

STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL DRAFT CANALS STRATEGY

Comments by ██████████, FLI (retd)

- 1 Welcome
I welcome the Council's commitment to ensuring that the district's canals are given the priority that they deserve, in future strategic and day to day conservation, planning and development activities.
- 2 Concern
I am concerned that, despite the wealth of detail included in the draft strategy, there will be insufficient staff resources, both in time and expertise, to interpret and apply the strategy in real life. I fear that the council will not have the resources to develop detailed studies of each area, to provide clarity for potential developers and those that have to interpret their plans.
- 3 Agree
I agree that using the three straps of Continuity, Crossings and Clustering appears to be an effective way of grouping the many topics and issues that have to be taken into account when considering the future of the canals and their surrounding areas.
- 4 Continuity and active travel
One of the major opportunities for both canal corridors is to use them as the heart of an active travel strategy. This will only work if a similar level of investment is made, to that recently agreed for the County Council's proposed cycle spine from Stroud to Cleeve. The towpath needs to be consistently wide enough to accommodate all users, including the less able as well as speedy cycle commuters. At present there are significant differences in levels and surface quality as well as width. As an example, think about the towpath between Wallbridge and Ebley Mill – but there are other places with similar problems. There would also need to be considerable investment in access spurs. This alone is a multi-million pound, major project. If that amount of investment could be found, active travel in the north part of Gloucestershire could be transformed from wish-list to reality when combined with the Stroud-Cleeve cycle spine.
- 5 An eighteenth century view of development?
The Council's existing strategy for the industrial heritage aspects of the canal corridor favours an outdated view of development neighbouring the canal. This is a pity. It is essential that all proposed development along the whole length of the canals makes the most of the canal setting. It is not appropriate to favour high, blank walls or industrial fences that mimic the industrial past. Materials, detailed design and the scale and massing of buildings should acknowledge the area's industrial heritage without being slavishly respectful.
- 6 Natural versus industrial heritage
Phase 1A put little direct emphasis on wildlife and the natural environment. From its inception Phase 1B has had a significant focus on achieving net gains for biodiversity. Phase 3, the final phase, needs to give top priority to retaining the existing high natural environmental values that exist up the Cotswold Edge, through the Sapperton Tunnel and across the Cotswold plateau. The draft strategy stresses connectivity for the natural environment along this stretch. This is a good thing. But there is going to be significant opposition to the restoration of the canal east of Chalford, because many people will fear that wildlife will be

severely compromised, if not destroyed, by the process of rebuilding. Personally, I think restoring the canal can be done in a sufficiently sensitive way.

7 A basin for Wallbridge

It is good to see a mooring basin included in the detailed proposals for Wallbridge. If canal restoration is to have the greatest possible impact on the economy and community of Stroud, it must be possible to moor close to the town centre.

8 A community/canal hub at the Ship Inn site, Stonehouse

The empty Ship Inn site, just south of Stonehouse, is the perfect place for a mixed function development, that combines commercial with community facilities. This is essential if Stonehouse is to benefit fully from canal restoration.