



Canal &  
River Trust

# **Foxton - Management & Development Plan**

**Working with stakeholders:  
creating a shared vision &  
action plan for the  
sustainable development of  
a destination**


# AMION appointed



To create a plan for the sustainable development of Foxton Locks Country Park with the aim of

- Enhancing the visitor experience and growing visitor numbers
- Identifying ways to monetise visits and increase revenue
- Creating exemplar sites and brand showcases for Canal & River Trust

# Methodology

- Inception meeting
  - Site visits (accompanied and unaccompanied)
  - Review of internally gathered data
  - Review of relevant policy and strategy
  - Market assessment
  - Consultations with internal and external stakeholders
  - A workshop with Canal & River Trust Staff
  - Recommendations
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# Relevant policy and strategy

- Canal & River Trust 10 year strategy published in April 2015 includes a number of relevant aims and objectives:
  - Encouraging and growing the number of people boating, using and enjoying the waterways, providing havens for people to escape to.
  - Looking after the heritage and championing restoration on canals and rivers for people to enjoy and ensuring that towpaths are safe and available for everyone to use.
  - Ensuring that waterside destinations, museums and attractions continue to be popular visitor destinations always meeting the expectations of customers and visitors.
  - Enhancing wildlife habitats and the natural landscape.
  - Encouraging business and enterprise in the areas surrounding the waterways providing opportunities and livelihoods for local people promoting the wider impact that waterways have.
  - Encouraging community events, festivals and celebrations on the waterways with communities and volunteers getting involved with caring for their local waterway.

# South East Waterways Partnership

- The main strategic objectives of the South East Waterway Partnership include:
  - Local distinctiveness and support for development that positively addresses its unique waterside setting.
  - Opportunities for regeneration and enhancements that enable the place to gain benefits from the water
  - Growing and nourishing ‘honeypot’ sites, and increasing the number and diversity of events and activities, to draw people to them.
  - Promoting and using the waterways as part of the ‘natural health service’.

# Leicestershire County Council

- Strategic Plan 2014 – 2018
  - Recognizes that tourism can be developed to increase its economic impact. The council will develop the quality of its offer including environment, culture, sports and heritage, supported by focused place marketing.
  - The council will also look to support tourism investment at key sites and significant attractions such as Foxton Locks, the Great Central Railway, Twycross Zoo and Donington Park.

# Leicestershire LEP

- Tourism Sector Growth Plan 2015-2020
- Tourism is acknowledged as one of eight key economic sectors in the county. Specific actions include:
  - To undertake a major refresh programme for the area's main visitor attractions
  - To support the diversification into the tourism and hospitality sector by rural businesses.
  - To develop long-term solutions to an undersupply of accommodation, notably hotels in Leicester city and the range of offer in rural areas.
  - To grow business and leisure tourism utilizing our central location.
  - To improve both the quality of the local offer and the customer experience.
  - To enhance accessibility and sustainability.
- Foxton Locks is directly referenced in the plan as having plans to refresh the visitor offer

# Leicestershire Rural Partnership

- In 2014, the partnership published a Rural Framework which outlined the following priorities:
  1. Active, inclusive and empowered parish councils and meetings
  2. Working with communities to deliver local services
  3. An enterprising and sustainable rural economy
  4. More affordable homes in rural areas
- The third priority above refers specifically to the canal specifically by stating that the key waterways such as the Ashby and Grand Union Canals can be further strengthened and exploited to enhance Leicestershire's inward investment offer and to deliver economic growth.



# Harborough District Council

- Blueprint for Tourism 2013-18

- The blueprint sets out the following specific actions for Foxton Locks:
  - Continue to invest in and maintain a quality environment for all users.
  - Work with key stakeholders to develop a medium to long term ambition for the site, evaluating all options from a full restoration of the inclined plane, through to virtual restoration using modern technologies.
  - Work to secure funding for major projects and schemes.
  - Develop a year round programme of festivals and activities.
  - Increase opportunities to grow the economic impact of visitors to the site, explore craft, artisan and rural industries through both temporary and permanent activities.
  - Position graded accommodation alongside other relevant properties in the district in targeted value-driven short break packages.
  - Consider 'welcome' activity to promote highest standards of customer service and care.
  - Look to reward excellence in customer service.
  - Review and improve visitor literature and online resources to support the proposition.

