

Royal Opening for the Biggest Canal Restoration Ever

Britain's biggest canal restoration project ever - The Millennium Link in Scotland - was officially opened by HM Queen Elizabeth II at the world's first rotating boat lift, The Falkirk Wheel, on Friday 24 May 2002.

Cutting a swathe across Scotland's central belt, the 68-mile coast-to-coast Millennium Link has been dubbed 'The People's Project' because it will be a catalyst for new employment, leisure, tourism, environmental and social regeneration opportunities for the millions who live and work along its length.

The restoration of The Millennium Link has been funded by a broad partnership including the Millennium Commission (who provided 40% funding), European Union, Scottish Enterprise, seven local authorities, The Waterways Trust Scotland and British Waterways.

The £84.5 million restoration has also reinstated the historic canal link between Glasgow and Edinburgh after a gap of 60 years. It has overcome major obstacles, such as motorways and roads constructed across the canal's path, built new lengths of waterway - including two aqueducts and a tunnel - and preserved and protected important wildlife sites and historic structures throughout.

Centrepiece of the Link is the innovative Falkirk Wheel - the world's first rotating boat lift - a stunning structure designed for the 21st century to replace a flight of locks. With its Visitor Centre, it is expected to be a visitor attraction with international appeal.

George Greener, chairman of British Waterways, said: "The Millennium link is an outstanding achievement for Scotland and for British Waterways and all our partners. It has been the largest commitment British Waterways has ever made, ensuring a sustainable long-term future for this magnificent example of Britain's and Scotland's canal heritage, and making it available for everyone to enjoy and benefit from".

Lord Dalkeith KBE DL, Millennium Commissioner, said: "We are delighted to see the Millennium Link being opened by the Queen. The Millennium Commission is proud to be supporting this unique project with National Lottery money. Not only is it resurrecting two of the most spectacular canals in the UK, but it is acting as a catalyst



The Queen opens the Falkirk Wheel, a giant rotating boat lift which is the only structure of its kind in the world.

for regeneration, boosting the economy and providing new job opportunities across central Scotland.

I believe the Falkirk Wheel is a wonderful new icon for Scotland which will provide a lasting legacy for generations to come and I congratulate everyone who has been involved in this remarkable project".

The Queen was accompanied by the Duke of Edinburgh and visited The Millennium Link and Falkirk Wheel as part of her Golden Jubilee Tour.