

# Cotswold Canals Connected

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## Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

Draft 1

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Footprint Interpretation Design and Stroud Nature CIC



# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

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# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

## Introduction

### Why a revised plan

#### Original Interpretation Plan 2019

The original plan produced by Footprint towards the end of 2019 was submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund as an annexe to the main Activity Plan. Its remit was limited to static location specific (didactic) interpretation along the canal towpath in the form of flat graphic panels or basic derivations thereof. The most traditional, widely used and tried and tested form of on site interpretation and already used along the length of Phase 1A.

The 2019 plan established themes and content about the wildlife, history and archaeology along the canal and some basic design concepts.

It was separate from a planned wider interpretation process, developed by the Community Engagement Team (CSCIC) at the time. This would be more physically interactive, engaging a range of different communities along the canal, together with users and visitors, through events and activities such as workshops, exhibitions, open days, festivals, etc.

It was taken for granted that any interpretation would need to try and reach those communities, groups and individuals who for any number of reasons, have become disengaged or disenfranchised from many of the everyday things so many of us take for granted, such as accessing and enjoying the outdoors, thereby missing out on some of the pleasures and rewards it can bring, not least greater health and well-being, through a greater connection with the natural world.

#### Review of Activity Plan

Following the submission of the original funding bid containing the Activity Plan, we were hit by the Covid pandemic. Two years on those now responsible for managing the delivery of the restoration and all of its constituent parts, have looked again at the Activity Plan.

There has been a significant reappraisal of the plan and how it is to be delivered, resulting in reviews of all the elements that make up the Activity Plan. This includes the interpretation.

The plan contained in this document is driven by that review and some basic proposals:

- **That it is widened to encompass more basic and human facets of the restoration, ie how visitors and users interact with the canal on a daily basis and the information they need to maximise their experience**
- **That community engagement plays a greater role in the development, design and delivery of the interpretation.**
- **That it links to the skills and learning plan aimed at schools, colleges, etc**
- **That it also looks at Phase 1A, ensuring consistency between this and 1B, given that once restored the canal between Saul Junction and Brimscombe Port will be a single length of water.**

There is also a need to look at how things have changed due to the pandemic. How for instance, it may have changed people's perceptions and behaviour, their feelings about nature and the environment, their own sense of health and well-being.

New topics and messages have come to the fore in recent years. We will need to look at these and evaluate their importance in the scheme of things.

The nature of some of the on the ground projects has also developed, particularly in respect of the visitor centre at Hydes Basin and a new visitor gateway adjacent to Pike Lock/Bridge. New engineering projects have seen the building of a replacement railway bridge at the Ocean and beneath the A38 roundabout below Whitminster.

Stroud District Council has also recently published a Stroud Canals Vision and Strategy document, that needs considering in the context of community engagement through interpretation.

*,The Canals Strategy is a wide reaching piece of work, establishing a series of vision themes (in the form of Future Drivers), identifying how this vision is articulated across the corridor in different ways (Canal Strategy Areas & Placemaking Frameworks), and, at its highest level of resolution, outlining the typologies in the built environment, public realm and landscape which enable the vision to be implemented in each location.'*

A district council canal strategy for the Stonehouse area is currently being developed and CCC will be also be seeking to link to this. This may have implications for interpretation.

#### Approach

At this stage in the project there is no need to provide a long introductory piece about the history and heritage of the Cotswold Canals, a blow by blow account of all its assets. This has all been done before. That is not to say we know everything. The restoration may reveal new stories, new archaeological items, changes in habitats, etc.

This plan's main purpose is to provide a framework for delivering the interpretation. It is not prescriptive, but should ensure that there is an informed and consistent approach to all interpretation along the canal and across all CCC information pertaining to the canal and this project.

That framework has a rationale behind it. A reasoned approach on the basis of all the various constituent parts of the restoration and life after the restoration. It is an informed reasoning that comes from the experience and knowledge that Footprint already has from working on Phase 1A and other Cotswold Canals projects. Also a good knowledge of the Stroud landscape and its natural and historical heritage, developed through years of local interpretation work with a wide range of local clients covering the areas historical and natural heritage.

You will notice that the plan has been put together by Footprint Design and Stroud Nature CIC. Stroud Nature is founder of the Stroud Festival of Nature and the Stroud Great Green Partnership. Networking and collaborative projects with a range of wildlife organisations since 2009, has further added to the knowledge base and deepened the commitment to the area where I live, work and play.

The desire to make the Stroud Valleys a better place for people and wildlife underpins almost everything I do. Underpinning that the fundamental need to conserve and nurture the natural environment and its wildlife, not just for wildlife's sake but for ours. I believe that all of us engaged in this project have an obligation to our children and their children to do so.



# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

## Phase 1B revisited

### The Ocean to Saul Junction: the changes

Three years on from the original plan, there have been changes on the stretch between the Ocean and Saul Junction. In particular, two great engineering solutions - the building of the new Jubilee Railway Bridge at the Ocean and the creation of a stretch of canal beneath the A38 roundabout.



