast** - from Wentworth Woodhouse to White Bear Estate
- **eccentricity** – Rotherham’s quirky features include follies, monuments, medieval deer parks and limestone gorges.

2.15 Community engagement

Across the policy agenda a consistent theme is the need to involve the community in setting local priorities and developing and delivering projects. The Cultural Strategy aims to increase levels of civic pride and citizen involvement and provide opportunities for voluntary and community sector involvement. The borough’s Play Strategy aims to involve children and young people in the planning, and management of future facilities.

The waterways strategy should therefore encourage community-based planning and delivery of projects. The implementation of the strategy should reflect the ambitions of local communities for their rivers, streams, canals and ponds.
2.16 Policy context: overview

Rotherham’s rivers, streams, canals, lakes and ponds have an intrinsic value which is considered in more detail in Sections 3 and 4. But this review has shown that they are also assets which have the potential to contribute to the goals of creating a borough which is achieving, alive, learning, proud and safe. The local and regional policy agenda provides a clear rationale for action to make the most of Rotherham’s waterways in the knowledge that, as foreshadowed in the brief, doing so will help to:

- enrich the quality of life of people who live and work in Rotherham, and to improve the experience of visitors
- promote nature conservation and biodiversity, and
- stimulate investment and regeneration.

2.17 Major projects and proposals

The consultant team has identified a number of major projects which, if implemented, would have significant implications for the waterways strategy:

- **Rotherham Renaissance**: The first goal of the Strategic Development Framework (SDF) is for the river and the canal to form a key part in the town’s future. Development, which has historically turned its back on the waterways, will be re-orientated towards them; Forge Island “represents a unique opportunity to create a new piece of townscape... connected to the town by beautiful and extraordinary bridges”. Development is now under way at a number of key waterfront locations including the Weirsie and Forge Island, and proposals for Westgate, the Guest & Chrimes site and others are taking shape.

- **Waverley**: The 300 ha site of the former Orgreave coking plant is currently being reclaimed and restored. Development proposals for the site, which runs down to the River Rother, include a new energy-efficient eco-community of approximately 4,000 dwellings with associated employment land and community facilities. The south-eastern part of the site would include new lakes and wetland areas, woodlands and wildflower meadows, and walking and
cycling routes. This new open space will complement existing assets such as Treeton Dyke, Hail Mary Wood and Catcliffe Flash LNR on the opposite bank.

- **YES! Project**: RMBC and Oak Holdings have recently concluded a Development Agreement for this project which will develop a 130 ha site near Swallownest in the Rother valley to create what is claimed to be Europe’s biggest covered leisure, entertainment and sports destination. An investment of around £390m will create up to 3,000 jobs on the site which lies immediately to the north of the Rother Valley Country Park.

- **Manvers Waterfront** is a proposed mixed-use development around Manvers Lake in the Dearne Valley. The development will be housing-led, with business and leisure elements. There are plans to create facilities for watersports, and the lake has been offered to the British Olympic canoeing team as a possible training facility.

- **Canal restoration projects**: the Chesterfield Canal Partnership is seeking to restore navigation on the canal through to its original terminus in Chesterfield by restoring the crucial “missing link” between Kiveton Park and Killamarsh; as a short-term measure British Waterways intend to extend the eastern section of the canal to a new basin at Kiveton Lakes. In the long term the partnership also has aspirations to create the Rother Valley Link from Killamarsh to the South Yorkshire Navigation at Rotherham. We have also been briefed on proposals to restore the Barnsley and Dearne & Dove Canals: the latter joins the SSYN at Swinton.

- **Flood alleviation works** are currently proceeding on a 3km stretch of the River Don from Templeborough to Rotherham town centre. The works will offer flood protection to existing businesses and the Rotherham Renaissance development proposals, as well as enhancing biodiversity and improving public access to the river. Phase 1, from the Borough boundary to Centenary Way is due to be completed this year and includes a flood storage area / wetland upstream of the confluence with the Rother. Sheffield & Rotherham Wildlife Trust has facilitated the development of this urban wetland nature park which it will operate under a 99-year lease. Phase 2, extending through the town centre to the A633 Rotherham Road bridge, is currently being designed.

- **Dearne Valley Green Heart** is a five year project begun in 2007, led by a partnership of the Environment Agency, the RSPB and Natural England. The Dearne forms the borough’s northern boundary for a short distance. The project combines physical biodiversity, greenspace and recreational improvements with community involvement, education and training.
Delivery is at an early stage, but it promises to be an interesting model for what could be achieved on some of Rotherham’s waterways – both in terms of the actual proposals and the partnership delivery model.

- **Don - Fish and Floodplain** and the River Don Fish Pass Proposal are related studies which propose removing or bypassing four barriers on the River Don within the borough. There are a variety of potential solutions, from re-naturalised ox-bows to fish ladders. The scheme will enable fish to move freely up and down stream, thus avoiding the need for annual restocking and reducing the impact of pollution events. It will enhance the recreational value of the river and consolidate the recent rapid growth of angling, with associated economic benefits. Feasibility work and initial costings have been completed. The project is ready to proceed to detailed design and implementation.

- **Sheffield Waterways Strategy**: the Sheffield Waterways Strategy, a multi-agency partnership, has commissioned a strategy document. The report’s recommendations are still being considered, but there are obvious opportunities for collaboration between Rotherham and Sheffield, especially on the key challenges of flood risk management and the restoration of urban rivers.
3.1 Geology, waterways and settlements

The Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council area is relatively small, with a land area of about to 286 km² (110 miles²). Most of the area forms part of the **Yorkshire Coalfield**, “a rolling landscape of low escarpments and broad valleys and vales”.¹ Although this part of the borough bears the marks of its long industrial history, farming landscapes and ancient woods survive in many places. Melvyn Jones has described a complex pattern of development including:

- Rotherham as a major industrial town
- the ribbon development of 19th century industry in the Don valley
- a variety of villages, some suburbanised, and
- estate villages such as Wentworth.

The river Don flows across the coalfield through a broad, shallow valley. Its tributary, the Rother, flows north to join the Don a short distance to the west of the modern town centre. A third river, the Dearne, forms the northern boundary of the borough for a short distance before entering the Don at Mexborough. A network of small streams feeds into the three principal rivers.

**Rotherham** grew up by a ford across the Don; the town is first mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086 which records that there was a church and a mill by the river. The ford may have been replaced by a wooden bridge which was in turn replaced by the stone Chantry Bridge: the famous chapel was added in 1483. In the 1570s the antiquary John Leland described Rotherham as “a meatfull large Market Town”, with “a fair Stone Bridge... [and] a large and fair Collegiate Church”. Even then, Rotherham was a centre of **rural industry** with “veri good Pittes of Cole... [and] very good Smiths for all cutting tools”.

An increase in trade and the rise of mining and manufacturing industry created demand for a navigable waterway through South Yorkshire. Until the 18th century, navigation was not possible beyond Doncaster. Various efforts to promote a bill foundered on vested interests, but in 1726 the Cutlers’ Company’s Bill to make the Don navigable from Doncaster to Tinsley was passed. The Don Navigation (now known as the South Yorkshire Navigation) reached Rotherham in 1740 and Tinsley in 1756. The engineering works continued for many years, but the Navigation still comprises sections of canalised river linked by artificial cuts. Swinton was developed as a canal port at the junction of the Dearne & Dove Canal, which created a link to West Yorkshire when it opened in 1804. In 1780, the Marquess of Rockingham built a private canal to transport coal from his collieries at Greasbrough. The rival Chesterfield Canal opened in 1780 after a proposal to canalise the river Rother failed. The arrival of the canal enabled coal and other products to be transported in bulk over long distances. It signalled the start of a period of rapid industrialisation which, despite some peaks and troughs, was maintained well into the second half of the 20th century. The Walker family moved its ironworks to Masbrough in 1746, after Samuel Walker “began to see ye disadvantage of being so far from ye navigable river”. In the 1750s the Walkers expanded their operations, acquiring a new site at the Holmes, linked to the Navigation by a mile-long canal. For the next 200 years, the Don valley would be at the heart of Rotherham’s industrial life: coal, iron, glass and steel were all produced in and around the river corridor, although by the mid 19th century railways were replacing canals as the principal means of transportation for people and goods. The town’s modern reputation as a steel-producing centre dates

Chesterfield Canal at Kiveton Park

Dearne & Dove Canal
from 1871, when the Phoenix Bessemer Works was established at Ickles.

Almost the whole length of Rotherham’s Don became a site of industry, from Templeborough to Swinton, and similar corridors of development extended into the Rother and Dearne valleys. Villages were subsumed into the industrial sprawl and emerged as industrial towns. Despite this, in the west of the borough there is still a semi-rural hinterland of villages, hamlets and farms connected by a network of ancient lanes. This area was densely wooded from early times and even in the early 20th century, trees were still a major element of the landscape. Many of the woods had been managed as coppices, providing fuel for iron, steel and lead smelting. The watercourses in this area reflect the complexity of the landscape – while the Don and Rother are the principal streams, they are fed by numerous small streams and drainage channels. Ponds are a feature of the coalfield.

Coal, shale, limestone and sandstone were all mined in the area, leaving a legacy of flash ponds, quarries, waste tips and derelict land. Much of this brownfield land has been rehabilitated while other areas are regenerating naturally, providing time-landscapes rich in artefacts and history. Extensive areas of land have been subject to settlement, flooding and seasonal standing water resulting from mineral extraction. As a result, water plays a key role as a focus for regeneration: Manvers Colliery and Orgreave (Waverley) are notable examples.

To the east of the coal measures, a narrow ridge of magnesian limestone produces a landscape of very different character, with large tracts of arable land, estate landscapes and attractive stone-built villages. It remained

Kilnhurst

Maltby Dike at Roche Abbey
an agricultural rather than an industrial area, at least until the early 20th century when a number of mines were opened in the “concealed coalfield”; indeed, Maltby is one of the last remaining deep mines in the UK. The M1/M18 follows the line of this ridge which marks a change in landscape character and a watershed. In the coal measures, the rivers flow into the Don; in limestone country, the streams and dikes flow east and feed into the Trent river system.

In this area, widely spaced villages are the norm, with fewer hamlets and isolated farms. Despite recent suburbanisation, the villages are generally smaller and more rural in character than the coalfield settlements. The underlying geology and the environmental conditions encouraged early settlement in this area. Much of the limestone landscape had been cleared of its woodland cover before Anglo-Saxon times. Even so, remnants of large ancient woodlands survive, notably at Maltby. The watercourses in this area are less complex, with longer stretches of streams in open valleys. Again, ponds and standing water are common features.

