



Tuesday, 13 January 2026

Report of Councillor Richard Cleaver,
Cabinet Member for Property and
Public Engagement

Grantham Canal Maintenance Works

Report Author

Gyles Teasdale – Head of Property Services & ICT

✉ g.teasdale@southkesteven.gov.uk;

Purpose of Report

The purpose of the report is to provide members with details of the Council's responsibility in relation to a section of Grantham Canal and the planned works that will be undertaken.

Recommendations

Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to:

- 1. Note the contents of the report and to request regular updates with respect to the works that will be undertaken during 2026.**

Decision Information

Does the report contain any exempt or confidential information not for publication? No

What are the relevant corporate priorities? Connecting communities
Sustainable South Kesteven
Enabling economic opportunities

Which wards are impacted? Earlesfield Ward

1. Implications

Taking into consideration implications relating to finance and procurement, legal and governance, risk and mitigation, health and safety, diversity and inclusion, safeguarding, staffing, community safety, mental health and wellbeing and the impact on the Council's declaration of a climate change emergency, the following implications have been identified:

Finance and Procurement

- 1.1 A budget allocation of £100k was included in the 2025/26 budget framework and a further budget bid has been included in the 2026/27 budget proposals. The proposed works will be funded from these budget allocations and the property maintenance reserve as required.

Completed by: Richard Wyles, Deputy Chief Executive and s151 Officer

Legal and Governance

- 1.2 If option 1 is endorsed by members of the Committee then the report would need to be considered by Cabinet. This is due to the level of spend required.

Completed by: James Welbourn, Democratic Services Manager

2. Background to the Report

- 2.1 The Grantham canal was primarily built for the transportation of goods between Grantham and Nottingham. The Canal opened in 1797 and was used for this purpose until 1841, when it was sold to a railway company. The use of the canal declined, and the canal is understood to have finally closed in 1936.
- 2.2 This historic waterway is now largely managed and restored by The Grantham Canal Partnership (GCP). Est 1997, the GCP is a collaborative body formed to coordinate restoration efforts and safeguard the canal's future. The Grantham Canal Partnership is made up of multiple stakeholders, including various local authorities at County and District/Borough levels, who provide strategic and financial support to the partnership.
- 2.3 The Grantham Canal Society (GCS) also form part of the partnership and are a volunteer led charity who undertake the majority of the canal's practical restoration works. The GCS was formed in the 1970's and is now the primary organisation for maintaining and restoring the 33-mile length of canal.

2.4. Along with the previously mentioned stakeholders, the GCP also includes the Canal & River Trust (formerly British Waterways) and various other stakeholders including environmental charities, local history groups, businesses, and individual community activists. A copy of the GCP mission statement and vision can be seen within Appendix A – GCP Supporting Papers.

2.5. South Kesteven District Council (SKDC) became responsible for approximately a 1km stretch of the Grantham Canal located in the south-western area of Grantham between the A1 / A607 slip roads (Swingbridge Road) and Earlesfield Lane in 1983. The canal follows a stretched 'S' shape as indicated by the below plan with two road bridge crossings positioned at Trent Road and Earlsfeild Lane.

2.6. The canal passes into underground culverts to the eastern and western ends as it moves out of SKDC's responsibility. To the western end of the canal at Swingbridge Road the underground culvert travels below the A1 in National Highways ownership, before reappearing into the section of canal managed by GCS to the west of the dual carriageway.



2.7. Since taking responsibility for the management and maintenance of this section of the Canal, the Council has undertaken various schemes of works to ensure the safety of the canal itself, the local environment and surrounding community.

- 2.8. In 2024, reports were received of water seepage through the banks of the canal by a business based just off Trent Road. This was causing some damage to the access road which had a detrimental impact on their trading.
- 2.9. Previous studies had been undertaken of the canal and work has been carried out in the past to repair the banks. In response to the issue which arose in 2024 and a lack of updated survey information, a comprehensive condition survey was commissioned from external consultants in order to assess the current condition of the canal and its banks, the cause of the seepage, and options for a full improvement scheme. This condition survey report has now been received and forms the basis of the recommendations set out below