# Foxton Neighbourhood Plan

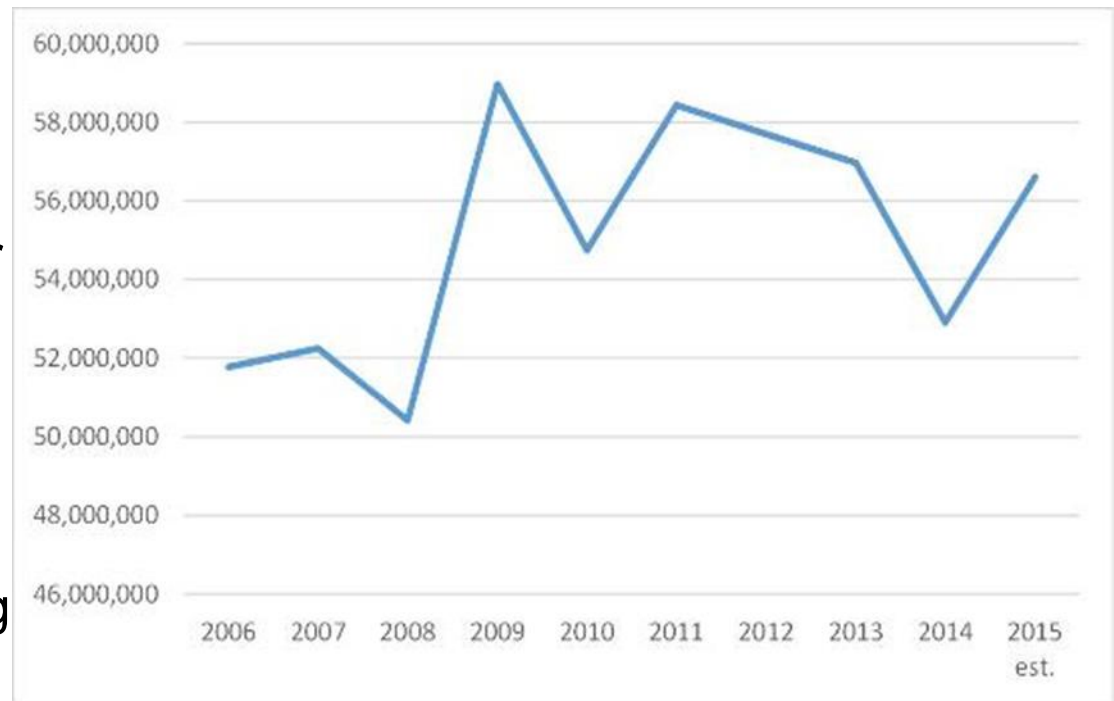
- The draft plan (2016) states:
  - Developments which support and maintain the positive management of the Foxton Locks Area through improved conservation, presentation and interpretation will be supported where:
    - There are no adverse effects on the physical fabric, character, appearance, setting or views into or out of the Foxton Locks Area;
    - New visitor attractions are directly associated with Foxton Locks;
    - They do not generate new sources of noise, disturbance or light pollution;
    - They are unlikely to significantly increase the level of vehicular traffic;
    - There are measures in place to reduce the impact of traffic on Foxton village. These shall include car parking and traffic management, public transport improvements, road signage and junction improvements.
    - The creation of new, permanent overnight accommodation other than through the re-use of existing buildings will not be permitted. The provision of residential moorings will not be permitted.