Figure 3-1 shows the waterways in their landscape setting. It reflects the extent and complexity of the borough’s river system and the historic importance of canals. But it also highlights the significance of artificial water bodies, such as reservoirs, ornamental lakes in planned landscapes such as Wentworth, and new waterspaces such as the lakes in Rother Valley Country Park and at Manvers, and the new fishing ponds created by British Waterways at Kiveton.

When the reservoirs at Thrybergh and Ulley were no longer required to supply water to the area, both were acquired by RMBC. They now form the centrepieces of two country parks, in the north and south of the borough respectively. Harthill reservoir was built to supply water to the Chesterfield Canal via a feeder channel: it is now a popular place for local people to walk, and the home of Rotherham Sailing Club.

The study area contains a number of estates, manor houses and country houses, and notable designed landscapes by Capability Brown (Roche Abbey and Sandwick Hall) and Humphrey Repton (Wentworth Woodhouse). These make a considerable impact on the surrounding landscape, and water is often a key element of designs which feature artificial Harthill Reservoir

Harthill Reservoir
Figure 3-1: Settlements, contours, waterways and water bodies
lakes and realigned streams to create picturesque landscapes. Todwick Hall was an earlier moated manor house. These features enrich the rural scene and provide interesting cultural punctuations in the landscape.

Rivers, streams and canals have played a pivotal role in the history of Rotherham. From the earliest times, waterways provided a source of power for rural industries; later factories discharged waste and effluent into rivers which soon became open sewers. From the 18th century, canals provided the transport links that enabled manufacturing to move from domestic to industrial scale. In the industrial era, the Don corridor was not a beautiful place and pollution was so severe that the water was, to all intents and purposes, dead, but the Navigation was central to the working life of the borough and the source of much of its prosperity.

3.2 The waterways today

The Don corridor retains something of its traditional character, and steel-making continues at Aldwarke and Thrybergh. But much of the river valley is now a classic post-industrial landscape with tracts of derelict and under-used land interspersed with low-density retail parks and other development. It bears all the hallmarks of a place which, for generations, has been undervalued and treated as a liability rather than an asset. That is very typical of the fate of industrial waterways in the second half of the twentieth century, but (as in many other towns and cities) there is now a growing appreciation of the value and potential of the Don, Rother and Dearne.

This new and more positive perspective can be attributed to a number of factors, including:

- the dramatic improvement in water quality which has made the urban rivers more pleasant and safer places to be, and encouraged recreational use especially for fishing
- a greater awareness of the importance and value of biodiversity and the role of water bodies and the areas close to them as urban habitats and wildlife corridors
- a growing appreciation of the value of riverbanks and towpaths as routes for cycling and walking and key links in access networks
- large tracts of contaminated land in the Rother valley were reclaimed to create the Rother Valley Country Park which has
become a highly valued community asset
  • the success of the regeneration of the Chesterfield Canal and other urban waterways, and the increase in leisure boating
  • the emergence of waterfront regeneration as one of the key themes of regeneration practice in the UK and internationally
  • a major investment in the South Yorkshire Navigation in the 1980s increased its capacity and opened up the prospect of a revival of freight traffic, albeit with limited success.

These factors help explain why previously neglected urban waterways have been reclaimed and positioned as key assets in a broad range of community, planning and development policies for Rotherham (see Section 2) and in other towns and cities. In many parts of the UK, voluntary groups have played an important role in raising awareness of the potential of forgotten urban rivers and in mobilising community interest and support.

Figure 3-3: Waterways and open space

Figure 3-4: Waterways and landscape value
Nevertheless, Rotherham’s waterways continue to bear the imprint of their industrial past. Figure 3-2 shows how business and industry remains concentrated in the Don corridor and close to the Rother and the Dearne. Large parts of the borough to the north and east remain undeveloped or have only a scattered settlement pattern. These less developed areas include substantial areas of open space, parks and gardens, local nature reserves (LNRs) and country parks (Figure 3-3), and they are often associated with areas of high landscape value (Figure 3-4).

### 3.3 Typology and character areas

The consultant team has constructed a typology of waterways and water spaces in Rotherham. The key stages of the exercise are summarised in Figure 3-5.

Using these variables we constructed a set of character areas which have helped to create an organising framework for waterways policies and interventions (Figure 3-6 overleaf):

1. **The River Don corridor through Rotherham north east to the Council boundary** – this is a predominantly urban area with typologies including civic waterfront, industrial, industrial transitional and significant areas of canalised river and canal. There are significant opportuni-

| Figure 3-5: Developing a typology of waterways and waterspaces |
|---|---|
| river | civic | industrial | industrial transitional | urban | urban parkland | urban fringe | rural |
| urban | industrial | industrial transitional | urban | urban parkland | urban fringe | rural | node |
| stream | industrial | hidden | urban | urban parkland | fringe | rural agric | rural wooded | designed landscape |
| lake | natural | urban parkland | drainage | transitional (seasonal) | designed |
| pond | natural | urban parkland | drainage | transitional (seasonal) | designed |

we then factored in ideas of function and cultural value:

transport | sailing | boating | recreation | fishing | habitat | drainage | reservoir | history | cultural significance | visual quality | stories | popularity |

finally, we considered context including:

landscape quality | nature conservation | accessibility | proximity to communities | travel-to distance | proximity to listed buildings or ancient monuments | ancient woodland | industrial history | designed parks and gardens.
Figure 3-6: Rotherham's waterways: character areas
ties for change in the river profile and for the natural regeneration of much of the riverside land

2. The River Rother valley including Treeton, Aughton and an upland area of tributaries and high quality landscape – this is an attractive area of river valley and lakes to the west along the Council boundary with an upland area of high quality landscape including Ulley Country Park.

3. The Chesterfield Canal corridor from Kiveton Park to Shireoaks – this east-west corridor is an attractive and historic area and includes the picturesque village of Harthill and its supply reservoir. It is a heavily wooded and agricultural landscape.

4. The valley of the Anston Brook including Thurcroft, Laughton Common, North and South Anston, Dinnington and Woodsetts - this is a distinctive zone heavily marked by industry in the west around the built up areas but becoming more attractive and rural to the east.

5. The Maltby, Firbeck, Hooton and Lamb Lane Dikes valley system running south east from Maltby to the Council boundary near Oldcoates – this is an area of high quality landscape including the remarkable Roche Abbey ruins and the designed landscape of Sandbeck Hall. It is an area of great contrasts – from the intimate Nor Wood to the open landscape of mineral extraction east of Maltby.

6. The rolling upland and high quality landscape area of Wentworth focusing on the Estate designed landscape and water system of streams and artificial ponds. This is an area of high landscape value contrasting strongly with the industrial tract of Rotherham immediately to the south. It is highly accessible to a large proportion of the urban population of the borough.

7. The predominantly urban area of Wath upon Dearne and Brampton – this is an urban area on the north boundary of the Council area which has been the subject of considerable investment in the past 20 years. The area is bounded by the river Dearne, and includes the lake at Manvers.
4.1 The stakeholder workshop

At the first stakeholder workshop the consultant team presented the analysis set out in Section 3 as a starting point for the discussion. Delegates were invited to:

- **review and test** the consultant team’s analysis
- **explore the implications** of the analysis, identifying strengths and weaknesses and opportunities for change, and
- **discuss priorities for action**, taking account of the resource implications and the likely risks and rewards.

Discussion was structured around the three key themes of the brief: **quality of life, biodiversity** and regeneration. For each of these themes, a borough-wide SWOT analysis was constructed, and the results are summarised in the following paragraphs.

4.2 Waterways and quality of life

The outcomes of the discussion on waterways and quality of life are summarised in Figure 4-1.

The group highlighted locations where they considered that waterways made a **positive contribution** to quality of life, including the restored section of the river Dearne, the Chesterfield Canal, the country parks and the Town Lock. Locations where the waterways have (or are associated with) **negative impacts**

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**Figure 4-1: Quality of life SWOT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recreation</td>
<td>Crime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>Dereliction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport</td>
<td>Negative Perception</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture and heritage</td>
<td>Pollution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walking and cycling routes</td>
<td>“ Forgotten” corridors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green and open space</td>
<td>Poor access</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opportunities</th>
<th>Threats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increased leisure boat traffic</td>
<td>Cost of maintenance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connectivity</td>
<td>A risk-averse/litigious culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access</td>
<td>Climate change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pride/sense of community</td>
<td>Future flood risks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic revitalisation</td>
<td>Fear of crime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biodiversity</td>
<td>Sanitising for new developments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased freight use</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
on quality of life include: Masbrough and the Holmes; Rawmarsh and Parkgate; and Rotherham town centre. The historic canal port of Swinton is in a particularly poor state.

This analysis was very much in line with the consultant team’s initial assessment. Much of the Don Valley corridor and the lower reaches of the Rother are areas of low amenity, and the evidence of litter, graffiti and vandalism suggests that the area is not highly valued by at least some local people. Although Rotherham is a riverside town, and the river and the canal form an island (Forge Island) close to the town centre, development has turned its back on the water and the river is enclosed between cliff-like walls. Towpath and riverside access is limited in Rotherham, especially near industrial sites. Despite this, even along the urban river, there are valued places including nature reserves and woodlands, as well as sites of character and heritage value. Barges and other boats are moored at Ickles and on the Rotherham Cut at Northfield, and angling is increasingly popular on all the urban waterways, including the stump of the Earl Fitzwilliam’s Canal at Parkgate.
Rivers, streams and waterspaces make a major contribution to the quality of life elsewhere in the borough. We have already noted how the reclamation of contaminated land has created the very popular Rother Valley Country Park, which offers facilities for watersports and a rich wildlife habitat. The small reservoirs at Thrybergh, Ulley and Harthill are also valuable facilities for their respective communities; and the restoration (by British Waterways) of the former Kiveton Park Colliery site to create the fishing ponds known as Kiveton Waters has been an outstanding success.

The short section of the Chesterfield Canal, from Kiveton Park to the borough boundary at Shireoaks is delightful, especially the wooded sections near Thorpe Salvin and the staircase of locks at Turnerwood. The canal is fully accessible to walkers and cyclists using the Cuckoo Way. The monastic ruins of Roche Abbey are sited next to Maltby Dike where it cuts through a limestone gorge, creating the most memorable and romantic landscape setting in the borough.

