

Stroud District Council Canal Strategy Consultation - May 2022

- I've been involved in public consultations for 25+ years, and I cannot recall any quite so bad as the set of documents that you are currently consulting on.
- The imagery is too small when viewed online; the language and terminology is far too complex for a general public consultation; double-page spreads have been split vertically, rendering the graphics impossible to follow; there are none of the internal hyperlinks in the document; there are pages with coloured graphics yet there's no key; it's totally unreadable when using a screen reader. As a result, I consider the Council has failed to consider the rights of people with disabilities under the Equality Act 2010. The A1 size map/plan even fails to identify Stroud!
- When set against other type of public engagement, the £45k+ cost of this exercise has been wasted, and I call upon the Council to scrap the current consultation as not fit-for-purpose, and instead start with a new, community-driven approach to give residents a proper opportunity to engage with the future of the canal corridor. This should include as a start: in-person events, and interactive, accessible plans and documents, such as are found on the Comonplace website amongst others.
- The document purports to be a Strategy, but it is not a Strategy, instead it is a set of often unconnected goals. It also fails to set out an overall vision for the three canals, but instead focuses on the concept (totally irrelevant for this sort of approach) of 'placemaking'. As such, it has at its core a fundamental misunderstanding of the purpose of the canal, and the adjacent land - the 'canal corridor'.
- The lack of understanding of this canal corridor means that a lot of the assumptions are incorrect and start from the wrong point.
- If the Council is to meet its 2030 net zero ambitions, there must be a significant increase in cycling instead of the car for local journeys. The canal courier is ideally placed for this use, but such opportunities are sadly lacking in this document.