*New Jubilee Bridge at the Ocean, Stonehouse*

In the years to come, how these two sites looked previously can easily be forgotten. The changes that have taken place have already become part of the history of the canal and the engineering process and site work that saw them completed needs to be included in the story.

One more piece of significant engineering remains, taking the canal beneath the M5 motorway in a section of the 'missing mile'.



Currently only the River Frome flows beneath the M5 motorway (above). The canal will be re-routed west of Westfield Bridge, to also pass beneath the M5 at the same point. The canal and its towpath will be separated from the river by a wall. Beyond the motorway, they will go their separate ways, the canal heading towards the afore-mentioned A38 roundabout.

Referencing the old 2019 plan, we now have more information on two new proposed developments that will bring greater numbers of people to the canal.

The western end of the missing mile, adjacent and east of the A38 roundabout, will be the location for Hyde's Basin, a new basin with a good number of barge moorings and a new cafe and car parking. This will allow access by vehicle for larger numbers of people.

This will also apply to the proposed development adjacent to Pikes Bridge/Lock, of an eatery/cafe with parking. Both of these developments present greater opportunities for interpretation and promotion of the canal to a wider number of people.

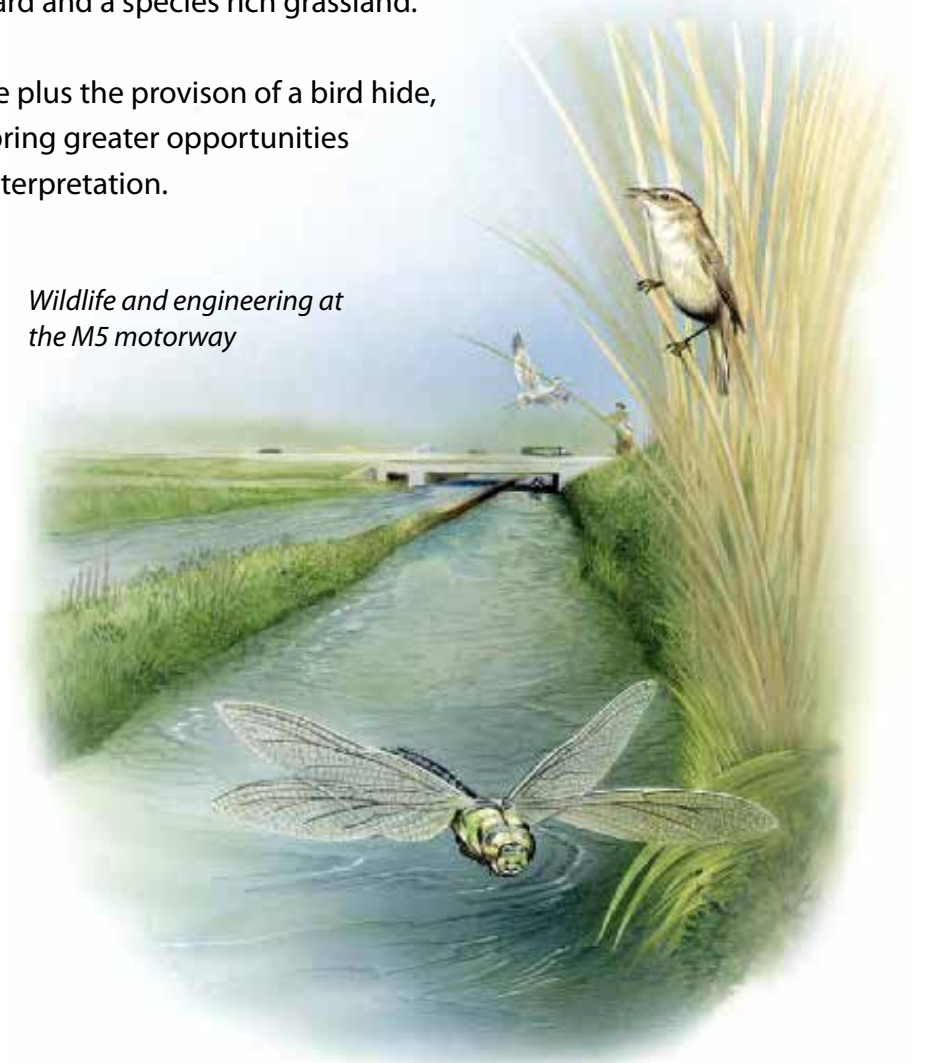
Wildlife and the natural environment was always going to be a major focus of the interpretation given the nature of the canal and the landscape through which it passes in Phase 1B. Habitat creation and enhancement was always a key part of the strategy.

We now have more detail about the work that Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust will be carrying out to conserve and enhance the biodiversity along specific sections of canal. In particular the section of canal just west of the A38 roundabout, between Bristol Wharf and Stonepits Bridge.

Here there will be a mosaic of habitats - newly created wetland scrapes and pools, a line of ponds, the conservation and improving of an old orchard and a species rich grassland.

These plus the provision of a bird hide, will bring greater opportunities for interpretation.