Waterways also contribute to less well-known places. The valley of Anston Brook divides North
and South Anston and flows through the nature reserve at Anston Stones Wood. A very attractive system of streams (the Maltby, Firbeck, Hooton and Lamb Lane Dikes) is one of the defining features of an area of high landscape quality in the east of the borough.

We concluded that the waterways already make a significant contribution to the quality of life of the people who live and work in Rotherham, and – especially at the Rother Valley Country Park, Roche Abbey, Wentworth Park and on the Cuckoo Way – they provide attractions which bring day visitors to the area. But the quality is patchy, and, especially by the urban rivers, there is an air of neglect which is compounded by vandalism and anti-social behaviour. There is a growing awareness of the value of waterways and water spaces in urban areas, but there is much to do in order to realise their full potential.

4.3 Waterways, nature and biodiversity

The outcomes of the discussion on waterways and biodiversity are summarised in Figure 4-2.

The results of the SWOT analysis were again broadly in line with the consultants’ diagnosis. Flood prevention measures introduced over many years on the Don, Rother and Dearne are the product of a “protect and control” approach

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Habitat corridors</td>
<td>Canalised sections (rural and urban)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved river channels in parts of the Don/Rother</td>
<td>Hazardous pollutants in sediments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Habitats and water quality better than 20 years ago</td>
<td>Invasive weeds (Japanese knotweed, giant hogweed, floating pennywort)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some protected species</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities</td>
<td>Threats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fish passes</td>
<td>Uniformity of approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity of management approaches, built around protected species</td>
<td>Developers want clean sites, but these make poor habitats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filling gaps in wildlife corridors</td>
<td>Too much public access</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuous riverbank access possible with slight detours to avoid key habitats</td>
<td>Canalisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naturalising urban rivers and washlands</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flood regulators coming to the end of design life</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional priority - RSS has policy about habitat links and corridors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impetus from Water Framework Directive to promote good ecological practice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
which has resulted in artificial, canalised rivers, which are hard to access and offer poor conditions for wildlife. Nevertheless, abandoned post-industrial sites by the rivers have provided valuable habitats for an increasingly rich and diverse range of plants, animals, birds and insects.

The June 2007 floods were a reminder of the risks to homes and businesses in an intensely developed flood plain, and the instinct to deal with those risks by raising barriers is understandable. However, there is evidence of a new approach and the 2008 Don and Rother Catchment Flood Management Plan argues that continuing to rely on building new flood defences to defend all areas is not sustainable. Instead, the strategy proposes the restoration of the natural flood plain to increase water storage capacity, and it highlights the Centenary Wetland Reserve as an example of the new approach.

Rotherham’s rivers were among the most polluted in Europe, but water quality has improved dramatically in recent years, thanks to improved sewage treatment facilities and a big reduction in industrial effluent discharges. Conditions were particularly bad on the Rotherham Don because of discharges from the Blackburn Meadows Sewage works and the “grossly polluted” waters of the Rother, which only became a self-sustaining fishery in the mid-1990s. As well as the fish population, surveys have shown that otters (which were absent from the Don system for most of the 20th century) have returned, together with herons and other predators.

There are, then, grounds for optimism. Rotherham’s waterways are once again important sites for nature conservation which are making a significant and growing contribution to the biodiversity of the borough. But the gains of the past generation are by no means secure and there is no cause for complacency. Flooding remains a threat, and invasive plants are major problem in many areas. Moves to naturalise the rivers would help to create a more sustainable flood risk management regime, and to improve wildlife habitats and corridors. But it is an approach that may require the “sacrifice” of development land and this may prove difficult to deliver in places where there is still property market failure.

4.4 Waterways and regeneration

The outcomes of the discussion on waterways and regeneration are summarised in Figure 4-3.

There is a growing recognition – among property makers and developers – that rivers, canals and lakes create attractive sites for regeneration. That is a central theme of the Rotherham Renaissance strategy, which aims to recover a previously neglected urban river, and to make a feature of the town’s potentially valuable but much-abused Forge Island. The YES! Project, the
regeneration of Manvers Colliery and Orgreave, and plans to fill gaps in the canal network all form part of the regeneration agenda in Rotherham; rivers and waterways are identified as key assets in housing market renewal strategies.

Workshop delegates took the view that Rotherham’s waterways will play a key role in the regeneration agenda in the town centre and the rest of the borough, but – like the consultants – they thought that there was a risk that the benefits might not be fully realised. There was a concern that the first phase of Rotherham Renaissance projects would not address the river/canalside opportunities adequately: there was some scepticism about the delivery of public goods. Delegates also feared that flood prevention measures would continue to be intrusive and over-engineered.

In discussion, it was noted that RMBC’s attitude to the Chesterfield Canal Partnership’s aspirations was ambivalent. The Council supports the Partnership, but it is not clear how committed it is to projects such as filling the Kiveton-Killamarsh “gap” or creating the Rother Valley Link. There was also some

Figure 4-3: Regeneration SWOT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rotherham Renaissance regeneration</td>
<td>Poor maintenance - Forge Island, Waddingtons yard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainable communities/HMR initiatives recognise waterways/natural environments</td>
<td>Lack of co-ordinated approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access and health - workforce, tourism, amenity</td>
<td>Complexity off issues and approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water quality improvements and biodiversity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities</td>
<td>Threats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renewable energy (hydro)</td>
<td>Financial commitments - who &amp; how much?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town centre renaissance</td>
<td>Conflicting priorities and agenda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canal partnership - ongoing commitment</td>
<td>Poor promotion after improvements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABLE project - future workforce training</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marine and boating links - Rother Valley link between Chesterfield canal &amp; SSYN</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnership development to achieve objectives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Links with Sheffield (and Doncaster?)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensible development in floodplains - but conflict with guidance which seeks to avoid flood risk (rather than manage it)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of s.106 planning agreements</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discussion about freight traffic: it was agreed that it was desirable to try to get some bulk goods off the roads network, but the canals were not considered to be a commercially viable alternative.

### 4.5 Rotherham’s waterways: overview

The consultants led a discussion based on this analysis, highlighting some key issues. It was agreed that, while the waterways are intrinsically valuable, this did not guarantee that they would be given a high policy priority or attract additional funding. It was therefore vitally important to connect the waterways strategy to the Community Strategy, the wider policy agenda and specific priority projects, as shown in Figure 4-4, which is illustrative but not comprehensive.

Rotherham is known as an industrial town, associated with coal and especially steel. The condition of much of the Don corridor confirms this image, even though most of the traditional industries have long since departed. But the borough is a more complex and varied place than this familiar stereotype would suggest, full of quirky and often delightful features. An exploration of Rotherham’s rivers, streams, canals, lakes and ponds opens up a rich and diverse series of landscapes and character areas: there are idyllic villages, medieval ruins, great country houses and ancient woods, as well as the more familiar scenes of industrial towns, factories and colliery villages.

The common themes running through our analysis are that:

- after decades of neglect the urban rivers

---

**Figure 4-4: Links to the policy agenda**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality of life</th>
<th>Biodiversity</th>
<th>Regeneration</th>
<th>Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amenity</td>
<td>River restoration</td>
<td>Development</td>
<td>Tourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Street Pride</td>
<td>Don Catchment Strategy</td>
<td>R Renaissance SDF</td>
<td>YES! project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Waverley Manvers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access</td>
<td>Flood management</td>
<td>Public realm</td>
<td>Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connect 2</td>
<td>Don Catchment Strategy</td>
<td>R Renaissance Urban Design Framework</td>
<td>Cultural Strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighbourhood</td>
<td>Habitats/corridors</td>
<td>Canal restoration</td>
<td>Freight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HMR</td>
<td>Centenary Washland</td>
<td>Norwood gap</td>
<td>South Yorks LTP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S Yorks Forest Plan</td>
<td>Rother Valley Link</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
have begun to recover, and there is a growing appreciation of their value and potential
- elsewhere, canals, reservoirs and even flash ponds have found new uses and are now highly valued by local communities
- across Rotherham assets are balanced by liabilities: a great deal of investment will be required to transform the latter
- the policy context is positive but there are still significant barriers to progress including flood risk, property market failure and a lack of resources for capital projects.
5.1 A vision for Rotherham's waterways

Following the stakeholder workshop we prepared the following vision statement, which looks forward to 2020.

Rotherham’s rivers, streams, canals, lakes, reservoirs and ponds are some of the best-loved and most highly valued places in the borough, and they have played a key role in the transformation of town centres and neighbourhoods. Rotherham has a stylish civic waterfront and Forge Island is a new riverside community, with a lively cultural scene.

The missing link in the Chesterfield Canal has been reinstated between Kiveton Park and Killamarsh, creating a popular route for leisure craft and walkers. There is public access to the river and the canal throughout the Don corridor. The Don fishery is thriving and angling is one the borough’s most popular leisure activities.

The implementation of the catchment flood management plan has transformed Rotherham’s urban rivers, re-naturalising channels and restoring sections of the flood plain in the Don and Rother valleys. This has contributed to biodiversity, with important sites at Masbrough, Thrybergh and a new nature reserve linking Waverley, Catcliffe, Treeton and Ulley.

Throughout the borough, rivers and water spaces are among the community’s most important assets. At the Waverley eco-community, and in the maturing housing market renewal areas they are valued as places for exercise, recreation and relaxation, and as a valuable educational resource. In towns and villages throughout the borough there has been a new wave of community-led projects to restore streams and ponds, and to create allotments, community gardens and orchards.

Stewardship has been vitally important. Rotherham’s waterways and water spaces are clean, safe and well cared for, creating a network of places of beauty and pleasure throughout the borough.

5.2 Strategic objectives

With this vision in view, the overarching goal of the Rotherham Waterways Strategy should be to nurture, restore, celebrate and care for Rotherham’s unique network of rivers, canals and water spaces.

We have framed five strategic objectives. These reflect the key themes of the study brief, which have proved to be robust and appropriate:

- to treat all Rotherham’s waterways and water spaces as valuable assets which have the potential to contribute to a better quality of life for all the people of...
the borough; to ensure that the best of them are nurtured and improved, and to restore those that have been neglected and abused

- to play a key role in tackling **climate change** by implementing a sustainable **flood risk management** regime in Rotherham, based wherever possible on making space for water by restoring natural processes in rivers and flood plains

- to recognise the vital role that rivers, water bodies and water margins play in promoting the **biodiversity** of Rotherham, by providing and protecting habitats, conservation areas and wildlife corridors; to continue to improve water quality, and develop and manage a network of high quality waterside habitats

- to treat Rotherham’s rivers and water bodies as key assets for **regeneration and economic development**; to ensure that the restoration and enhancement of waterfront sites is integral to the borough’s major regeneration projects

- to achieve sustainable change by engaging with local people whenever possible, to generate real **community ownership** of projects; and by establishing long-term arrangements for **stewardship**.

