

Conservation

East of Occupation Bridge the canal line is soon lost to modern road-building, though not before passing the site of the former Bristol Road Wharf. Construction of the M5, Junction 13 and the re-aligned A419 led to the loss of this section of canal. A new route, over privately-owned land, must be created to restore the canal here.

Key features/issues include:

- Species-rich vegetation on the first part of this section, The first length is also significant for amphibians -and waterbirds such as swans and coot.
The adjoining river is known to be a significant corridor for otters
- Occupation Bridge is the first original fixed bridge remaining. It is a brick-arched humpback typical of the Stroudwater. It has survived largely unaltered by major repair works.
- Bristol Road Wharf, marked by the surviving small complex of housing adjoining the canal at the A38 crossing, was a Canal Company wharf
- The buried remains of Bristol Road Bridge and Lock - under the centre of the present A38/A419 roundabout.
- The lost line of the canal ran just above the floodplain, and the new line will need to take account of flooding issues
The site of Hyde Bridge - a brick-arched bridge now lost within a field to the south of the A419. The new canal line is unlikely to pass through this site
- Westfield Bridge, a narrow brick-built accommodation bridge, of brick with stone detailing. Thought to be of original design - but the 1841 date suggests some rebuilding.
- Westfield Lock - the bottom lock of the Eastington flight, now buried but believed to be largely structurally intact.
- Adjoining historic sites include Fromebridge Mill - a renovated watermill building, now a pub/restaurant
Meadow Mill spill weir, an original weir, restored by CCT volunteers. At one time Oldbury Brook flowed into the canal on the opposite side and flowed out via this weir.

People

Because the canal line is largely lost through this section, public access is poor and there is negligible use at present.

Key features/issues include:

- Fromebridge Mill pub/restaurant - a very popular family venue, particularly at weekends. This site has good road access and parking facilities - but does not promote the canal at present.
The 'hidden' towpath access at the A38 roundabout - not a right of way, not signed, but open to walkers and linking back to Whitminster.
- The absence of a through route to the east because the canal has been lost. Difficulties and opportunities include:
The A38 crossing - there is no facility for pedestrians here, and the road is dual carriageway on the approach to the roundabout.
- The existing footpaths along the River Frome - on both north and south banks - though only passing under the motorway on the south bank
- The difficulties of regaining the towpath from the southern Frome-side path - involving road walking (See Plan 3)
- The potential for using the existing 'cattle creep' as a motorway underpass on the north side of the river.
There are canal social history stories connected with the motorway - notably the account of the local landowner standing on Westfield Bridge to prevent it being demolished like the other local canal structures by the M5 construction engineers
- There are also significant interpretation issues here, with the abrupt ending of the canal at the A38 and the equally abrupt reappearance at Westfield Bridge.

Planned works

Works here are currently limited to recreating a formal multiuser path throughout the length - restoration of the channel and structures will be undertaken later. Key longer-term needs are listed in aspirations below.

