

### 1.0 Introduction

#### 1.1 Aims

This Study has been commissioned to investigate ways of improving and developing the terminus of the Caldon Canal Leek Arm and to explore the opportunity for the creation of a new positive canal destination at Leek to renew the connection between the town and its canal.

Funding for the study has been secured from the following organisations: Leek Market Towns Initiative, Inland Waterways Association Restoration Grants Fund, Caldon & Uttoxeter Canals Trust, British Waterways and Staffordshire County Council Local Member Initiative Scheme. A project steering group has been established comprising representatives of British Waterways, the Caldon & Uttoxeter Canals Trust and The Inland Waterways Association. This is a joint report prepared by Mott MacDonald and British Waterways.



#### 1.2 Background

The Leek Arm currently is an attractive cruising cul-de-sac off the main line of the Caldon Canal, but it has very low levels of use.

It carries the water supply from Rudyard Reservoir to the main line which then feeds the Trent & Mersey Canal summit in Stoke on Trent. Historically, the Leek Arm crossed the River Churnet and terminated in a basin half a mile closer to Leek town centre. However, in 1957 this section was filled in and the area has now been developed as an industrial estate. Elements of the former canal still remain including the Barnfields Canal Aqueduct (known locally as the Churnet Aqueduct), now de-watered. Nothing remains of the original canal north of the aqueduct itself. The canal in context with the surrounding area is shown in Figure 1 (page 3).

Several thousand boats visit the Caldon Canal each year. However, very few make the trip to Leek. Access between Leek and the canal at its current terminus is poor and the canal is not visible from the surrounding roads. The stretch of canal leading to the current terminus has no safe mooring facilities. Boats longer than 50 feet can not currently turn at this point and instead must end their journey to Leek and turn further south near Wall Grange Farm Bridge.

Leek currently does not capitalise on the fact that the town has a canal that links to a nationwide waterway network. This contrasts with the popularity of the terminus of the main line at Froghall where restoration work has taken place and new facilities have been developed.

The existing terminus of the Leek Arm is in close proximity to other proposed visitor attractions and redevelopment in the area. Other proposals include re-opening the Churnet Valley Railway and redevelopment of the Cornhill area of the town.

The Study has considered the following :

- A range of route options devised by the Steering Group and the Consultant, for navigation extension and basin construction and an assessment of the options' viability in terms of design, vertical alignment, ease of construction and potential impact on adjacent land and property.
- The water requirements of the extended length of canal and basin construction and the best means of providing the necessary water resources.
- An estimate of cost for each of the route options (including land acquisition) as well as an indication of future maintenance and operational costs.
- The environmental impacts of each of the route options and suggested mitigating measures where an adverse impact is likely.
- Current land ownership associated with each of the route options.
- Ways of conserving and enhancing the built heritage, environment and biodiversity of the canal.
- The best means of providing canal access for visitors and Leek residents.
- The social and economic impact of each option, expected benefits and potential for improved access to Leek Town Centre.

A copy of the project brief is included in Appendix 1.

### 1.3 Report Format

British Waterways specified the report format taking into account the requirements of the Steering Group.