### 5.3 Links to the policy agenda

In an already crowded policy agenda, the prospects of a stand-alone waterways strategy being treated as a high priority are remote. We recommend therefore that, wherever possible, the objectives and priorities identified in this report should be **integrated with the wider policy agenda** of RMBC, the Environment Agency, British Waterways and other key partners.

Of these, the Environment Agency’s Don and Rother **catchment flood management plan** is obviously of pre-eminent importance because it represents a once in a generation opportunity to combine essential flood prevention measures with a programme of river restoration. The plan will mark the end of the old “protect and control” philosophy and introduce a sustainable approach based on working with the natural processes of the rivers. Every effort should be made to piggy-back complementary investment (for example, on access, nature conservation and neighbourhood renewal) on the implementation of the flood management plan, which will be monitored by the Environment Agency (NI 189).

In the same spirit, the Rotherham Renaissance projects and the proposed Waverley eco-community provide outstanding opportunities to leverage **planning gain** and to coordinate programmes for river restoration and
improvements to the public realm. Delivering the vision of an outstanding urban riverside (which is at the heart of the Strategic Development Framework and referred to in the RSS) should be a top priority.

This is a pragmatic approach which will help ensure that ambitious aspirations for the transformation of Rotherham’s waterways are nevertheless realistic and practicable. We need to ensure that interventions are framed in a way which will attract support from key partner organisations and maximise private sector contributions. The partners will need to work in partnership with the private sector to secure public goods from the Rotherham Renaissance schemes, the Waverley and YES! projects. Elsewhere, the emphasis will be on mobilising public sector resources, and we have already consulted with the partners to identify projects which represent the best balance between risk and reward. Their guidance is reflected in the priorities for action in the following section.

Rotherham’s rivers and canals form part of a wider waterways network. The principal rivers form part of the extensive river Don catchment, while the smaller streams in the east of the borough flow towards the Trent. The Sheffield & South Yorkshire Canal forms a link to the Ouse and the major inland port of Gooe, and there are proposals to create a link to the Chesterfield Canal via the Rother Valley and even to restore connections to West Yorkshire via the Dearne & Dove Canal. The missing link between Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire on the Chesterfield Canal is in Rotherham. The strategy will scope out recommendations for action in Rotherham, but a partnership approach – working with national agencies and other local authorities - is essential to achieve best value and maximum impact.

There is an immediate opportunity for collaboration with Sheffield. A key theme of the Sheffield Waterways Strategy (currently in draft final report form) is the case for creating an urban landscape park to provide a framework for development in the flood plain. This chimes with the emphasis in this strategy on restoring Rotherham’s urban rivers, and there is clearly an opportunity to work with Sheffield on developing the concept and commissioning the landscape strategy.

Further up the Rother Valley, The Avenue project, led by the East Midlands Development Agency (EMDA), is restoring the large (98 ha) and seriously contaminated site of a former coking works. A washlands nature reserve has already been created around the Rother and the Redleadmill Brook. This major project also offers opportunities for collaboration, as well as a source of inspiration in the immediate locality.

Our experience elsewhere, including case studies prepared for the Sheffield report, confirms the importance that communities attach to even small streams and ponds. There are many inspirational examples in the UK of community-led projects which have reclaimed neglected waterways and turned them into valued assets, sometimes linked to the creation of community gardens and similar schemes. Working with communities and interest groups such as conservation societies, boat owners and anglers will be an important theme of the strategy, and experience suggests that this approach will also help to reduce vandalism and other problems. Voluntary effort will play an important part in a stewardship scheme to ensure that investment in the waterways is maintained.

5.4 Priorities for action

Setting priorities means making tough decisions and being prepared to give a lower priority to projects which are, for example, too expensive, carry unacceptable levels of risk and uncertainty or which are unlikely to deliver significant impacts. We have reviewed a wide range of projects and initiatives during the course of this study and, although our terms of reference precluded a detailed cost-benefit analysis, we have undertaken an informal appraisal taking account of factors including: strategic fit, likely impact, affordability, deliverability, risk and uncertainty. We also drew on the results of a programme of consultations and the outcomes of the stakeholder workshop.

The six priorities to emerge from the process were:

1. River restoration
2. Major regeneration projects
3. Chesterfield Canal
4. Riverside nature reserves
5. Access networks

**Figure 5-1: How the priorities contribute to the strategic objectives**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priorities</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>QOL</th>
<th>Climate change</th>
<th>Biodiversity</th>
<th>Regeneration</th>
<th>Ownership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>River restoration</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regeneration projects</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chesterfield Canal</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature reserves</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access networks</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community projects</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

● Direct contribution ○ Supporting contribution
### Figure 5-2: Priorities for action

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. River Restoration</td>
<td>Implementation of the catchment flood management plan and of major regeneration projects will create a once in a generation opportunity to restore Rotherham’s canalised urban rivers, and to establish a new approach based on working with the natural processes of the rivers. Alongside major capital projects to create meanders and restore wetlands along the Rother and the Don, there will be opportunities to improve fish and eel passages and to conserve habitats for fauna and flora. There should be a concerted effort to remove invasive plant species. The prioritisation of sites for intervention should reflect their potential contribution to sustainable flood risk management. The design and funding of schemes should reflect the need to work with riparian owners to improve water quality and reduce discharges and dumping.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Major regeneration projects</td>
<td>A top priority should be to ensure that the vision of an attractive urban waterfront in Rotherham is realised. The Rotherham Renaissance projects create opportunities for river restoration and improvements to access and the public realm: a key role for this strategy is to ensure that these opportunities are identified and turned into a specific place making plan should be reflected in all development briefs. Similarly, the partners must ensure that the high aspirations for the Waverley community (green space, wetlands, SUDS etc) are delivered on the ground. The Manvers Waterfront scheme will create an important watersports facility in Rotherham.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Chesterfield Canal</td>
<td>The success of the restoration of the canal to date and plans for major regeneration at the Chesterfield Basin create a compelling case for restoring the “missing link” at Norwood. However, as the benefits of such a project would be shared across a wide area of South Yorkshire and the north midlands, RMBC will need financial support from other agencies and partners. Proposals to create a basin at Kiveton would create a temporary terminus and a long-term activity node. This project should be the first step, while fully costed proposals for the section between Kiveton Bridge and Nethermoor Lake are prepared. In the meantime, the canal route should be reserved to ensure that restoration is not prejudiced by inappropriate development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Riverside nature reserves</td>
<td>There is an opportunity to build on existing and planned facilities to create enlarged and improved nature reserves. We envisage two medium-term projects: (i) establishing a pedestrian/landscape link between the new Centenary Riverside and Blackburn Meadows, (ii) consolidating the existing nature reserves at Catcliffe Flash and Hail Mary Hill Wood, with the new open spaces and wetlands being created by the Waverley development. In both cases, new footbridges will be required.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Access networks</td>
<td>Access to Rotherham’s waterways is patchy, especially in the Don corridor and the lower Rother valley. A concerted effort is needed to extend the network of footpaths and cycleways, and to create safe and attractive diversions where waterside access is not possible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Community and stakeholder engagement</td>
<td>We recommend a strong focus on engaging with communities, businesses and riparian owners to get them involved in developing the proposals described in priorities 1-5 above. We also propose a programme to encourage and support bottom-up initiatives from residents’ associations, amenity groups and others. Groups should be able to access technical support and seed corn funding to assist with, for example, pond conservation projects, the restoration of streams and dikes or even small-scale hydro power schemes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. Community projects

Figure 5-1 shows how action on the six priorities will contribute to the strategic objectives. Figure 5-2 sets out an outline description of each of the priorities; recommended action plans are set out in Section 6 of this report.

A number of projects which were flagged up in Section 2 are not included in this list. In particular, we recommend that, among the canal restoration projects, top priority should be given to restoring the missing link on the Chesterfield Canal between Kiveton Park and Killamarsh: this will build on the substantial investment already made on the canal in Rotherham and enable the economic potential of the waterway to be realised; proposals to

Figure 5-3: Vision, objectives and priorities
establish the Rother Valley Link, or to re-open the Dearne & Dove Canal from Swinton may be attractive, but the indications are that these would be very complex and expensive projects, and the economic benefits have not yet been clearly demonstrated. **Completing the restoration of the Chesterfield Canal** will be a considerable challenge: we recommend that the partners should focus their attention on this goal for the time being, while reserving the right to revisit other projects in the future.

5.5 The strategy in summary

Figure 5-3 summarises the strategy framework:

5.6 Guiding principles

The action plan in Section 6 is not a detailed blueprint. It identifies **key projects and initiatives** and establishes a **framework for action**. It is for the local and regional partners to work up detailed, costed proposals. This will enable a **pragmatic, incremental approach** to the conservation and regeneration of Rotherham’s waterways, capitalising upon development and funding opportunities as they arise. But this does not mean that the approach should be piecemeal or merely opportunistic. We recommend that the detailed design of every intervention should be informed by an agreed set of **guiding principles**. A key task for the project manager (see Section 6) will be to ensure that these principles are applied. The principles may evolve over time, but we recommend that the following list should be adopted in the first instance.

**Principle 1 – Diversity: the strategy should celebrate and maintain the diversity of Rotherham’s rivers, waterways and water bodies.**

Rotherham is a distinctive, sometimes quirky place. Its waterways and waterspaces range from urban rivers to idyllic streams; through canals traditional and modern; to flash ponds, artificial lakes and reservoirs. Different waterspaces require different treatments, whether the creation of a stylish urban waterfront or a light touch (even benign neglect) for cherished natural places. But they are all valuable assets, and they should be respected and nurtured accordingly. The approach should reflect the waterspace typology and the diverse character areas described in Section 3-3.

**Principle 2 – Hidden places: parts of the waterways network have been neglected and overlooked: these hidden places should be rediscovered and restored.**

The Don and Rother valleys are classic post-industrial landscapes where, for too long, the rivers and canals have been treated as...
troublesome liabilities rather than valuable assets. There is an opportunity to rediscover waterways in all parts of the borough, but this does not mean that all these hidden places should be tamed and tidied up: wild places are valuable too, especially in urban areas. The Don valley could become a distinctive and memorable place: a productive landscape in which restored rivers, orchards, gardens and wilderness provide the setting for new homes, offices and factories.