# Post recession leisure trends

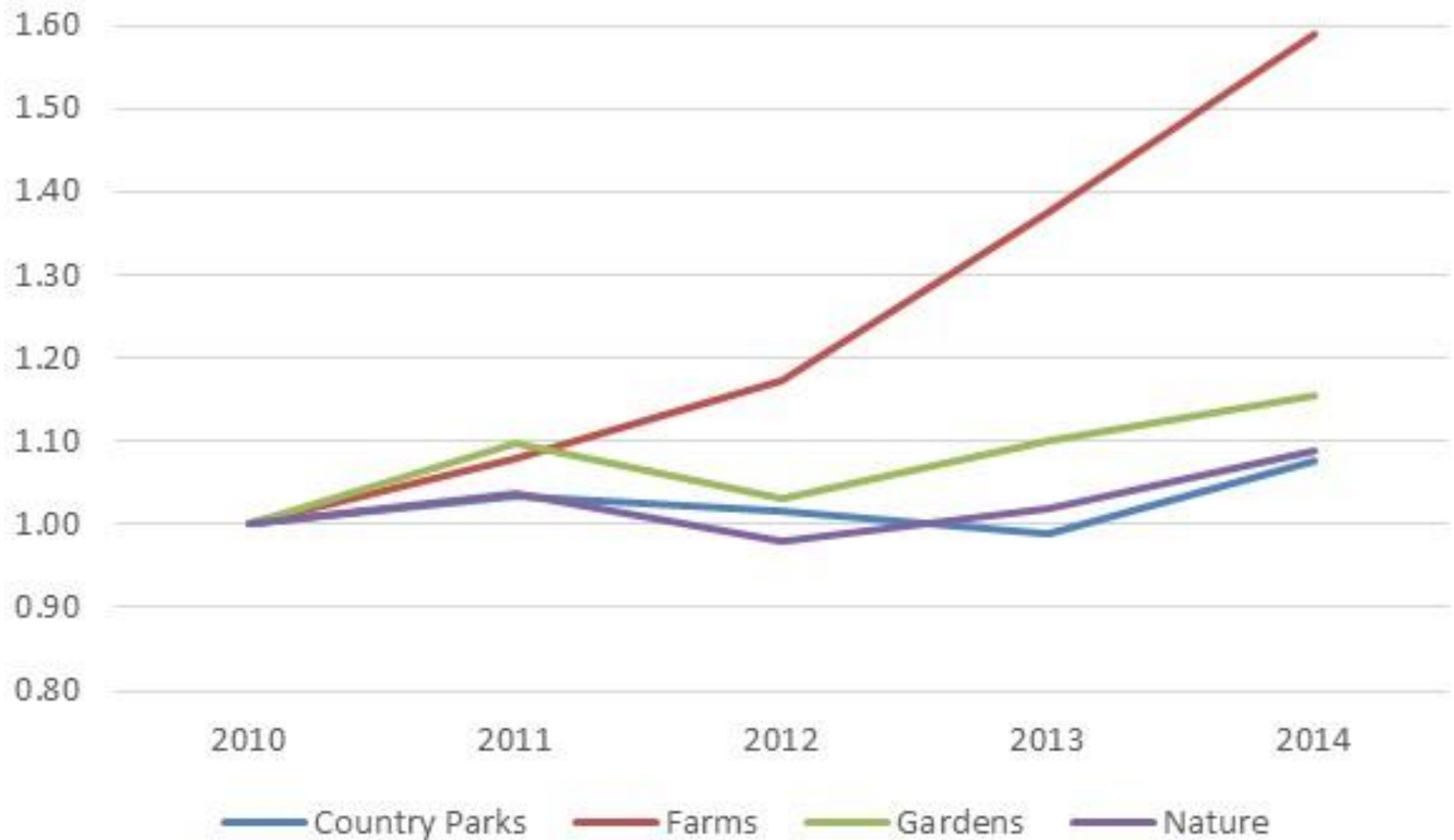
- **Leisure spend** no longer seen as 'discretionary spend items'.
- **More discerning customers**
  - 'cash-rich, time-poor' society now a 'cash-tight, time-poor' society
  - consumers seeking quality and value for money
- **Pre-trip research**
  - 150 million people using Tripadvisor each month
  - 115 new reviews every minute
- **The importance of a 'good deal'**
  - 44% of people that visit attractions usually try to find special offers, deals or discounts before visiting a particular attraction (Mintel, 2013) .
- **Rise in memberships, season tickets and annual passes**
- **Leisure learning**
- **Almost 100% internet penetration**
- **Mobile and tablet**
  - internet usage shifting towards mobile and tablet services
  - Customers expect good Wi-Fi connections

