

Neath and Tennant Canals Feasibility Study – AtkinsRealis, 2026

Notwithstanding other issues relating to the Report which are welcome, the Trust wishes to record its over-riding concern relating to constraints imposed by the document in promoting navigation.

Against a background of guarded optimism relating to the provisional verbal reports regarding the study, the conclusions of the Report relating to navigation are disappointing and concerning, not least as it contains no references to other studies which are of relevance

In that regard, the Report is at odds with that produced by the same author(s) in 2002 (*Atkins, Feasibility Study*) which advocated the restoration of the entire length of the Neath Canal from Glynneath to Briton Ferry, primarily to establish a ‘critical length’ of navigation in addition to the Tennant and Swansea Canals which would be sufficient to attract boaters.

Such a requirement is supported in a comprehensive report by *Bridge Economics and Hyder Consulting* (2008) on the ‘Economic Appraisal of Restoration’ of the Neath and Tennant canals commissioned by NPTCBC, the Welsh Assembly Government and City and Council of Swansea – which notes ‘..... the earlier (2002) study by Atkins, to exploit this opportunity requires the achievement of sufficient critical mass.’

In pursuing such an outcome, the Report concludes that a partial scheme involving complete restoration/navigation from Ysgwyrfa to Giant’s Grave would be the most appropriate scheme and the one producing the highest Benefit/Cost Ratio (BCR).

In contrast, the present report at best seeks to repair/restore what currently exists whilst further severing navigation for ‘full size’ craft at Rheola, Neath Abbey and at Canal Green, Neath. The Report, however, concludes that the canal from Ysgwyrfa to Resolven ‘*could readily be restored to navigation by undoing the neglect of the last few decades since the previous restoration works*’. Similarly, references to individual sections of both canals in Section 7 imply that ‘full navigation’ is possible and potentially desirable.

In relation to the proposed Hub at Canal Green and issues relating to the low bridges, attention is drawn to the ‘Enquiry by Design’ (2009) Study / Canalside Masterplan undertaken by the *Prince’s Foundation* for NPTCBC.

Based upon the Restoration Route Options in section 1.3 of the Executive Summary, the available continuous navigation for ‘full size’ canal boats with a beam of 2.2m (Section 14.2), will be limited to 13.5km (8.5 miles) compared to a ‘critical length’ over 30km (19miles) represented by the partial scheme advocated in the Bridge Economics Report.

As such, it is highly improbable that such a limited route mileage advocated by the Report would attract the type and numbers of boats referred to in Section 9, whilst undermining the prospect of a 30 mile ‘South Wales Inland Waterway’ in conjunction with the Swansea Canal.

The report can be downloaded from <https://www.npt.gov.uk/business/regeneration/canal-regeneration/>