

The Development Consent Order Process

The Grand Union Canal Transfer (GUCT) scheme requires a type of planning permission called a Development Consent Order (DCO), because the amount of water we'll be transferring means the scheme is considered a Project of National Significance.

This means the scheme must apply to the Planning Inspectorate, instead of the relevant local planning authority, for a DCO under the Planning Act 2008.

The DCO application is made up of a series of documents and plans including scheme plans, a draft DCO, Environmental Statement, Compulsory Acquisition information and a Consultation Report.

You can find more information on the DCO application process on the Planning Inspectorate's website:

<https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/application-process/the-process>

What is a DCO?

The DCO process is a bespoke consenting route for major infrastructure projects that are of strategic importance in England, due to their size or specific characteristics. They include road, transport, water, and energy schemes. A DCO grants development consent which includes planning permission.

How is planning permission granted?

The Planning Inspectorate will appoint a panel of inspectors who will examine the DCO application and make a recommendation to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. The Secretary of State will consider the Planning Inspectorate's recommendation and then decide whether to approve or refuse the development consent, and therefore whether the scheme can continue through to construction. It typically takes around 18 months from submitting an application to a decision being made.

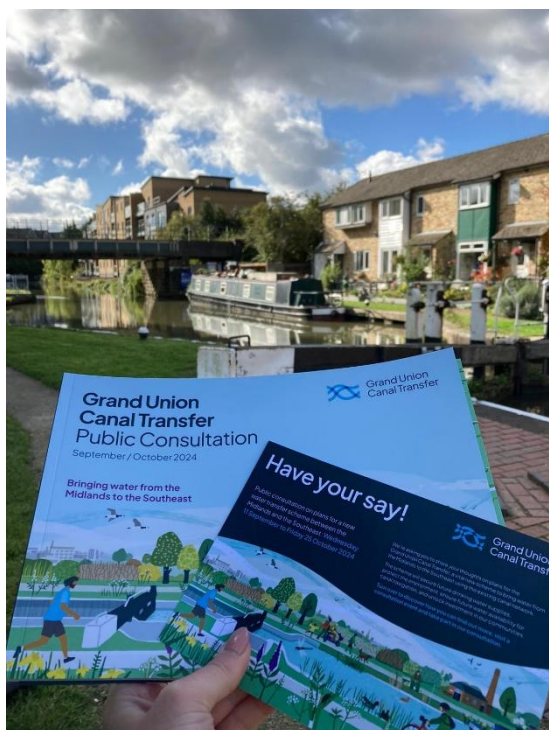
Why your say matters

The DCO process puts an emphasis on early engagement with communities and stakeholders, to allow for the opportunity to influence a project before a DCO application is submitted. Listening to and understanding the views of people living and working alongside the scheme is fundamental to how the scheme is designed, built and maintained.



During the autumn of 2024 we held a non-statutory consultation reaching out to over 21,000 stakeholders to gather feedback, which has further informed the design of the scheme.

We're continuing to carry out conversations with local communities, local authorities and other key stakeholders such as the canal user community and local businesses, to identify potential opportunities to deliver environmental and social value as our scheme develops.



While we prepare for the next stage of consultation, we're staying in touch with stakeholders and local communities by sharing updates, tackling misconceptions, and continuing conversations to shape a better scheme together.

Our next consultation will take place in early 2026 where we will present more detailed plans and gather further feedback from members of the public and key stakeholders including boaters, canal side businesses and those living on or alongside the transfer route.



The adequacy of consultation that is carried out is a key factor in the acceptance of the application by the Planning Inspectorate, and if the DCO is approved, the local planning authorities will have a role in approving details of the proposals before construction commences.

DCOs are changing

On Wednesday 23 April 2025 the Government [announced](#) its intention to further reform the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project application process through the Infrastructure and Planning Bill. This potentially has implications for the GUCT DCO process but as of yet we do not know what these might be. However, the GUCT will continue to engage and consult with local communities and stakeholders along the length of the scheme. We'll keep our website updated with the latest developments in our engagement plans.



DCO timeline

The GUCT scheme is currently in the 'pre-application' phase as illustrated below.

Answering your questions

If you have a general query about the scheme, please contact the team via

email: contact@guctransfer.co.uk

We are
here
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