Principle 3 – River restoration: we need a new philosophy of flood risk management, a sustainable approach based on restoring rivers and working with the water cycle.

Protect and control flood management has demonstrably failed. The combination of run-off and canalised urban rivers is particularly susceptible to flash flooding, and climate change may increase the frequency of flood events. Action is required to increase the natural storage capacity of rivers and streams, and the Floods and Water Bill will require local authorities to develop surface water management plans. Measures to reduce the impact of run-off from impermeable surfaces might include making SUDS mandatory for new developments. Restoring rivers and flood plains will be a complex, long-term task, especially in urban areas, and hard defences will continue to be part of the solution. But the complexity of the challenge cannot be an excuse for inaction, and the Centenary Riverside project is an example of Rotherham’s commitment to a new approach. Building on this experience is an urgent priority.

Principle 4 – Biodiversity: Rotherham’s waterways are priceless assets for nature conservation and the promotion of biodiversity.

Water – whether flowing along rivers or standing in canals and ponds – is an important habitat for fish and insects, and the water margins sustain populations of birds, mammals and plants. Water bodies are vital eco-systems and are often associated with woodland and greenspaces; rivers, streams and canals act as wildlife corridors, linking urban nature reserves (formal and informal) with the rural hinterland. The designation and management of nature reserves will help the richest habitats to flourish, but the strategy must not forget the value of the places in-between. Waterside access is important, but some places should be left undisturbed.

Principle 5 – Leisure: the people of Rotherham should be encouraged to rediscover their rivers and waterways and to use them for leisure and recreation.

Attitudes are already changing, but large parts of the network of rivers and waterways in Rotherham are still under-used. Encouraging local people to rediscover the water as a place
for informal recreation (walking and cycling),
for wildlife interest, for angling, boating and
watersports will enhance the quality of life,
and it will establish a virtuous circle. Well-
used places are safer, more comfortable and
less likely to attract anti-social behaviour.
We should not aim for an “access all areas”
approach: we may need to protect the flora
and fauna in some sensitive sites.

Principle 6 – Community: we need to
establish or improve the links between
communities and neighbouring waterways/
waterspaces.

Many people in Rotherham live or work close
to rivers, canals and ponds without knowing
they are there, or ever visiting them. We
need to encourage people to discover these
forgotten assets, by improving physical links,
creating useful walking and cycling networks
and – in some cases – creating public spaces
by the water. In this way, some places can be
reinvented as appealing riverside towns and
villages.

Principle 7 – Development: we need to
integrate waterspace into new developments.

New developments – in the heart of
Rotherham, at Waverley and in the housing
market renewal areas – should promote
innovation: they provide an opportunity to
restore rivers and their flood plains; to create
parks and nature reserves; and to re-orientate
development towards rivers, canals and
waterspaces. The re-meandering of the Rother
at Waverley, as part of a scheme which also
includes a fish pass, is an excellent local
example. Sometimes “developable” land
in the flood plain may need to be sacrificed
for long-term gain and to ensure a more
sustainable future.

Principle 8 – Design: all waterfront
interventions – built development, works
in the public realm, river engineering and
environmental schemes – should represent
the highest design standards and use the
best materials.

Quality and appropriateness should be
the keynotes. Design should reflect the
requirements of specific sites: signature
buildings and stylish public spaces may
be appropriate for the civic waterfront, but
more modest solutions will be appropriate
elsewhere – although this must not mean
compromising on quality. In some places
relatively recent public realm schemes are
already showing signs of wear, because cheap
materials have not stood the test of time. It
is better to do fewer things well than more
things badly.

Principle 9 – Culture: the waterways strategy
should respect and celebrate the history and
cultural heritage of Rotherham.

Rotherham has a fascinating history and a
rich heritage. Roche Abbey and the Wentworth estate are two notable historic landscapes, but the borough’s industrial heritage is also of great intrinsic value and cultural significance. In the modern era, the area’s industrial heritage – archaeology, architecture and landscapes – are too easily overlooked. We believe that Rotherham’s industrial history is unique: conserving and celebrating the heritage of the borough should be a key priority.

**Principle 10 – Engagement:** communities should be encouraged to play a lead role in implementing the strategy and in stewardship of the legacy.

Many of the projects described in the action plan will require public sector leadership and/or private sector investment, but implementation of the strategy also offers an opportunity to let communities play a key part in setting the agenda and delivering on the ground. Communities and voluntary groups should be encouraged and given practical support to adopt rivers, streams, canals and ponds and turn them into treasured assets. Experience suggests that community-led and maintained schemes are much less likely to be damaged or abused.

**Principle 11 – Stewardship:** the strategy is only as good as the long-term plan for management and stewardship.

Every action taken by the partners must be accompanied by a robust and sustainable plan for management and stewardship. The public sector partners, riparian owners and voluntary groups all have a role to play in ensuring that the strategy leaves an enduring legacy.

### 5.7 Ideas and inspiration

A 2006 report by The Communications Group for the Welsh Development Agency argued that, in an era in which it is hard to distinguish one place from another – and in which hundreds of towns and cities in Europe offer broadly similar sets of attributes to investors and individuals – **differentiation** is the key to successful place marketing.\(^4\) The report argues that places need to:

- create an image which has **emotional resonance** with investors
- exploit the power of **intangible assets** as well as financial and economic factors
- recognise the importance of **lifestyle and soft factors**
- tell a **unique and compelling story**.

There is a lot of evidence to suggest that, as soft factors have become more important in influencing the location decisions of businesses and individuals, **medium-sized**

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\(^4\) The Power of Destinations: why it matters to be different, report by The Communications Group, commissioned by the Welsh Development Agency, 2006.
industrial towns like Rotherham have found it hard to compete. The urban renaissance of the past 10-15 years has been largely confined to the large regional capitals: the gap between the core cities and the second tier of towns in city regions has grown. There are many towns like Rotherham in the north of England that cannot match the opportunities and choices available in the core cities, and many of them have struggled to shake off the legacy of industrial decline and (often undeserved) negative reputations. Rotherham is associated in the popular imagination with the fragmented and degraded landscapes of the Don valley, rather than the high quality rural landscapes that frame the urban areas, not to mention the little-known gems throughout the borough. Recent national media coverage has done nothing for the town’s image: flooding in Catcliffe, a bankrupt football team and the junk food culture exposed by Jamie Oliver’s Ministry of Food.

This report has noted some of the ways in which Rotherham is trying to re-invent itself: regeneration of the urban waterfront, an ambitious public realm strategy, the Waverley eco-community, an Olympic-class watersports facility at Manvers and many other initiatives. Implementation of the strategy set out in this report has the potential to make a real and lasting contribution to the change process. The scale of the task is daunting: the entire length of the Don valley in Rotherham bears the marks of centuries of exploitation and abuse. The recovery has already started, but transforming this broken landscape into a place that is valued and enjoyed by the people of Rotherham will be a huge challenge.

In Europe, the most ambitious and inspirational example of post-industrial regeneration is the Ruhr region of Germany. The yellow book report, Sheffield: city of rivers, commissioned by the Sheffield Waterways Strategy Group, includes a case study of the Emscher Landscape Park.

The creation of Emscher Park was the centrepiece of the International Building Exhibition (IBA) which ran from 1989 to 1999, and a partnership, Project Ruhr, was formed to continue the project which is now approaching its 20th year. In our Sheffield report we highlighted six key lessons from the Emscher Park experience, which we make no apology for repeating here:

- the concept of the landscape park is the big idea, which gives direction and coherence to a wide-ranging programme of projects large and small; every project must play a part in delivering the park; but the masterplan is not a strait-jacket: it establishes guiding principles – spatial and philosophical – but it can also respond to changing conditions
- the partners’ approach is genuinely holistic: economic, social, cultural and environmental objectives receive equal priority and are integrated into project
design and resource allocation

- **Ecological recovery** and the **naturalisation of rivers** are key themes running through the masterplan, and all developments (private sector and public sector) are expected to contribute to a more sustainable future.

- The overall **quality of architecture and design** is exceptionally high: this is true of business space, houses, schools and neighbourhood parks as well as high profile prestige projects.

- Emscher Park celebrates the **history and culture** of an industrial region: the remains of industry are valued and have found new uses as cultural venues, monuments and parks.

- The regeneration process has been exemplary, with extensive **public participation** at every stage: by understanding what local communities most value as well as what they want to change the partners have built a broad consensus around the masterplan.

IBA Emscher Park is the pre-eminent example in Europe of the regional-scale regeneration of a degraded and contaminated industrial landscape. The story is well known in the UK, but no British region has been able to deliver the same results. In trying to understand why, we believe that UK regions have struggled to match the **good governance**, the commitment to **design excellence** and **long-term strategic vision** which have made the transformation of the Ruhr possible. It is worth bearing in mind that this was achieved by **17 local authorities** working in partnership with the regional (Land) government.

We have also researched case studies of two other large area regeneration initiatives, in Norway and Finland: the creation of an environmental park around the neglected and polluted **Aker River** in **Oslo**, and the creation of a new community, **Arabianranta** on a derelict waterfront site in **Helsinki**. The Aker river park is now a mixed use area, with higher education, research, knowledge businesses and residential developments. Arabianranta has achieved a similar mix, and a recent appraisal has noted the way in which development of the area has been achieved in a thoughtful and organic way, respecting its history and culture, and remediating contaminated land.

Closer to home, the regeneration of **Castleford** in West Yorkshire has recently been the subject of a Channel 4 documentary series. The results have been decidedly mixed, largely because the programme was badly managed and design standards were compromised. However, the initiative can point to one outstanding success story: McDowell + Benedetti’s superb Castleford Bridge, which is not only beautiful but useful. The bridge connects the town with the River Aire, and dramatically improves pedestrian access to and from an isolated residential
new life for rotherham’s rivers and waterways

quarter. Its beauty and elegance have had a profound impact on the community. While some of the Castleford projects have misfired, leading to disappointment and recriminations, the bridge is an unqualified success and should be a source of inspiration for Rotherham when new river and canal crossings are commissioned.

The recommendations in this report place a strong emphasis on river restoration as part of a package of measures – including SUDS and green roofs – designed to reduce flood risks and encourage sustainable development. The Environment Agency has played a key role in encouraging river restoration in England and Wales, with the re-meandering of a section of the river Dearne at Broomhill being a notable local example. Examples of best practice in the UK are documented by the River Restoration Centre (www.therrc.co.uk), and European case studies (including the River Skjern in Denmark) are available from the European Centre for River Restoration (www.ercc.org).

