



STRATEGY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

MEMBER/OFFICER REPORT

NAME OF ORGANISATION/BODY	Cotswold Canals Connected Project Board
DATE OF LAST MEETING ATTENDED	15 th December 2022

BRIEF REPORT:

A detailed Canal Report was submitted to the S&R Committee on 24th November 2022 where it was agreed to allocate £1m to the Phase 1B project from the SDC Capital Reserve Fund as an additional contribution to the project. This was further discussed at the full SDC Council Meeting on 15th December 2022 where it was resolved to increase the capital budget for the Canal Project by £10.87m. During both of these meetings there was agreed support across all councillors for the successful completion of the Canal Project (Phase 1B) and recognition of the significant economic, environmental and community benefits of this project.

As we start 2023 the canal project is gaining momentum and we have a programme of work to achieve the five strategic objectives that were developed and agreed by the National Heritage Lottery Fund. The integrated programme of work includes:

- Engineering programme to restore the section of canal between Stonehouse and Saul Junction to make Stroud and Stonehouse canal towns once again
- Environment programme
- Community engagement programme
- Interpretation plan

Progress and governance of this project is overseen by the Cotswold Canals Connected (CCC) Project Board and regular updates are provided to National Heritage Lottery Fund (NLHF) who are the major sponsor of the project. A detailed progress report was submitted at the last NLHF review meeting on 1st November 2022 and this was summarised in the S&R Canal Report, and discussed during the last S&R Meeting on 24th November. The next NLHF review meeting is on 7th February 2023. We have submitted a bid for a further grant of £2.3 million from the NLHF Covid Fund; this is anticipated to be considered at the NLHF March Board meeting.

As mentioned at the last S&R Meeting we are still awaiting a decision from National Highways on the additional grant of £2.175 million towards the Missing Mile section of the canal. National Highways have confirmed that they will not take this decision until we have secured planning approval for the Missing Mile.

The additional awards from SDC, NLHF and National Highways will enable us to meet 50% of the forecast funding gap for the project. The remaining 50% will be met



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through additional contributions from project partners, grants, private donations and fundraising. SDC as the Accountable Body for the project will work with the CCC Project Partners to secure the additional funding required for the project. This fundraising is progressing however we may require more time, beyond 2025, to secure the additional funds. The CCC Project Board, and SDC as the Accountable Body, will monitor and manage cashflow. Decisions to commit to sub-projects will be taken by the CCC Project Board in consultation with NLHF and there is a risk that some sub-projects may be deferred until funding has been secured which could result in the project extending beyond 2025.

Planning approval on the Missing Mile is taking longer than expected due to the complexities of the flood modelling. We are working with the Environment Agency and Katherine Colby Hydrologists Limited (independent consultant) and there is a programme of work to run a series of scenarios through the model which is a new requirement since the planning submission was submitted in December 2021. This additional work has to be completed and the output of the modelling signed off by the EA in order to submit the Missing Mile Planning Application to the SDC Development Control Committee for planning approval. This will now not happen before Easter 2023, and we will keep the S&R Committee updated on progress and timelines. However, it should be noted that this delay is not currently impacting the Engineering Programme as work continues on Sections 1 and 3 of the canal.

The focus for the first 6 months of 2023 will be on Section 1 (Stonehouse to Eastington) & Section 3 (A38 roundabout to Saul Junction). In December work was started to plant a new hedge along the canal between Bonds Mill and Eastington with work to plant a new hedge along the driveway to the Fromebridge Mill pub due to get underway in February. Restoration work has now been completed on Hoffmans Dam and Pike Lock. All of this work was done by volunteers from Cotswold Canals Trust, Stroud Valleys Canal Company, Stroud District Council, Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust and Stroud Valleys Project. We are about to start work on restoring Newtown Lock, rebuilding the towpath west of Bonds Mill, strengthening culverts to enable future works in section 1 and completing the excavation of John Robinson Lock.

We are organising a Canal Spring Festival over the weekend of 13th & 14th May 2023 with the support of Stonehouse Town Council and an extensive range of charities, organisations and community groups. This festival will involve The Lock Challenge on Saturday 13th May which includes a number of distance runs and walks (10 miles, 5 miles and 5 km), an accessible route on water and land (3 km) and a canoe and paddleboard time trial; with a community Festival on Sunday 14th May .

There will be a series of presentations and workshops over the next few months on both the Canal Spring Festival and all of the different programmes of work. Community engagement,



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raising awareness of the project and attracting a wider audience to the canal will gain momentum this year now that we have recruited our Community Engagement Manager, Sarah Burgess, and appointed the Skills & Learning Coordinator (shortlist confirmed and expect to appoint and onboard by April 2023).

As part of this community engagement we will be organising an event for all SDC councillors so that they can be updated on the project and ask any questions that they may have.

FUTURE MEETINGS	29 March 2023
REPORT SUBMITTED BY	Chris Mitford-Slade
DATE	12 January 2023