# Domestic tourism trends

- Staycation here to stay
- Short breaks are getting shorter
- Dominance of the car
- The rise of self-catering
  - large groups holidaying together
  - lodges, self-catering cottages and glamping
- Major attractions becoming resort destinations



# Outdoor attractions



# Historic Properties

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## Key ingredients for growth

- Product development
  - investment in play areas, entertainment, exhibitions, catering and retail.
- Major events
  - concerts, exhibitions, shows, horse trials, rallies etc.
- Diversifying income streams and extending the season
  - functions, conferences, weddings, accommodation, Christmas markets etc.
- Focus on membership

# Local population & catchment

- Harborough District has a population of around 85,000
- It is located within close proximity to major conurbations including Leicester, Coventry, Northampton and Peterborough.
- Within a 90 minute drive time of Foxton Locks, there is a population of 6.8m

<i>Drive time catchment</i>	<i>Total population</i>	<i>Total households</i>
30 minutes	442,805	177,160
60 minutes	2,629,765	1,080,756
90 minutes	6,771,724	2,755,581

# The schools market

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- Almost 500,000 school children within a 60 minute drive time of Foxton Locks

	<i>Primary Schools</i>	<i>Secondary schools</i>	<i>Special schools</i>	<i>Pupil referral units</i>	<i>Independent schools</i>	<i>All schools</i>
Leicester	32,638	17,932	975	78	2,321	53,942
Leicestershire	50,527	42,753	1,019	6	6,399	100,755
Northamptonshire	61,959	46,623	1,424	188	5,897	117,153
Rutland	2,772	2,755	9	0	2,121	7,657
Coventry	31,365	20,640	826	1	2,757	55,794
Solihull	20,294	17,081	541	67	2,070	40,053
Warwickshire	43,418	33,085	1,257	0	6,197	84,467
Peterborough	19,225	14,325	555	154	613	35,024
<b>Total</b>	<b>262,196</b>	<b>195,194</b>	<b>6,606</b>	<b>494</b>	<b>28,375</b>	<b>494,845</b>



# The East Leicestershire Tourist Accommodation Study

- Priorities for tourist accommodation development in the Harborough District include
  - The upgrading and expansion of existing touring caravan and camping sites including:
    - The installation of electric hook up points to pitches;
    - The development of hard standing pitches and fully serviced pitches;
    - New and/or improved toilet and shower blocks.
  - Camping pod developments;
  - Glamping sites.

# AMION Recommendations

- The project themes :
  1. Create a healthy new heart for Foxton Locks
  2. Extend the number of overnight stays to the destination through the creation of a range of sustainable visitor accommodation.
  3. Provide an exciting mix of things to do for families and adult visitors which increase reasons to visit, encourage longer dwell times and add revenue.
  4. Create new opportunities for learning and education
  5. Improve visitor services.

# 1. Create a healthy new heart for Foxton Locks

- Build a new visitor centre
  - 1,500m<sup>2</sup> – 2,000m<sup>2</sup>
  - the museum could move into the visitor centre
  - New site interpretation
  - Showcase Canal & River Trust as guardian of waterways
- Include an excellent waterside destination café
- Specialty shopping – 4 units 30m<sup>2</sup> or Office space
- Offer a range of activities on the site as well as meeting rooms for functions and community uses



# Carsington Water Visitor Centre, Derbyshire



- A 'brand showcase' for Severn Trent Water
- Visitor centre with 7 retail units and toilets
- Upstairs café has 80 + 20 covers
- Total income is around £550k to £600k p.a.
  - expected to at least cover its own costs which include all the costs of site management except costs relating to the reservoir itself and the dam.



# Attenborough Nature Centre

- Opened in 2005
- 230,000 visitors
- The centre has a nature exhibition and programme of events and activities
- Café with amazing views
- Shop
- Conference/meeting room
- School learning sessions.
- 11 FTE
- Income of £575,000 in the year 2014/15.