One of the most successful examples of a restored river in an industrial town in England is the River Skerne in Darlington, which – like the Don – had been canalised and straightened, with raised banks to prevent flooding. A scheme, begun in the late 1990s, created a meandering channel, with pools and backwaters for young fish and insects. The banks were re-profiled as part of a programme to restore the flood plain, making the river safer and more accessible. The restored river is now the main feature of an area of informal parkland and public usage has agreed dramatically.

5.8 Conclusion

In this section of the report we have set out a new vision for Rotherham’s waterways focusing on five strategic objectives. We have argued that, rather than pursuing a stand-alone waterways strategy (which stands little chance of success in an already crowded policy landscape) the partners should aim to deliver the action plan by connecting it to existing policy priorities for Rotherham and the city-region. Based on the analysis in this report (and the outcomes of the stakeholder workshop) we have identified six
priorities for action, underpinned by a series of guiding principles on implementation. Finally, we have shown how the ideas shaping the Rotherham Waterways Strategy have been inspired by the success of other post-industrial cities and regions, notably the Ruhr region of Germany.
6.1 Key programmes and initiatives

In Section 5.4 we set out recommended priorities for action, and we have used these to frame a series of key programmes and initiatives which are described in the following paragraphs.

6.1.1 New Life for Urban River Valleys

This will be one of two flagship initiatives of the Rotherham Waterways Strategy, a 15-20 year programme to transform Rotherham’s urban river valleys – the Don and the lower reaches of the Rother – into attractive productive landscapes. The first key task will be to develop a landscape strategy, based on a fine-grained analysis of the character of the rivers and canals and their landscape setting, of the present and planned pattern of land use, and a detailed survey of biodiversity, cultural and heritage assets. This will provide the basis for a long-term programme of initiatives to restore the rivers and their flood plains, enhance greenspace and access networks, and create/enhance nature reserves.

The detailed design of projects and schemes should involve the application of the guiding principles set out in Section 5.5.

Work on this programme will deliver many of the priorities for action identified in the previous section. In the Don valley, sections of canal alternate with sections of navigable river but where possible the Don and the Rother river should be naturalised, to enhance biodiversity and restore the floodplain. Detailed planning and feasibility studies will be required, building on the Don and Rother Catchment Flood Management Plan (section 2.9). The landscape strategy will also provide an opportunity for innovation and creativity. For example, the large tracts of derelict land in the urban river valleys offer an exciting opportunity to work with communities to create a productive landscape of woodland, orchards, allotments and urban farms around new and existing settlements. There are opportunities to pursue this approach in some of the hidden landscapes around industrial sites and between the river and the canal. The long-neglected urban waterfront at Swinton should be reclaimed, including the now-derelict stump of the Dearne & Dove Canal; the Earl Fitzwilliam Canal is also awaiting regeneration.

For generations, development in the urban river valleys has ignored and discounted the potential of waterfront locations by the rivers and canals: throughout the 20th century they were treated as liabilities. The aim of the landscape strategy should be to re-orientate future development around the waterways and a restored floodplain, rediscovering these unique assets and treating them as the organising framework for development in the new century.

In our earlier report to the Sheffield Waterways Strategy Group we recommended a similar approach, with a proposal (inspired by the experience of the Ruhr) to designate the urban Don valley as a landscape park, designed to
create “a high quality landscape setting, re-establishing coherence and a sense of place, and restoring connections to...local centres and neighbourhoods”. We believe that there is an outstanding opportunity for collaboration between Rotherham and Sheffield, involving sub-regional and regional partners, to create an extended Don Valley Park, which will have a genuinely transformational impact on the lives of local people and on the image and reputation of South Yorkshire.

6.1.2 Chesterfield Canal: bridging the gap

The other flagship initiative will aim to complete the restoration, in the next 5-7 years, of the missing link in the Chesterfield Canal, between Killamarsh and Kiveton Park, all of it in the Rotherham borough area. We recommend that the partners should give priority to bridging this gap, which will complement the planned development of the canal basin at Chesterfield, and the ongoing restoration of the canal between Staveley and Killamarsh. Critically, completing the canal will enable Rotherham and its neighbours to capitalise on the significant investment already made, and to realise the economic benefits.

The Chesterfield Canal Trust has already commissioned a number of exploratory studies, Arup consultants have recommended a preferred route. As a first step, the Trust proposes to extend the canal from Kiveton Bridge across the Kiveton Park colliery site, where a small marina will be established at Kiveton Waters, close to the remains of the former Norwood Tunnel. From this point, the canal will cross the former colliery site before passing below the M1, and dropping down (via a new flight of locks) to the top of the Norwood flight. The next section requires the restoration of the 13 locks in the Norwood flight, and the final section will run from here to the restored canal at Killamarsh. The Trust acknowledges that this will be a “formidable” challenge, but no more so than other successful canal restoration schemes in the UK.

We recommend that RMBC and its partners should make the restoration of the canal a top priority, subject to a detailed appraisal, including a cost-benefit analysis. The Council’s support should be on the understanding that the costs of the project will be shared with regional bodies and neighbouring councils. The project will generate economic benefits, especially at Kiveton Waters and Rother Valley Country Park, but there will also be major benefits for neighbouring areas, especially Chesterfield, where the new canal basin will be a magnet for visitors and investors. Some local economic benefits will accrue at Kiveton Park and the Rother Valley Country Park, but the principal beneficiary (in terms of economic impact) will be North East Derbyshire, with Chesterfield becoming an important destination for leisure boats.
Key proposals map: the urban river valleys

1. river and flood plain restoration
2. productive landscape
3. connection of riverside communities
4. areas for walkers and cyclists
5. promoting biodiversity
We recommend that RMBC should support the Chesterfield Canal project, subject to appraisal, but that one of the conditions should be a decision **not to offer financial or in-kind support for other major canal projects** such as the Rother Valley Link or the restoration of the Dearne & Dove and Barnsley Canals at least until the Chesterfield Canal is completed. However, the entrance to the Dearne & Dove Canal should be restored as part of the regeneration of Swinton’s waterfront (see para 6.1.1). We understand that these schemes have enthusiastic supporters, but the evidence that we have seen suggests both projects are likely to be very complex and expensive and – with so many other challenges to address – it would be hard to justify expenditure on more than one major canal project. In view of the principles set out in the previous section, the partners should consider carefully the biodiversity implications of canalising the Rother for navigational purposes. The evidence to date is that restoring the Chesterfield Canal, though undoubtedly challenging, offers the most attractive risk-reward ratio.

### 6.1.3 Urban waterfront

Most of the key Rotherham Renaissance projects are located in the heart of the town, on or close to the banks of the River Don or by the Sheffield & South Yorkshire Navigation. The Strategic Development Framework emphasises the importance of the waterways as drivers of regeneration. A delivery vehicle is in place to implement the major developments, a number of which are nearing completion, but we have encountered concerns that **some of the promised benefits may not be delivered**. Our understanding is that plans for a riverside public space on the abattoir car park site are still on track, but there is no evidence that river restoration forms part of the plan, and the Don will still flow through the town in a deep concrete “canyon”. Access to the river is still constrained and compromised, and the quality of the public realm remains unacceptably poor. While the Black Book offered an attractive vision of Rotherham re-invented as an attractive riverside town, some of the stakeholders felt that a piecemeal, site-by-site development process was failing to deliver the promised **public goods**.

We recommend that the Rotherham Waterways partners should work together to **champion river restoration** and the creation of an **outstanding public realm** in the town centre. The **immediate practical steps** would be (i) to **review** the treatment of the rivers/public realm in projects on site or planned, and assess how this measures up to the initial vision, and (ii) to develop an **action plan** which will retrofit current schemes where possible, and provide a landscape framework for the next generation of town centre schemes, including new river/canal crossings as required. These **early actions** will help to ensure that the high aspirations of Rotherham Renaissance are fulfilled and not diluted as some stakeholders fear. Ideally, the
development of the plan should be coordinated with the initial stages of the development of the urban rivers landscape strategy (6.1.2 above).

6.1.4 Riverside communities

The development of new or expanded riverside communities provides an ideal opportunity to apply the guiding principles set out in Section 5. The Rotherham Waterways partners should aim to influence the form and quality of new development by focusing on sustainable flood risk management. This may mean sacrificing nominally “developable land” in the flood plain so that rivers can be restored and re-profiled in order to increase water storage capacity during peak flows. The resulting wetland river margins will be of significant value for wildlife and flora, and may form key elements of new parks, open spaces and nature reserves.

Planning of new communities such as Waverley needs to start with the river, and this will shape a framework for development, in which sustainable drainage (SUDS) and green roofs will play an important role. Here, restoring the flood plain will help to protect neighbouring communities such as Catcliffe from flooding in the future, and there is an opportunity to introduce a foot bridge, linking Waverley riverside with Catcliffe Flash, Treeton Dyke and Hail Mary Wood to create a superb new nature reserve. The HMR Pathfinder already recognises the opportunity to connect new and regenerated neighbourhoods in the Don valley to canals, rivers and wetlands; in the light of our wider proposals for the urban river valleys this opens up the prospect of a new generation of Rotherham’s citizens living in the park.

6.1.5 Rotherham’s Hidden Gems

The first four themes of the programme are major strategic initiatives which will require a significant long-term investment by the public sector, working in concert with private developers. However, this approach – important though it is – must be balanced by smaller interventions, led (and sometimes delivered) by communities. Implementation of the New Life for Urban River Valleys initiative (6.1.1) will create numerous opportunities for community engagement and innovation, and the delivery mechanisms should encourage this. But there are cherished rivers and water bodies throughout the borough, and community and amenity groups should be encouraged – and given practical support – to improve, restore and conserve some of these hidden gems, together with associated green spaces, woodlands and heritage sites.

We propose the introduction of a local challenge fund. Following an initial awareness raising campaign, local groups, schools and others should be encouraged to bring forward proposals to enhance and celebrate the amenity, nature conservation, heritage and cultural value of streams, rivers, canals and ponds.
We recommend that the scheme should have a minimum 5-year life, and that a total of 25 projects should be supported over that period. Successful bids would have access to technical assistance, and grants to pay for plant hire, minor engineering works and so on. A key task will be to ensure that volunteers will contribute to the stewardship of completed schemes.