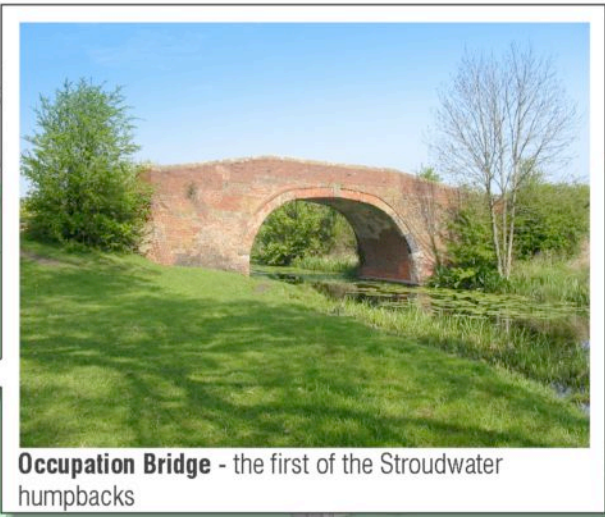
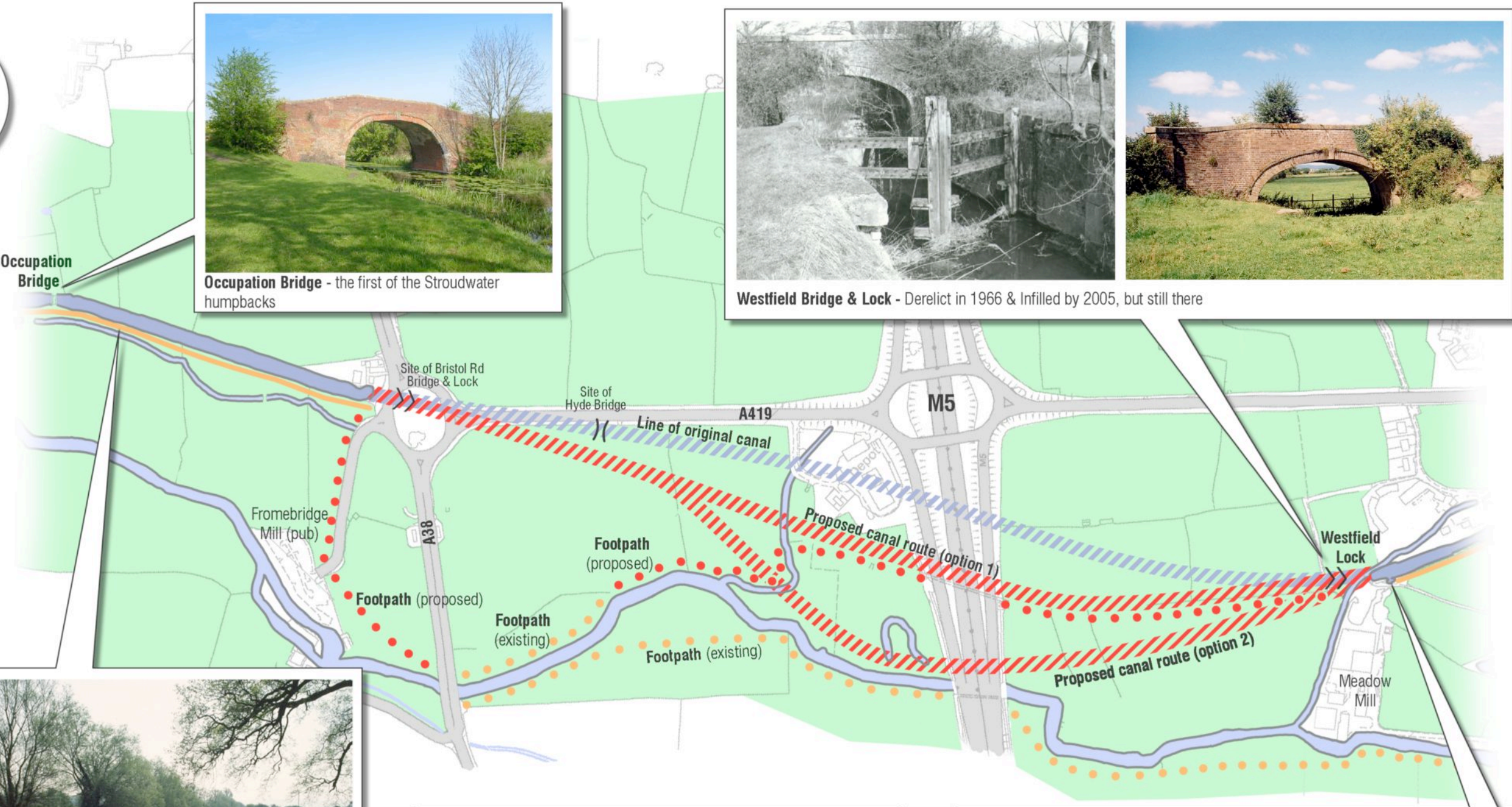
Even for just a pathway this section will be particularly challenging as so much of the canal has been lost and the possible routes are over private land. Suitable surfacing, fencing and signage will be provided, with interpretation as needed.

Future aspirations

The long-term aim is to recreate the canal and towpath on a new route through this length. As with temporary multi-user path the route has not been finalised and is subject to negotiations with landowners and the Environment and Highways Agencies. Two possible options are shown on the map:

- Both options would link to the existing canal west of the A38 and pass under the roadway at the roundabout
- There are then two options to pass under the motorway - under a new specially-constructed culvert close to the original line, or diverting to run close to the river and sharing the existing river culvert.
- Both options have potential to create a wide canal corridor, with new habitat and landscape features (similar to those suggested on Plan 1), particularly between the canal and river.
- The first option appears preferable, in terms of closeness to original location, potential for multi-user towpath and for habitat improvements - these would be more restricted on the second option.
- The second option would be considerably less expensive to build, and could achieve many of the same habitat improvements. There could be access issues under the motorway, particularly in terms of pathway width and flooding potential.

Other long-term aspirations for this length include restoration of Westfield Bridge and Lock and dredging of the remaining canal channel.



Occupation Bridge - the first of the Stroudwater humpbacks



Westfield Bridge & Lock - Derelict in 1966 & Infilled by 2005, but still there



Westfield Lock



Wildlife Rich Channel - Between Occupation Bridge & A38

Multi-user Path Options

Reinstating the canal here is not included in the current project. Instead a multi-user path, linking the two ends of the canal, is proposed. Possible routes are marked ●●●●● and ●●●●●

Canal Restoration Options

In the long-term the canal will be rebuilt, but cannot be on its original line. Two possible routes are being considered. Possible routes are marked ///////

When canal is rebuilt the towpath will follow the new canal route.



Meadow Mill Spill Weir - derelict in 1988 now restored by CCT volunteers