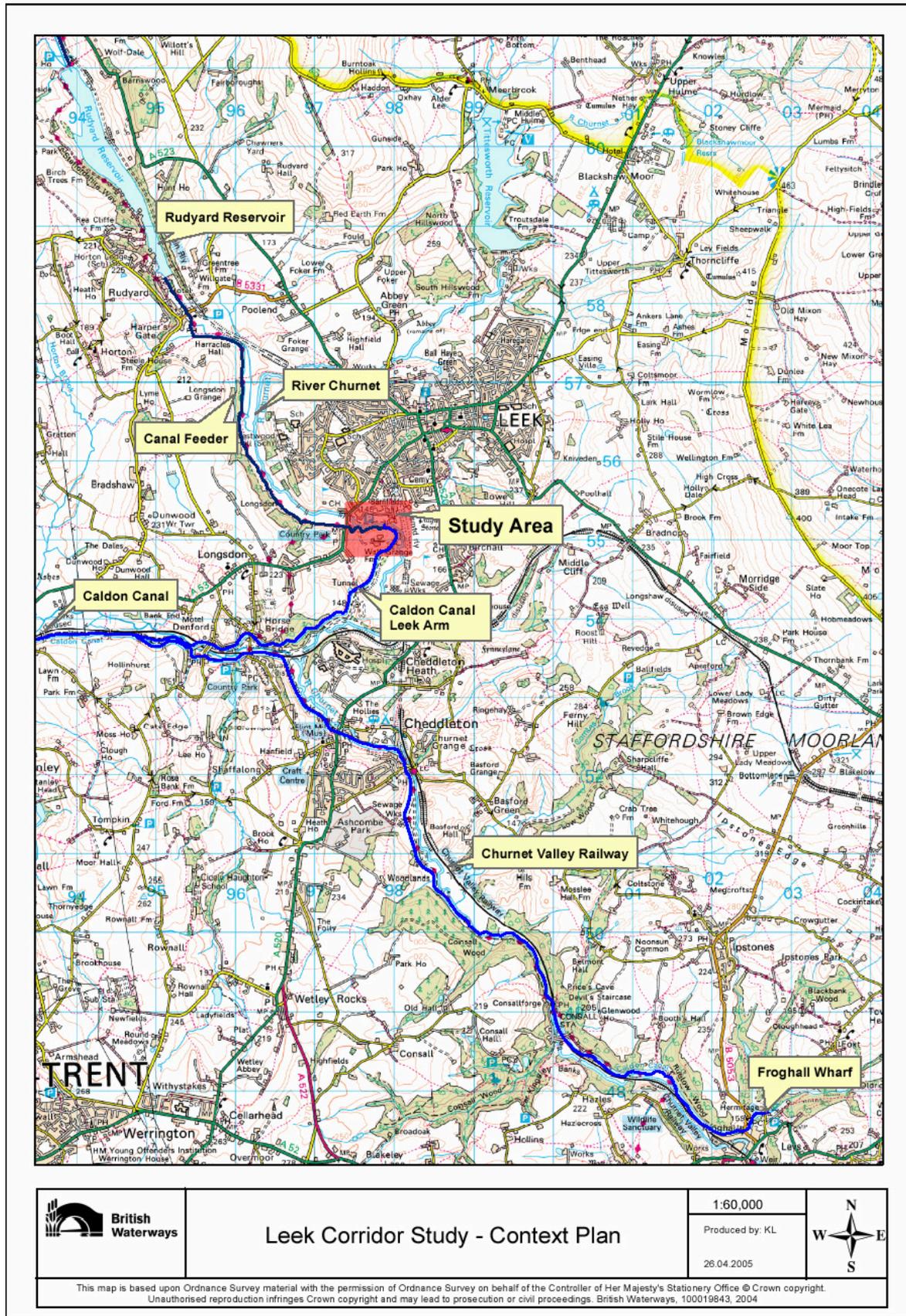
Chapter 2 introduces the five routes and variations being considered.

Chapter 3 provides general information regarding the site and its locality which may affect all the options described.

Chapter 4 presents each of the routes in detail and provides a summary of the outline cost for each of the route options.

Chapter 5 contains a general discussion of the potential benefits of a new terminus facility based on the Association of Inland Waterways Authorities (AINA) guidance "*Demonstrating the Value of Waterways*". This section also provides information on the value and benefits of waterways in general at a national level, economic benefits and expected levels of usage and levels of investment required to justify development of a canal terminus facility at Leek.

Chapter 6 provides information of potential sources of funding for a new canal terminus at Leek and suggested next steps.



Leek Corridor Study - Context Plan

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Figure 1 – Context Plan