

From: [REDACTED]
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To: _WEB_Canals Strategy
Subject: Canal Draft Strategy - Public Consultation Response

Categories: Canal Strategy 2022 response

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Dear SDC Officers and Councillors,

I would be grateful for your consideration of this letter, written in response to the current public consultation on the proposed Canals Strategy for the Stroud District.

As a resident of the area for the majority of my life, I am hugely concerned about many aspects regarding the proposals for the stretch of canal running from Chalford Bottom to the Sapperton Tunnel. From a purely personal perspective, I have run and walked along this particular stretch for over 25 years and revel in the solitude and sanctuary that this more 'wild' stretch of footpath affords. One of my many concerns regarding the redevelopment of the area lies in the detrimental effect this may have on the mental well-being of so many who use this particular stretch of canal as an escape. In the current climate, where so many people are struggling to break free from the pressures of modern life and at a time where so many are extolling the virtues of mindfulness and re-wilding, I find it a backwards step for a council in a town which has recently been voted the 'best place to live' at least in part due to its green spaces, to seemingly have so little respect for an area to which so many retreat from the hustle and bustle of modern life.

Further to this, one of the many reasons why this particular area is so peaceful lies in the vast array of wildlife, flora and fauna which can be seen here. To my mind, there is no greater joy than retreating to a space with such a diverse eco-system, where it is not uncommon to see the flash of a kingfisher or heron, the rustling of an adder in the undergrowth or the peculiar form of an Elephant Hawk Moth caterpillar. It is similarly a privilege to spend time so close to the dormice of Siccaridge Woods. All of these species are naturally shy and reclusive in nature and I feel that in redeveloping the path here and thereby opening it up as a more sterile, 'human' environment to which many more feet, bicycle wheels and boats would flock, you would be removing a huge part of the reason why so many value it, not least the wildlife itself. The re-development of the canal in itself would no doubt impact harshly on the habitat of many of these significant species but consideration also needs to be given to the impact the active re-development of this area would have – there simply isn't the infrastructure in place to support the development of the site given that none of the roads to this particular stretch of canal are passable by the lorries required to undertake such work.

In summary, I believe the plans to be short-sighted at best and I feel many inhabitants of the surrounding villages (and indeed further afield), simply do not support the scheme, a scheme which I would add, seems to be flying under the radar in terms of public consultation. I would urge you to reconsider re-development before such a precious eco-system and beautiful and tranquil stretch of 'green' be irreversibly damaged beyond repair.

Many thanks,

[REDACTED]