

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 24 April 2022 22:09
To: _WEB_Canals Strategy
Subject: Proposed Canals Strategy for Stroud

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Dear Councillors,

I have tried to read the the documents but can't get very far with understanding them. So I thought I would just send you my thoughts about the proposal to 'restore' the canal between Chalford and Sapperton because it is something I feel very strongly about.

I often walk along that stretch of the canal as it is so beautiful and so good for seeing wildlife. Recently a friend and I saw a water shrew in the canal - as you probably know they are rarely seen and I have never seen one elsewhere. We almost always see dippers, and have watched them nesting, and a long list of other birds for example yellow and grey wagtails, willow warblers and chiffchaffs etc. This valley is obviously a very special habitat and important for biodiversity. I think (I did not find the documents easy to read) it is mentioned in Document B but without any suggestion that much of that value would be lost if this work was carried out. All these species depend on the habitat as it is - it would have to be completely disrupted to produce a canal which could carry boats so there is no way it could remain as diverse. The only references to the ecology seem to just gloss over any loss eg it seems to me to be an absolute contradiction to say on the one hand that the area could become "an eastern partner-landscape to the WWT Slimbridge landscape in the west" (whatever that may mean) and on the other to talk about towpath improvements providing "better local multi-modal travel options". And I have no idea what can possibly be meant by "to harness the canal as a conduit for ecological enhancement and water management in collaboration with all stakeholders". The ecology doesn't need any enhancement - it needs protection!

My overall impression is that the impact on biodiversity and on local people's quiet enjoyment of a very special habitat has simply not been considered. I am surprised that there seems to be no environmental impact assessment included in the consultation, as far as I can see, and am especially disappointed as I had thought Stroud council had put biodiversity very high on the list of its priorities.

I have no strong feelings about the other parts of the canal project but if this work in the Chalford to Sapperton section goes ahead I will feel that the area, and my life, will have been impoverished - it is a favourite walk which always lifts my spirits and is beautiful and interesting in all seasons. I always meet other people so I am sure I am not the only person who feels like this. I sincerely hope that there will be another, more accessible consultation so people like me can express our views.

Regards
[REDACTED]