6.1.6 Caring for Rotherham’s waterways and water spaces

Guiding principle 11 states that the strategy is only as good as the long-term plan for management and stewardship. As detailed planning proceeds, the revenue implications of management and maintenance as well as the capacity of community and voluntary groups need to be taken into account. It will be much more cost effective to deliver a smaller number of projects which are all well cared for in the future, than a larger number which are neglected and abused. Equally, a culture of care and stewardship will help to change behaviour and reduce anti-social behaviour, and there is plenty of evidence from other places that schemes which are led and managed by the community are less likely to be abused.

Focusing on long-term stewardship will help the local partners to achieve a sustainable level of project activity; robust designs and materials will help, as will the inclusion of a number of informal, low maintenance schemes. The promoters of small schemes seeking assistance from the challenge fund (see 6.1.5 above) will be required to make a commitment to contribute to the ongoing management and maintenance of the improvements. Volunteers can also play a vital role in helping to maintain larger schemes, and special management arrangements should be agreed for nature reserves and other sites of special interest.

However, keeping waterways – and especially big rivers like the Don – in good condition is a major challenge. The rivers should be major environmental assets in the borough, but the experience of being by the water is often far from pleasant, not least because of an endemic problem with litter and fly-tipping. In some places there may also be problems with drinking, drug abuse, vandalism and other forms of anti-social behaviour. It is often hard to gauge the reality of the situation, but if places are perceived to be dangerous or unpleasant local people will be reluctant to use them.

Ultimately, these problems persist because too many of Rotherham’s waterways are forgotten and under-used. Anti-social behaviour thrives in these circumstances, and the best and most sustainable response is to encourage communities to reclaim their rivers and waterways as walking and cycling routes, and as places for relaxation and recreation. For this to happen, people need to see evidence that the waterways are being looked after, and they need to be confident that they are safe and pleasant...
places to be. Angling is a particularly important recreational use, and is particularly popular in South Yorkshire. The angling community has played a key role in restoring rivers and waterways in Rotherham, and also has a key role to play in stewardship. In some places, such as the Fitzwilliam Canal, angling continues in spite of a poor environment, but this will not encourage new participants in angling, watersports or any other recreational activity.

We propose that RMBC and its local partners should develop a **stewardship scheme**, which will bring together a dedicated team of paid workers and local volunteers to keep the rivers, riverbanks and canal towpaths clean and tidy; repair damage; and provide a regular presence on the ground. The design of this scheme should draw on the experience of a similar scheme now under way in Sheffield and operated by Groundwork. A key element of the Sheffield model is that riparian owners contribute to the cost in return for a rapid response to litter and vandalism on their sections of the river. Angling organisations should also be involved: they have a major stake in the quality of Rotherham’s waterways, and a key role to play in controlling unauthorised fishing and other nuisances.

### 6.1.7 Celebrating Rotherham’s rivers

In recent years Rotherham has produced excellent guides to walking in the countryside and to the borough’s historic woodlands. We recommend that the next series of publications should focus on Rotherham’s waterways in all their diversity. The launch of this series – with new guides coming on stream as the action plan is implemented – will provide an opportunity to raise awareness of the waterways and their pivotal role in the history of the borough. An early action would be to design a small exhibition which would tour the borough to highlight these forgotten assets and publicise the Hidden Gems Challenge Fund.

Other actions should be integrated into the New Life initiative and the Challenge Fund projects, reflecting guiding principle 9 (culture). For example:

- **we recommend a survey of the industrial archaeology** of the urban river valleys, to identify key sites and buildings and inform a conservation strategy: a high quality publication should be produced to document and celebrate this heritage; as in the Ruhr region, the area’s industrial monuments should play a central role in the regeneration of the river valleys – through creative re-use, stabilisation of ruins, lighting and imaginative interpretation

- **public art** should also form an integral part of the New Life initiative and of small-scale community projects: we are not proposing any large “iconic” structures at this stage; we think that considered **interventions that reflect and enhance the special character and culture of Rotherham** would be more in
keeping with the spirit of this strategy, and are more likely to be of enduring value than another crude and bombastic exercise in place promotion.

6.1.8 Priorities and programmes

Figure 6-1 shows how the seven themes of the action plan address the priorities set out in Section 5. Together, they represent an **ambitious, comprehensive but realistic package** which has the potential to make a real and lasting **difference** and a major contribution to the goals of the community strategy and the emerging local development framework.

6.2 Making it happen: the Rotherham Waterways Partnership

We have already argued (in Section 5.3) that – in a crowded policy landscape and with intense competition for resources – it is not realistic or sensible to attempt to add a stand-alone waterways strategy to the long-list of priorities competing for attention. Some additional resources will be required to deliver the strategy, but our approach has been to treat Rotherham’s waterways as a **cross-cutting theme** which can **add value** to work already under way, planned or under development.

We recommend that RMBC, the Environment Agency and key local partners and stakeholders should form a **Rotherham Waterways Partnership** (RWP), which would be charged with **championing the strategy** and working across organisational boundaries to secure its **implementation**. We recommend that the partnership should be subject to a review to monitor progress after 3 years in any event, it should be wound up after **5 years**, by which time the implementation of the strategy should have been **mainstreamed** within existing plans and budgets.

Figure 6-2 summarises the **structure and roles** of the partnership in this 3-5 year period. Once the strategy has been approved and funding secured from the lead partners (see below), EA, RMBC and an agreed group of local partners will sign a **memorandum of understanding** and form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action Plan themes</th>
<th>Priorities</th>
<th>Nature reserves</th>
<th>Access networks</th>
<th>Community engagement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban rivers</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chesterfield Canal</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban waterfront</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riverside communities</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hidden gems</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caring for the waterways</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celebrating the rivers</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
a **partnership board**. A key role for the board will be to maintain effective working relationships with other sub-regional, catchment area and regional groups.

We recommend that a project manager - the Waterways Champion - should be seconded to work for the partnership. This would be a full-time appointment in the first year, but might taper off to a part-time commitment in subsequent years.

### 6.3 Making it happen: the action plan

The project manager will be responsible for implementing an **action plan** comprising two work streams, project development and influencing.

Where the waterways strategy breaks new ground, **project development** work will be required as follows:

- **New Life for Urban River Valleys**: the board’s most important task will be to commission the urban rivers landscape strategy and a costed 15-year implementation plan. As far as possible, the strategy – which should be launched in Y2 - should seek to apply the guiding principles set out in this report to planned work programmes on flood management, housing market renewal and major projects, but additional interventions may also be required to address the hidden places that the strategy aims to restore and rediscover. During this development phase, the board and the waterways champion will need to maintain close links with key decision makers, to ensure that the strategy is adopted as a key element of the local development framework, the Don catchment flood management plan and other policies.

- **Hidden Gems**: the waterways champion will develop the Hidden Gems Challenge Fund (Y1) and securing funds for an initial 5-year programme. We anticipate that the programme will be administered by the project manager in the initial pilot stage,
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ref</th>
<th>Theme/action, description, milestones</th>
<th>Y1</th>
<th>Y2</th>
<th>Y3</th>
<th>Y4+</th>
<th>Funding strategy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>Pre-launch</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>Secure approvals from lead partners, including budget Y1-3.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Q3</td>
<td>In-kind contributions only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>Confirm work programme</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Q3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>Launch partnership</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Q4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Project development</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>New Life for Urban River Valleys</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1) Commission landscape strategy and implementation plan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Q4</td>
<td>Additional funding for landscape strategy, spread over 2 financial years. RMBC, with contributions from other partners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2) Finalise report</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Q2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3) Secure approvals for 1st tranche of additional expenditure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Q3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3) Launch strategy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Q4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(4) Oversee mainstreaming and support funding applications</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>Hidden Gems</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1) Develop Challenge Fund</td>
<td>Q3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Develop Challenge Fund in-house, but with some consultancy support as required. 5-year funding package funded primarily by RMBC, with potential contributions/sponsorship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2) Secure 5-year funding package</td>
<td></td>
<td>Q1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3) Launch pilot</td>
<td></td>
<td>Q2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(4) Review and mainstream programme</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Q4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>Stewardship</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1) Develop stewardship scheme</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Q1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Scheme developed in-house and with partners, with some specialist input. Scheme funded by RMBC with partner support and private sector contributions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2) Secure 5-year funding and conclude agreements</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Q3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3) Launch pilot</td>
<td></td>
<td>Q1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(4) Review and mainstream programme</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Q4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>Celebrating</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1) Commission touring exhibition</td>
<td></td>
<td>Q2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>RWP partners to meet additional costs of exhibition and publications, and of studies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2) Commission publications in stages</td>
<td></td>
<td>Q2</td>
<td>Q2</td>
<td>Q2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3) Industrial archaeology survey</td>
<td></td>
<td>Q2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(4) Public arts strategy</td>
<td></td>
<td>Q2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
with appropriate officer support, but that it should be mainstreamed by Y3.

- **Stewardship**: one of the board’s priorities in Y1 should be to negotiate a stewardship scheme, focusing on the urban rivers in the first instance, but with a view to seeing it expanded into a ranger scheme for the whole of the landscape park in the medium term. The aim should be to mobilise public sector finance, volunteer effort and riparian owners to deliver a high quality stewardship scheme at the lowest possible net cost to the public purse. A pilot scheme should be launched in Y2, with a fully-funded 5-year scheme going live in Y3.

- **Celebrating the waterways**: an early action for the waterways champion will be to commission the touring exhibition

### Table 6-4: Additional expenditure RMBC/EA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ref</th>
<th>Theme/action, description, milestones</th>
<th>Y1 - 2009 £K</th>
<th>Y2 - 2010 £K</th>
<th>Y3 - 2011 £K</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>New Life for Urban River Valleys</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>Hidden Gems</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>Stewardship</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>Celebrating</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Chesterfield Canal</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Urban Waterfront</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total programme costs</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>375</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>390</td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
on Rotherham’s waterways, designed to coincide with the launch of the Hidden Gems Challenge Fund. She/he should also secure funding for the preparation of the new waterways guides which will be launched in phases between Y2 and Y4. Two other pieces of work should be progressed at an early stage: the industrial archaeology survey (Y2) and the public arts strategy (Y2).

A key task as these projects come to fruition will be to embed them in mainstream programmes and budgets; at this point the waterways champion’s role will be to maintain a watching brief on behalf of the board, and to continue to exert influence as required.

For the other elements of the action plan, the board and the project manager should be to seek to influence the design and delivery of existing projects and initiatives. The RWP should only seek to intervene where this would clearly add value, for example:

- **Chesterfield Canal**: a clear statement of commitment in principle by RMBC should help to kick-start the “bridging the gap” project, which will be led by the Chesterfield Canal Partnership. The RWP should set out its conditions for providing financial support for the project (for example, subject to matched funding by partners and a cap). In Y1 the partners should budget for a contribution to a study which will produce firm, costed recommendations on the preferred route and engineering solutions.

