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Canal Strategy
Planning Dept
Stroud District Council
Ebley Mill

Mail Room Services

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Received

**Comment on Stroud District Council's
' Strategy for the Future of Canals'**

I am a resident of Stroud with particular connections to Oakridge Lynch. I have a deep affection for the area. I walk almost daily in and around Oakridge and frequently along the valley bottom.

The access to and readability of the Canal Strategy.

I only discovered the existence of this strategy document on the 23rd of May .
An attempt to get information and urgently, from SDC has still not resulted in a reply to my enquiry.

Thankfully I have found the link elsewhere.

The document is almost impossible to read on a domestic computer or laptop. The information appears chaotic and indecipherable. It is not presented in a way to promote public understanding.

There are elements ... such as the 'Carbon Reduction Document' that seem to be generic rather than specific to Stroud...or the canal.

I have watched the videos too which seem to offer no greater clarity.

As far as I can see this document seems very urban in its view. The reference to the hills coming into Stroud as 'barriers' and the concentration on the bridges over the canal, the reference to Stroud as a 'city' do not inspire confidence in the understanding of Stroud and how the residents access and enjoy these 'barriers' which might have then informed this strategy. The video with cyclists seem to offer a very limited and 'blokey' urban view. The canal is more than this.

The limitations of any public survey during Covid restrictions seems not to have helped. The value of any conclusions are perhaps disputable and might have been better postponed?

Continuity, clustering and crossings

I am not sure how this relates to the future of the canal. These headlines seem to have driven the survey although the text merely describes them. They would be an inevitable consequence of the existence of the canal. Is it a problem ?

Strategy areas

Specifically regarding the stretch of canal between Chalford and Sapperton.

This canal strategy fails significantly in not recognising and taking into account the very distinct and longstanding difference between the stretch of canal between the Chalford and Sapperton and the more urban and industrial areas downstream, towards Stroud.

The questions asked in the very limited (3) person consultation seem awkwardly irrelevant to what the communities here and visitors to the valley, experience and value.

This area is surely both different and valuable enough to merit its own survey more specifically concentrating on the protection of the natural environment. A slow steady and wonderful reclaiming of the canal by nature. And an understanding the very necessary aspects of such quiet and life enhancing environments to human health.

Other points

This document still carries the stated aims of the Canal Trust to link the canal through and beyond Sapperton Tunnel.

Due to the nature of the geology the canal did not hold water well. It had to have water pumped into it. Any redevelopment of the canal as a navigable waterway would inevitably have an apocalyptic effect upon this valley's natural environment. Any excavation or relining of the canal, the felling of mature trees and the stabilising of steep slopes would carry an enormous carbon footprint... and to what purpose? The canal and single tow path are both narrow. The traffic would be limited and bring undesirable noise and disturbance into the area.

Until this is absolutely ruled out as a possibility, any of SDC's proposals are going to be regarded with well deserved scepticism by those who know and love this valley.

To continue to preserve and enhance the rare natural treasures of this valley the support of the people who live in the area is vital.

The numerous reserves along this valley and its AONB status are indicators that this environment is nationally exceptional and valuable beyond the aspirations of the Canal Trust and any need for a navigable canal.

An issue that could be resolved sooner.

When I first began walking along the canal there were kissing gates and notices to prevent it being used as a cycle track. It was designated as a footpath on the OS map and signposted as a footpath in Chalford.

Somehow this footpath designation seems to have 'evaporated' and yet the foot path is still too narrow to allow pedestrians and cyclists to safely use the same path.

I would suggest the restoration of the kissing gates (removed by cyclists and thrown into canal as I watched) and the signage to hopefully take cyclists off this section of canal. There are quiet and beautiful parallel roads and wider tracks. Unfortunately the tracks/greenways have been utterly destroyed in places by 'off roaders'. I would suggest that restoring the track to bridle path standards for cyclists and horses and closing it to off roaders would be a very worthwhile aim.

Canal tow paths are perfect level walking for young families and the elderly. In this area giving them an immersive, contemplative experience of nature that they otherwise might find difficult to access.

The presence of cyclists often fast, fit, loud males, is very obviously a threat to such pedestrians. Roads are increasingly unsafe while the need for exercise and access to the environment is increasingly recognised as important.

Please consider restoring the canal footpath to an actual FOOTPATH for the enjoyment of all, between Chalford and Sapperton.

Broadly and for the canal as a whole;

This should be an opportunity to hand something of value to future generations. The canal as an extensive wildlife corridor should maybe be the prime objective. It is the natural landscape that is recognised as being valuable to human health and yet is also seems to be most under threat from development. Please understand and investigate the future of the canal as a resource for as wide a spectrum of people as possible and not as opportunity for narrow interests and exclusive developments.

If the canal itself provides an open corridor there might be reason and inspiration to protect and provide more open public spaces along its banks as housing development continues....and to widen that corridor?

In Stroud there are stretches of the tow path closely hemmed in by high walls. creating ridiculously narrow spaces for walkers and cyclists to pass.

Communities need to be able to see something we can engage with, comment upon.....and support!

I am unable to see (in places literally) how this Canal Development Strategy actually fulfils that part of its brief... I am sure I am not alone.

