

Ramped egress points

The photo was taken on the Caen Hill flight outside the CRT office. At this point the banks and fendering are already low and canoeists would usually portage the flight in one go but the location is adequate for showing the principle of ramped egress points.

A ramped egress point has a gentle ramp so that there is always somewhere that is at the right level for anybody wishing to portage, including when needing to push down onto a flat surface to get out of a boat with a small cockpit. It assists wildlife to leave the canal and need not use any imported materials, so being more economical than a platform. It avoids injury from repeated use of platforms with abrasive surfaces but has the disadvantage that it is likely to be soiled by wildfowl, which will appreciate it as a surface on which to stand.

The bottom of the ramp is no higher than the lowest normal water level. The top needs to give an adequate length of dry surface above the highest normal water level. Battered sides are at 1:2, where grass is an adequate surface for somebody climbing with a boat. A half metre of dry ramp above the top water level would be enough for a single user. 3 – 4m of dry ramp would allow two paddlers to exit an open canoe simultaneously.

Ideally, the ramp should be wide enough for paddlers standing beside an open canoe when lifted from the water. It should always be wide enough to withstand the load of regular users, remembering that damp soil will break up more easily. In restricted locations a 100mm wide ledge surfaced with brick or concrete might have to suffice as long as there is adequate space to lean away from the water while counterbalancing the boat when being lifted or a rail to hang onto while walking with a boat.

There are places where the ramp can lead directly onto an open meadow. More often it might require a brick or concrete well with a flight of steps leading up. The design will need to be adapted to the circumstances but the most important aspect is the ramp from lowest normal water level to above highest normal water level to ensure that there is a convenient level for each user regardless of the water level, which is likely to fluctuate with lock usage.

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