

Response to Proposed Canals Strategy for Stroud District

Section 10: Chalford to Upper East Valley (Sapperton)

Summary

“You pave paradise and put up a parking lot”

Q1: Are these the right Drivers for Change? Have we missed anything you would like to add?

The plan assumes that change is required and that any change is positive – no evidence is actually presented for Section 10. Instead, it is included in a very urban, consumptive mode, which is unsurprising given that DHUD (David Hawes: Urban Designer <http://dhud.co.uk/>) is an urban designer and Hilton Barnfield (<http://www.hiltonbarnfield.co.uk>) are small-scale domestic architects. There is no real concern for ecology demonstrated, but there is extensive greenwashing and use of buzzwords. Stroud District Council's own public consultation showed the only concern was access - because it is served by three small, twisting, single track roads. The plan does not tackle this, because it would require building new, wider roads into a very narrow, steep-sided gorge, which would not play well with the expressed carbon reduction policy.

Q2: Do you agree with the number and boundaries of the 14 canal strategy areas? Do the areas and their profiles reflect your understanding of the different character and functions of places?

Agreed: Section 10 is a cohesive area with a distinct ecological and social identity.

Q3: Do you agree with the key ways identified on the diagram and in the text in which each canal strategy area could be improved? Do you agree with the carbon reduction opportunities identified?

This area is already effectively carbon-zero. There is no public access other than by foot or bicycle. Limited parking provision prevents mass tourism. This creates a quiet natural area with high biodiversity - otters are present (pers. obsv. and ██████████ pers. comm.), indicating the rest of the ecological network is in good condition, including water voles (see summary at https://wikishire.co.uk/wiki/Sapperton_Valley). The entire length of this section is accessible by foot or bicycle at low density, reducing disturbance to plants and wildlife. Disabled access is very limited, as is normal in remote rural areas.

Q4: Do you agree with the ingredients in general terms? Are there other ingredients you would like to identify? Do you agree with the ingredients identified for each canal strategy areas? Do you agree with the timeframes for delivery? Should some be brought forward and others pushed back?

The "Improvements" suggested would possibly increase potential usage although limited road access from Cirencester and Gloucester would make this unlikely. The damage to the environment caused by creating a modern paved footway, and the restoration of the canal would far outweigh any benefits, especially since historically, the canal has had a very uncertain water supply and a great deal of additional engineering work would be required to secure such a supply (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thames_and_Severn_Canal#CITEREFHadfield1969). The wider plan to reconnect to the Thames at Lechlade requires restoration of the Sapperton Tunnel: , roof falls and heave of the tunnel floor would require major engineering to correct, and resident bats would make this illegal. Without this, however, the canal restoration would require a large basin for turning to be constructed at the Daneway (more heavy engineering)

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It is an existing Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust nature reserve: A series of wet meadows and this area is damp, generally undisturbed and overgrown, supporting wildlife. A diversity of habitats are concentrated in a relatively small area ranging from ancient woodland to wetland (<https://www.gloucestershirowildlifetrust.co.uk/nature-reserves/sapperton-valley>) . Many large trees have grown up along the towpath and in the canal bed in the last 70 years, and the, canal walls have collapsed in places creating wide wetlands. The plan would require both trees and wetlands to be destroyed to restore the navigation and create the wider, paved towpath.

Q5: Do you agree that the canals strategy should be used as design guidance to support the delivery of adopted Local Plan Delivery Policy ES11? Would any changes to the canal strategy help to improve the delivery of Local Plan canal policy?

Section 10 should be removed from this plan and regarded as a separate protected habitat. The proposed “improvements” are entirely inappropriate and would be very highly destructive to the existing natural environment, for very limited benefit. The plan is utterly unsympathetic to this section, and highly impractical. It appears as though the consultants have not actually visited this section or consulted residents and visitors before making their plans.

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Frequent visitor to the Chalford to Sapperton area.

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