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From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 27 May 2022 16:46
To: WEB_Canals Strategy
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Canal Extension beyond Brimscombe

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As home owners in Chalford, we have always been dismayed at the desire to re-establish the Thames and Severn canal. The project obviously has its supporters, but we wish to object to any plans which might change the canal's current state and character beyond Brimscombe, especially through Chalford and into the Eastern Upper Valley, or Golden Valley as it is known.

Such plans would inevitably involve the spoiling and destruction of one of the hidden gems of the Gloucestershire countryside. The wildlife in the valley is rich and varied. Vital habitats for many precious species would disappear. We should be preserving this beautiful environment, not carving a steel corridor through it. The old canal course between Chalford and Sapperton is home to a wide variety of plants, insects, butterflies, mammals and birds. Its delights are many and various. Even a on dull winter's afternoon, flocks of tiny firecrests (the UK's smallest bird) can be seen among the grasses and reeds in the disused canal bed. If the canal were to be gouged out, as proposed, so much of this natural diversity would be lost both for ourselves and for future generations.

The route along the old towpath is a well-worn track for many who seek inspiration and solace in nature. The decaying architecture of the canal has its own exquisite beauty. These ruins should be preserved, as they are, in the same way an ancient derelict castle is left to remind and educate us how things once were in the past.

The stretch of the valley that runs between Chalford to Sapperton already affords such pleasure to so many people at all times of the year, both from around the Stroud Valleys and further away. They walk, run, ride and cycle... enjoying the beauty, peace and tranquility of this unique landscape.

In our view, the diversity of our precious local wildlife should be protected, at all costs. We should all be able to appreciate the Golden Valley as it currently is, untainted by the effects of boating and tourism. It would be a travesty to destroy this precious natural environment, to say nothing of the cost involved and the potential folly of, one day, attempting to repair the Sapperton tunnel.

As Joni Mitchell once wrote and often sang: "You don't know what you've got till it's gone."

[REDACTED]