

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 26 May 2022 21:28
To: _WEB_Canals Strategy
Subject: Response to Canals Strategy

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Dear Sirs,

I wish to object to and call into question the reasoning underpinning those elements of the Canals Strategy that are predicated upon making the canals themselves navigable. Many of the benefits outlined in the Strategy can be achieved by using resources to improve the existing network of pathways, which could be done in a manner sensitive to those areas that are re-wilded and currently exist as tranquil and precious wildlife sanctuaries.

I am a resident of Chalford and am privileged to be able to walk the stretch from the A419 to Baker's Mill and beyond at all times of day and in all seasons of the year. No-one who does so could be in any doubt as to the species-rich, ecological diversity that is present. I would plead that this anecdotal evidence be enhanced by a serious ecological survey before any moves are made to restore the canal here to navigability. The wholesale felling of trees, removal of fallen logs and other vegetation that provide important habitat and the re-cutting of the canal bank to an uncompromising vertical would all have a devastating impact on the flora and fauna that currently thrive there. It is specious reasoning to cite any environmental benefit whatsoever to what, in this area at least, would be a fundamentally destructive project. A navigable canal benefits only that small element of the population with an interest in and access to water-borne transport. On the other hand, upgrading and improving accessibility of the towpath benefits a far wider section of the community. While restoring navigability in some more urbanised areas may be appropriate, and may improve wildlife habitat at the same time as delivering the other benefits outlined in the Strategy, that is not true of all sections across the district. A revision of the Strategy bearing this in mind should be undertaken.

In an era when the efforts of individuals, their representatives in local and national governments and of numerous non-governmental organisations are directed towards preserving wildlife habitats, it should be unthinkable to destroy what is naturally re-wilded and healed scar on the landscape and return it to what it was in the vanguard of the Industrial Revolution.

Your faithfully,

[REDACTED]