- **Urban waterfront**: we are aware of concerns that the public goods – high quality public realm and river restoration – envisaged in the Rotherham Renaissance Black Book are in danger of “slipping through the net”. The RWP partners do not want to be in the position of second-guessing the Renaissance executive team, but the New Life initiative presents possibly the final opportunity to ensure that the benefits of regeneration are fully realised. The partnership should support (and contribute towards the cost of) the review and action plan described in Section 6.1.3.

- **Riverside communities**: the Waverley scheme has recently been the subject of a design review by CABE, who have recommended a number of improvements. The RWP partners should seek to influence key aspects of the scheme while it is still in development, notably in relation to river restoration and greenspace, as well as the medium-term opportunity to link Waverley to nature reserves at Catcliffe and Treeton. The HMR Pathfinder Strategy has already signalled a desire to strengthen links between communities and waterways, and this should be made one of the specific requirements of the New Life landscape strategy brief.
6.4 Programme and resources

We have mapped out a provisional **3-5 year work programme** for the Rotherham Waterways Partnership (Figure 6-3).

Figure 6-4 presents an **indicative budget** for additional expenditure by the lead partners in that period. It shows that the costs in Y1 (2009) will be in the order of £225,000, mostly for consultancy fees; the figure rises to £390,000 in Y2 when the pilot challenge fund and stewardship schemes come on stream, but falls back to £235,000 in Y3 by which time most of the studies should have been completed. The aim should be to mainstream programme expenditure by Y4-5. We therefore anticipate that the total additional costs of the Rotherham Waterways Strategy between 2009 and 2011 will be in the order of £850,000. There may be an opportunity to attract European Structural Funds to support some of these initiatives, notably the New Life programme.

6.5 Collaboration

We have stressed that this is not a stand-alone package. The success of the Rotherham Waterways Strategy will depend crucially on the ability of the board to engage with local, sub-regional and regional partners and to mobilise resources. The areas of opportunity include:

- a joined-up **corporate approach** in **Rotherham**, ensuring that the goals and guiding principles of the strategy are embedded in planning policy and the design of major projects
- **collaboration with Sheffield**, including the potential for the two councils and the Environment Agency to work together to commission a landscape strategy for the urban river valleys
- **collaboration with partners in the Don catchment** to deliver river and flood plain restoration as a key element of the flood management plan, and
- **collaboration with partners in Derbyshire** on completing the Chesterfield Canal and river naturalisation in the Rother valley
- **partnership with agencies** including Yorkshire Forward and Transform South Yorkshire
- **coordinated bids** for EU structural funds and other programmes, promoting the New Life programme in particular as a long-term “big idea” capable of delivering transformational change in South Yorkshire.

6.6 Performance management

We have recommended that the Rotherham Waterways Partnership should be subject to **review after 3 years** and that, in any event, it should cease operations after 5 years, by which time the key elements of the strategy should be well advanced and embedded in forward capital programmes.
In order to be able to gauge the success of the strategy and the partnership arrangements it will be necessary to establish a simple, no-frills performance management framework comprising objectives, performance indicators, milestones and targets. Developing this framework will help the board and the project manager to be clear about what they are trying to achieve, how they intend to go about it and, crucially, what success will look like. Wherever possible, measurable targets should be adopted but some qualitative (but robust) indicators will also be required.

In framing these targets, it will be important to distinguish between activities where, at least in the medium-term, the partnership intends to take the lead (ie, the project development element of the action plan) and those where the partners aim to exert influence. In setting up the partnership, the board needs to define the territory in which it will operate, the key partners it needs to engage with, and the way in which the RWP will add value to the efforts of existing bodies and executive teams.
7.1 The policy context

Rotherham’s rivers and waterways figure prominently in regional and local planning policy, and across a wide range of other policy areas. However, while the waterways are generally deemed to be valuable assets, there is little evidence that the poor quality and condition of many of the borough’s rivers, canals and waterspaces has been acknowledged. This confirms the clients’ perception that a strategy is required to focus attention on the waterways and to devise a cohesive strategy and plan for action.

Although the potential of Rotherham’s waterways remains unfulfilled, it is clear that they can make an important contribution to the quality of life in the borough, to biodiversity and to regeneration.

7.2 Waterways in the landscape

Rotherham’s waterways have played a pivotal role in the borough’s rich and fascinating history, determining the location of settlements and sites of industry. The canalisation of the river Don in the mid 18th century made Rotherham an important inland port, and encouraged the growth of industry, even though the waterway was soon superseded by the railways. Though the borough only covers a small area, it is surprisingly diverse: while the Don and the Rother became archetypal industrial rivers, the attractive streams in the limestone country to the east feed into the Trent catchment. Ancient ponds are a feature of Rotherham, as are planned landscapes with water features, as at Wentworth.

This diversity is still reflected in the condition of Rotherham’s waterways today, which present a challenging mix of assets and liabilities. The consultant team has analysed the waterways and waterspaces by type, function and context, and we have also identified a series of distinct character areas.

7.3 Rotherham’s waterways appraised

We tested and developed our analysis in a series of consultations and at a stakeholder workshop. These events confirmed the mixed “report card” on our site visits and research. There was unanimous recognition of the potential of Rotherham’s waterways, and a broad consensus that recent successes (Rother Valley Country Park, Blackburn Meadows, Chesterfield Canal improved water quality, etc) had raised public awareness of the value of water and its potential to contribute to a better quality of life. The Cuckoo Way and Roche Abbey are examples of little known delights in the borough. At the same time, the urban Don and the lower Rother still appear to be neglected and under-used places, and recent events have highlighted the threat of flooding and the presumed effects of climate change. The potential is unmistakable, but the problems are big and structural and the barriers to progress sometime appear formidable.
7.4 Developing the strategy

Section 5 of the report draws on this analysis to map out a vision and strategy for Rotherham’s waterways. Achieving the vision will require action to nurture, restore, celebrate and care for Rotherham’s unique network of rivers, canals and water spaces.

The report frames a series of strategic objectives and identifies six broad priorities for action: river restoration, major regeneration projects, the Chesterfield Canal, nature reserves, the access network and community projects.

Given the sheer scale and diversity of the challenges, it is not possible or desirable to draw up a detailed blueprint at this stage, but the consultant team has drawn up a set of 11 guiding principles, to be applied as appropriate as new projects are brought forward.

This section concludes by highlighting some of the places and ideas that have helped to shape the Rotherham Waterways Strategy, and which should act as sources of inspiration in the future. In particular, we acknowledge our debt to Emscher Landscape Park in Germany’s Ruhr region, which is the best example in Europe of the transformation of a polluted and semi-derelict post-industrial landscape.

7.5 The action plan

The themes of the strategy are drawn together in Section 6 which begins by recommending that the key themes of the action plan should be: New Life for the Urban River valleys, the Chesterfield Canal, the urban waterfront, riverside communities, Rotherham’s Hidden Gems, caring for the waterways, and celebrating them.

We also recommend the formation of a Rotherham Waterways Partnership (with a maximum 5 years’ life) to drive forward the initiative, and the appointment of a project manager.

We have drawn up an illustrative 3-5 year action plan, which distinguishes between project development activities (where the partnership should take a lead role) and influencing the work of others to ensure that benefits for the rivers and waterways are achieved. We have estimated that the partnership would require a budget of around £850,000 over 3 years to take forward this work programme.

The success of the partnership will be determined largely by its ability to engage effectively with other partners, locally and at the sub-regional, catchment and regional levels. We have identified some key connections, including with Sheffield which is also developing proposals for reviving its urban rivers.

Finally, we have stressed the importance of adding value and knowing what success looks like. A simple performance management framework is required for the partnership, which should be the subject of an independent review after 3 years.
A. Land-use planning

Yorkshire & Humber RSS 2008
Yorkshire & Humber RSS Water topic paper 2005
South Yorkshire Spatial Strategy and Vision 2004
Rotherham Unitary Development Plan 1999 & saved policies direction 2007
Rotherham Local Development Framework: consultation draft Core Strategy Preferred Options 2007
Rotherham Town Centre SDF: Interim Planning Statement 2008
Rotherham Renaissance Charter 2004
Rotherham Strategic Development Framework 2005
Design Code for the Rotherham Town Centre River Corridor 2005
Rotherham Draft Town Centre Public Realm Strategy 2008
South Yorkshire Settlement Strategy 2005
Rotherham Employment Land Review 2007

B. Transport planning

South Yorkshire Local Transport Plan 2006

C. Regeneration and housing market renewal

Corporate Plan 2005-2010 (refreshed)
Public Health Strategy 2006
Rotherham Regeneration Plan 2004 (reviewed 2006)
Rotherham Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy 2005
Rotherham Statement 2005 (Transform South Yorkshire)
Rotherham North ADF 2005 (Transform South Yorkshire)
Rotherham South ADF 2005 (Transform South Yorkshire)
Rotherham West masterplan 2005 (Transform South Yorkshire)
Rotherham East masterplan 2005 (Transform South Yorkshire)
Wath and Swinton masterplan 2005 (Transform South Yorkshire)

D. Environment and biodiversity

Don and Rother Catchment Flood Management Plan 2008
List of nature conservation sites in the Borough River Rother Wildlife Strategy 1994
Rother Valley Country Park Management Plan 2005
Yorkshire and Humber Regional Biodiversity Strategy 2009
Dearne Valley Green Heart Project Strategy 2007-2012
South Yorkshire Community Forest Plan 2002
Rotherham Local Biodiversity Action Plan 2004
Otter Survey of the Upper Don and Rother 2005
Don - Fish and Floodplain (undated)
A River Don Fish Pass Proposal (undated)
Ridings Area River Enhancement Project: Don Catchment (undated)
E. Recreation and amenity

Rotherham Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2007
Sustrans Connect2 proposals
Rotherham Play Strategy 2007-2011
Rotherham Cultural Strategy 2003
Rotherham Sport & Active Recreation Plan 2006-2009
Rotherham Tourism Plan 2005-2008

F. Major projects

Rotherham Renaissance
Waverley masterplan
YES! Regeneration proposals
Manvers Waterfront
Flood alleviation works: Templeborough to Rotherham town centre
Dearne Valley Green Heart
Don – Fish and Floodplain
Rover Don Fish Pass Proposal