3. Key Considerations

- 3.1. There are number of considerations to be borne in mind when reviewing the options for the Council owned stretch of the canal. These were covered in the condition survey report and in summary dealt with the following:
 - a) The risk of the canal bank failing due to its poor condition which could result in damage to property and potentially risk to life.
 - b) The negative effect of low water levels, which reduces the quality of water by reducing its oxygen content, which in turn affects the health of the fish population. SKDC have raised this matter with the Environment Agency, however, they currently do not deem the issue of sufficient severity to intervene.
 - c) Currently water levels vary significantly. At times of heavy rainfall, too much water can cause the risk of seepage and potentially failure of the bank. Too little water can affect the health of the fish population, which in turn reduces the biodiversity of the habitat.
 - d) Low water levels also contribute to additional vegetation growth in the canal, further impeding the flow of water and leading to build up of silt, again negatively impacting on the biodiversity of the canal environment.
 - e) The canal environment is seen as an amenity to the area, with a well-used towpath and grassed area used by residents. By improving the control of water levels this amenity could be enhanced and management of the biodiversity improved.
 - f) Vegetation growth on the eastern bank has not been controlled to a sufficient standard, leading to several areas becoming inaccessible for general maintenance, along with excessive tree, shrub and other vegetation growth resulting in debris falling into the canal and causing further silt deposits.
- 3.2. The works specified by the condition survey report include stop logs located at The Swingbridge Road, Trent Road and Earlesfield Lane culverts. Stop logs are aluminium sections that can be inserted and lifted out to allow differing heights of

water to be managed. In addition to these stop logs, safe means of access to place and lift out these sections would be required, including railings, steps, working platforms and fencing. An electronic water level gauge and stop log store will also be installed.

- 3.3 Expenditure incurred to date has been in relation to the carrying out of the feasibility study for the options to repair the banks of the canal at a cost of £53k. This has now been completed and further consultancy services are required to progress the scheme order to provide a specification and support the procurement process in order that the works can be undertaken to install water level control features and create a safe means of access for ongoing maintenance and repairs.
- 3.4 It is anticipated that these works will cost in the region of £250k (subject to tender evaluation). The works will enable the water levels to be stabilised and facilitate safe water management. However, there will be a need for further works in order to stabilise the canal banks for the future long-term condition. These works have been estimated at £750k, to be spent in the next 5 years.
- 3.5 Currently the immediate works to install water level control features and safe means of access are being tendered through an open procurement process managed by Welland Procurement. The outcome of this evaluation and recommendation for an award of the works contract will be presented to Cabinet at their meeting on 10th February 2026.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1 The consultant's condition survey report considered the following options:
 - a) *Option 0 – Do Nothing.* The option of taking no action was considered, however, this is not recommended as the current seepage will continue and progressively get worse with the consequence that the stability of the bank could fail causing damage to property and potentially risk to life. The condition of wildlife will also deteriorate. The works currently being tendered are short term measures to control the water levels and in doing so, will reduce the risk of a failure of the bank.
 - b) *Option 1 – Do Minimum.* This option focussed on the essential repairs, maintenance and work to minimise the risk of bank failure in the short term.
 - c) *Option 2 – Embankment Repair with Water Body and Recreational Improvements.* This option focusses on the expansion of Option 1 to include water body and recreation improvements. This option has not been pursued at this time due to ongoing discussions about the future of the canal, but the recommended Option 1 does not preclude this option being pursued in the future.

- d) *Options 3&4 – Canal infill.* These options considered the possibility of either partially or fully infilling the canal and creating land for either residential or commercial development. These options are not recommended as there are aspirations to restore the canal should funding be available in the future.
- e) *Option 5 – Full Canal Restoration.* This option considered fully restoring the canal to enable navigation and potentially opening the infilled basin to allow an associated waterside investment/development possibility. This was considered as the Grantham Canal Society has long term aspirations to open more of the canal between Nottingham and Grantham for navigation

5. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 5.1. In the short term, the recommendation is to pursue *Option 1: Do Minimum works required*. This will undertake immediate works required at a budgeted cost of £238k. The remaining repair works can then be carried out over 5 years.
- 5.2. The reasons for the recommendation are:
 - a) Action is required in the immediate term to address the risk of bank failure and to enable installations to be put in place to control the water level and to allow safe means of access for maintenance and wildlife management.
 - b) This option also enables other longer-term options to be considered in detail and by carrying out these immediate works, they do not preclude any of the other options being pursued in the short term.
- 5.3. Action is required now, so a Do-Nothing Option, although considered, is not recommended as the canal banks require works to stabilise them to prevent a failure which could cause damage to adjoining properties.

6. Consultation

- 6.1. Consultation has been undertaken with the Grantham Canal Society during a meeting held in August 2025 when the options listed above were presented and discussed.
- 6.2. The Grantham Canal Society has been engaged to carry out scrub clearance works to the canal and the culverts and SKDC are looking into setting up a regular maintenance contract with them to maintain the water side vegetation thereby benefitting from their knowledge, expertise and equipment in canal environments.

7. Appendices

- 7.1 Appendix A: GCP Supporting Papers (1&2)