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Subject: Proposed Canal Strategy for Stroud District - Public Consultation to 18 April 20

Categories: Canal Strategy 2022 response

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Proposed Canal Strategy for Stroud District - Public Consultation to 18 April 20

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this draft strategy.

When we think of the restoration of canal routes and links we immediately think of cycling and green transport corridors. Stroud's canal heritage offers distinctive and vital opportunities to provide a blue green network for the benefit of people and wildlife. They appear to tick a lot of sustainable transport boxes and are waiting to be reinvented. The Local Transport Plan (PD2 and PD6) encourage sustainable travel and promote health and wellbeing. It envisages an expanded local and strategic cycle network, and measures to overcome walking and cycling barriers between new and existing sites, amenities, facilities and developments. The Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan recognise the huge value and potential of the canal corridors through Stroud district especially in terms of their existing and future roles as active travel corridors. Both National Cycle Networks 41 and 45 already use the canal towpaths and are highly valued by local communities.

It will be useful to consider how, in the context of Stroud, the canals can serve new this purpose in terms of full inclusivity; more people walking and cycling on the paths adjacent to them and, in addition, more from groups using wheelchairs, mobility aids, 'micromodes' such as segways and other small lightweight vehicles. There will need to be consideration of :-

- the extent to which the canals are geographically aligned to enable significant trip transfer from the highway;
- what happens to connecting route capacities if the canal becomes a stronger trip magnet;
- how the lateral and access/ egress points function (or potentially function);
- where links can be made to public transport hubs;
- what happens if there is significant mode transfer in terms of user conflict and congestion. An LTP performance indicator (PI-8) target is to "to increase cycle use within the County by 50% from 2015 to 2031". Combined with growth in population near to the canal corridors (south Gloucester and West of Stonehouse) this may manifest in very high usage;
- what can be done about the quite frequent pinchpoints;
- how this SPD, together with the Development Plan, will ensure that new land uses link with and support the revised purpose of the canal network;
- whilst the canal paths are potentially desirable routes, they also weave and alter in terms of their character throughout their extents. How much of Stroud's canal network can reasonably be upgraded in terms of coherent routing and optimal widths for pedestrians/ cyclists/ fishing/ boating/ playing etc. to occur in the same space?
- can we look to this canal network to transfer some trips from eg. Chalford Corridor and other highway routes which offer sub-optimal or dangerous conditions to non-motorised users? It will be important not to resort to the canal network as an alternative to improving alternative road conditions.

The emerging LCWIP for Stroud explores opportunities to create and reinforce a safe attractive walking and cycling network and considers the canal corridors. It notes that in some places the canal may form the most desirable route. In others there is not the capacity – in terms predominantly of widths – for the canal to be the primary active travel route. Therefore routes such as the A419 (Stroud – Chalford) will still need attention to highway conditions, and with reference to the Inspiration Study.

The LTP identifies strategic transport priorities in the Stroud area to accommodate growth ambitions, including significant growth west of Stonehouse. The Connecting Places Strategy (CPS5) section of the LTP outlines several active travel improvements for the Stroud area in more detail. These are not committed schemes, but potential funding routes have been identified including routes aligning to or linking with the canal corridors through the district, such as :

- Strategic Park & Interchange hub scheme for M5 J13 / A419;
- Stroudwater Navigation to Gloucester & Sharpness Canal – Active Travel Route;
- Access improvements ‘Active Travel Route’ – B4008 between Little Haresfield (M5 J12) and Stonehouse corridor;
- Cycle access improvements to National Cycle Network, Route 45 Stroud;
- Cycle access improvements Stroud and Chalford;

The Stroud District Local Plan 2015-2031 identifies several key development sites – particularly;

- West of Stonehouse where a strategic site is allocated with the aim of developing a new local centre; and
- Regeneration sites along the valleys east and south of Stroud.

Both these areas are also identified as key employment areas.

Core Policy CP13 (Demand Management and sustainable transport measures) states major developments should provide alternative travel choices to the car, and improve transport network infrastructure.

Policy EI13 requires an extended cycle network to be developed – particularly in Stroud and Cam & Dursley.

Essentially, these key development sites will benefit from, create demand for, and potentially help fund or deliver improvements to the canal corridor and connectivity to it.

This promises to be a highly valuable initiative with huge benefits for Stroud and people living and working there.

GCC looks forward to supporting the delivery of measures agreed within the resulting SPD. Please let me know if you would like further background to some of the documents discussed here,

Kind regards,

[Redacted signature]

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