**The Somersetshire Coal Canal and the Local Plan**

Each Local Authority in England and Wales has to produce a ‘Local Plan’ which defines its planning policies for the development and use of land in their area. It is drawn up by planning officers before going out to public consultation and it is eventually submitted to the Secretary of State for ratification, following which it is normally in place for 15-years. Each plan must define the authority’s visions and development strategies for areas such as housing, industry, the environment and infrastructure and, once adopted, it will form the basis of future planning decisions.

It should come as no surprise that the B&NES Local Plan contains a significant section covering the Historic environment. This section contains two Heritage policies, HE1 and HE2 which are both of particular importance to the Society.

**Policy HE1** sets out how any development that affects the historic environment should be considered within the planning process. It aims to support and protect the District’s Heritage Assets, in particular assets such as the Bath World Heritage Site, conservation areas, ancient monuments and historic parks and gardens.

**Policy HE2** additionally sets out how to protect ‘two important linear assets’, namely the Wansdyke earthwork and the Somersetshire Coal Canal. Both of these features are defined as **Designated Heritage Assets** within the context of the National Planning Policy Framework. That policy states ‘*When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation’*.

As a Society we are therefore very fortunate that the Somersetshire Coal Canal is not only covered by the general planning policy HE1 but, alongside the Wansdyke, it is given specific protection under policy HE2. That policy sets out a protected area that surrounds the historic route, including some of the tramways leading to it. This map can be viewed online within the Planning / Historic Environment section of the [www.bathnes.gov.uk/webforms/maps](http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/webforms/maps) website.

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