

Pocklington Canal

Regarded as one of the most beautiful and ecologically significant waterways in the National Canal Network, the Pocklington Canal is one of the unspoilt gems in our region. Running from its junction with the River Derwent at East Cottingwith, the canal heads more or less due east passing the village of Melbourne before turning north near Bielby towards the terminus at Canal Head.

Unusually the canal is entirely rural through its nine miles and is crossed by four road bridges, and also has nine locks. All these bridges and the nine locks are Grade II listed structures. There was little use of the canal by pleasure craft since the last commercial use in 1932 due to the increasingly derelict state of the locks and swing-bridges. In the 1950s there was a proposal to infill the canal, which was opposed by waterway enthusiasts and local residents. In 1969 the Pocklington Canal Amenity Society (PCAS) was formed, and through hard work by volunteers the canal has now been restored to navigation for around half its length, the current head of navigation being at Melbourne where there are moorings and facilities for visiting boats. PCAS runs a very popular trip boat *New Horizons*, based at Melbourne, which runs during the summer months and allows visitors to explore and enjoy the canal.

IWA has worked very closely with PCAS and British Waterways (now Canal & River Trust) to encourage and support the restoration work, with the ultimate aim to open the canal throughout its length. In 2017, PCAS received a grant of £106,400 from IWA towards its restoration of the canal between Melbourne and Bielby (see below).

A Heritage Lottery funding bid by Canal & River Trust was successful in 2015 and this will greatly help towards this goal, in addition to supporting improvement of wildlife habitats, community engagement and provisions of interpretation signs and leaflets. In parallel, PCAS held a successful appeal to raise £250,000 to fund a plan to extend the current limit of navigation to Bielby. Work on this project started in 2016 and will be completed in 2018 - the Bicentenary year of the canal. This will extend the navigable length by two miles.