## 2. Extend the number of overnight stays

- Create a range of sustainable visitor accommodation.
  1. Seasonal campsite
  2. Continue to use the existing caravan site
  3. Glamping - self catering narrow boats for hire
  4. Glamping – Ecopods



# Seasonal Campsite

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- 30-40 grass pitches – some with electric hook up
- Shower and toilet block/ amenity building
- Access road and car parking area
- Water and electricity connection & waste disposal
- Landscaping

# Caravan rally site

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- The land immediately to the north of Gumley Road
- Continued use of the field as a caravan rally site





# Static narrowboats...

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- 5 moored narrowboats for self-catering rental
- To be located at the Inclined Plane top arm
- Water, electricity connection & waste disposal required

# Glamping Eco pods...

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- 20 insulated and heated units with integral shower, toilet and kitchenette



# 3. Introduce exciting mix of activities

- Adventure Play
  - 1) Adjacent to the new visitor centre
    - Free entry
    - To create a further reason for families to use the commercial facilities.
    - designed so that it felt part of the catering facilities i.e. surrounded by outdoor seating, easily visible from inside.





# Adventure play

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2. in the wooded/scrubland area between the top arm and the side ponds

- Pay to play
- More of an adventure trail than a fixed play frame.
- Much more in tune with nature and woodland
- Could include barefoot walks, den building, obstacles, rope swings, ladders and slides.
- Should follow a linear route if possible so that families do it as a 'challenge' together



[illegible]

# Activities to extend the use of the site for outdoor recreation

- Canoeing
- Orienteering
- Zorbing
- Star gazing
- Health walks
- Nature walks
- Outdoor/survival skills





# Events

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- The inclined plane is a ready-made auditorium.
- Summer: outdoor cinema, theatre and music, food & drink & beer festivals
- Winter: Halloween, fireworks, illuminated Boat Festival and Christmas Market.



# 4. Create new opportunities for learning

- The new visitor centre could incorporate the Foxton Inclined Plane Trust and its museum collection within the interpretative spaces
- The current Boilerhouse Museum building could be used as a base for educational visits to the site
  - Meeting point, lunch room, storage, resource centre, class room
- Extend range of outdoor activities for schools & combine with overnight stay
  - Orienteering, outdoor skills, survival skills, nature and wildlife programmes
- Introduce leisure learning opportunities
  - Art, rural crafts, yoga
- Community meetings





# 5. Improve visitor services

- Signage
  - Brown signs: substantial plan to improve directional signage
    - M1, A6 and A403.
- Enhanced interpretation and wayfinding
  - New looped routes from the visitor centre should lead visitors to the key features on the site
  - Access to the incline plane should be improved
    - new walk created which takes visitors south from the visitor centre, along the north western edge of the incline arm to the incline plane



# Improve visitor services

- Car parking
  - Extend, resurface & mark out
  - Automated signage on Gumley Rd
  - Coach parking provision
  - Work with PC re Foxton village to support CPZ
- Toilets
  - Replace Bottom Lock toilets with facilities in new VC
  - Rebuild and expand facilities in Top Lock car park

# Improve visitor services

- Site management team
  - Critical to the success of the destination
  - Funded through the increased revenue which the new facilities will generate.
    - Ensuring the quality of the visitor experience
    - Events co-ordination
    - Destination marketing
    - Volunteer recruitment and training

# Summary

Project Theme	Project	Capital Costs
1. Create a healthy new heart for Foxton Locks	1. New visitor centre	
	2. Major catering offer within visitor centre	
	3. Small retail units within visitor centre	
	4. Museum and interpretation space within visitor centre	
	5. A base for outdoor activities, community meetings and private functions	
2. Create opportunities for overnight stays	1. New accomodation (20 eco pods, 5 self catering static boats, campsite and occasional caravan rally site)	
3. Attract new audiences	1. Introduce new play areas	
	2. Develop new events	
4. Create new opportunities for learning	1. Convert boiler house to class room	
	2. Diversify schools/groups offer with outdoor activities	
5. Improve visitor services	1. Car Parking	
	2. New Toilets	
	3. New signage	
	4. Site management team	
		£4.8m to £8.5m