

## **Scottish Canals Towpaths**

Scottish Canals commissioned a strategic overview of towpaths and towpath use. The strategy illustrates that the paths are an important national asset and have developed tremendously over the last 10 years as a result of the Millennium Link upgrade and further investment in urban areas by partnership investment to create hard towpaths (now 15% of total length). This improvement work has led to considerable increase in usage with a public health value of £6.4m and a road safety benefit of £220,000.

However, the report also highlights that the soft paths have deteriorated due to a lack of investment over the last 14 years and are now inconsistent due to surface condition & drainage. Partners interviewed including Councils and cycling agencies have all expressed that the paths should be improved to create consistency of product.

Our new strategy highlights that improved surfacing is important to the canal delivering all weather quality access and after these interventions we are recording a doubling of towpath usage. This illustrates the latent potential of improved paths and the value that the paths can contribute to providing a safe multiuser leisure path which also contributes to promoting active travel, health and wellbeing of local communities, sustainable transport options, Safe Routes to school and much more.