

## **SDC: Consultation on Proposed Canal Strategy for Stroud District**

### **Response to Proposed Strategy by Chalford Climate Action Network (ChalCAN) 25<sup>th</sup> May 2022**

ChalCAN is an independent community group with more than 300 active members representing the views of many in Chalford Parish. Formed in 2019, its aims are to achieve carbon neutrality within the Parish by 2030 and to protect and enhance local biodiversity.

This response concerns the proposals for canal restoration from Chalford to Sapperton.

Our first comment is that the format and language used in the proposal makes it inaccessible and extremely difficult to read. In order to generate the level of public response this proposal deserves we urge that any future proposal is issued in a less challenging form.

The valley between Chalford and Sapperton is rich in wildlife and deserves special consideration in any plan. Over the last 90 years, this valley has developed as a rich and important wildlife corridor. Recently, its significance has increased further in acting as an unbroken link between a series of nature reserves established by both the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust [GWT] and Woodland Trust, running down the valley and stretching from Daneway Bank to Blackness. The importance of these interlocking habitats is recognised in the GWT's latest County plan.

The significance of this rich and established wildlife corridor, made up of a range of habitats, does not appear to be acknowledged in the draft proposals. Indeed, we are concerned that the issue of biodiversity and its protection is not given sufficient status in the draft proposal as a whole.

In plans for this section of the canal, it is also not clear how the draft proposals will be reconciled with recent environmental legislation or with Stroud District Council's own Local Plan. The Environment Act 2021 identifies the need to "halt overall biodiversity loss, support healthy well-functioning ecosystems and establish coherent ecological networks." The SDC Local Plan supports this approach. It is unclear in the proposal how the destruction of habitat necessary to restore the canal can match the aims of recent legislation or how any scheme can replace the current range of biodiversity.

The old canal towpath between Chalford to Sapperton, in its present form, is a varied and attractive wildlife trail, much enjoyed and appreciated by local community and visitors alike. As an amenity, there is nothing like it in the Stroud Valleys. We feel that any canal restoration proposal should only come after extensive, meaningful consultation with local communities.

With this in mind, we would be happy to host a public meeting in the Parish and to welcome any representative from the SDC to share views on possible plans.

[REDACTED] on behalf of the Co-ordinating Committee ChalCAN]  
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