

Design company plans walkway to revitalise 'forgotten' city river

By Rachel Sixsmith

Manchester's River Irwell could soon be as bustling as it was in its 19th-century heyday if plans drawn up by design firm Art2Architecture come to fruition.

The London-based company was chosen by Salford City Council and Manchester City Council to develop a detailed master-plan for a walkway along the route of the Irwell.

The walkway will connect the Salford and Manchester parts of the city and, it is hoped, revive its riverside area – once a busy hub of the city's manufacturing industries but now an area that is underused by the public.

Art2Architecture co-founder Peter Fink said: "We worked with EDAW 10 years ago on the big regeneration master-plan after the IRA bombed the city centre. It was one of the first attempts in Britain to regenerate a city. But now we need to up the bar.

"The river is the reason why the city was built in the first place, but it has been almost totally forgotten. People will be able to enjoy the river again."



River Irwell: links west Manchester with the Salford quays

The Irwell flows from west Manchester into the Salford quays – home to arts centre The Lowry and the preferred location for the new northern headquarters of the BBC.

The Art2Architecture master-plan divides the route into six linking zones, which include a new public park called The Meadows, a group of new green spaces collectively named Anaconda Park, and several new pocket parks and public spaces.

A new public square has also been earmarked for the area in front of Manchester Cathedral as has a futuristic, illuminated footbridge leading up to it.

Fink said: "Every modern city needs a non-commercial public realm, which is what this is – it reconnects the community.

"Ships used to approach the cathedral by water, so we thought: 'Wouldn't it be magic to do it again.' Right now the river is like a huge canyon."

The master-plan is one of 23 projects to make the shortlist of the Big Lottery Fund's Living Landmarks programme.

In the next couple of weeks, a panel of judges will assess which projects will be entitled to a £10m to £25m share of a £140m prize fund.

Town in hunt for master-planner

A master-planner with a range of urban and landscape design skills is being sought to restore Gainsborough town centre.

West Lindsey District Council is looking to appoint a consultant to produce a final design that will increase the appeal of the town.

The redesign will form part of Gainsborough Regained – a master-plan that, it is hoped, will help restore Gainsborough's physical and economic status.

A council representative said: "In the last century, Gainsborough lost its role and stature as a strong, independent place."

The council also hopes the redesign will attract shoppers from the new retail developments in east Gainsborough to the town centre.

The consultant will need expertise in urban design, hard landscaping, engineering, infrastructure improvement, cost estimation, urban planning services, architecture and engineering.

The contract starts on 1 January and ends on 31 March 2008.

Interested parties should contact Joanna Walker on 01427 676633 or joanna.walker@west-lindsey.gov.uk by 27 September.