*Wildlife and engineering at the M5 motorway*



*New bridges and canal cut beneath the A38 roundabout*



# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

## Phase 1B revisited section by section

### From the Ocean to Saul

Phase 1b has always referred historically to the section of the Stroudwater Canal between The Ocean at Stonehouse and Saul Junction. In respect of the Community Engagement Plan this has now been extended eastwards to include the location of Boatmobility, just west of Ryeford Bridge at Harper's Field..

Boatmobility provide a very important service for a range of vulnerable individuals and groups, many whose access to the canal and the outdoors in general is limited, both physically and mentally.

The disused section of canal west of Saul Junction is not part of the scheme. The aspirations to recreate the link with the River Severn will be realised by the Cotswold Canals' connection to the Gloucester Sharpness Canal that enters/leaves the Severn at Sharpness.

However the short stretch of canal beyond Saul is worthy of mention and inclusion in the interpretation plan, not least, where and how the Severn Trows joined the canal from the River Severn.

The Phase 1B restoration is being broken down into three sections, implemented each year for the next three years. The sections having previously been identified west to east as section 1, section 2 and section 3:

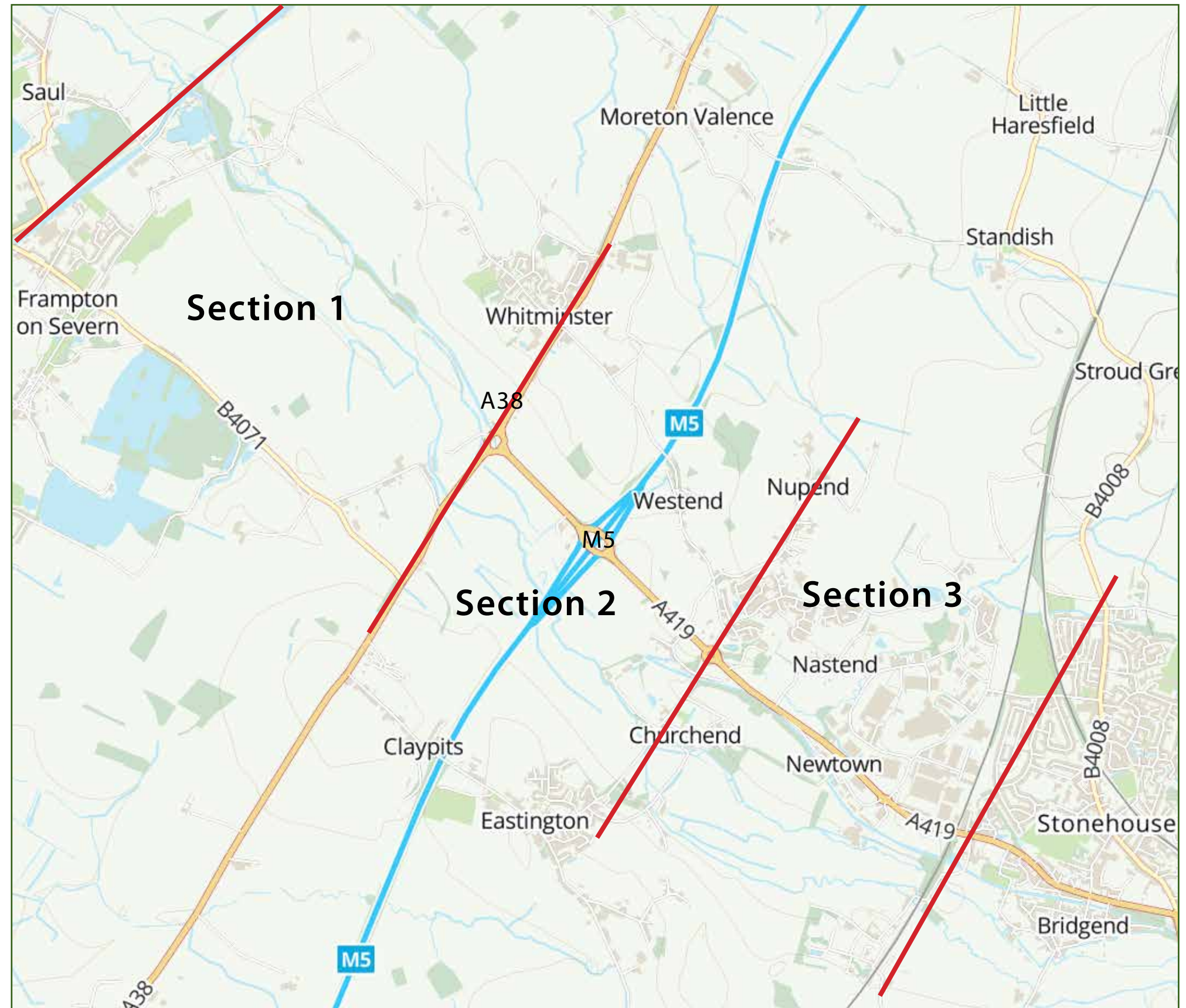
**Section 1: Saul to Fromebridge/A38**

**Section 2: Fromebridge/A38 to Eastington/Pike Bridge**

**Section 3: Eastington/Pike Bridge to The Ocean/Stonehouse**

Although some major works have already been carried out in all three sections and will continue to do so, the focus will be on section 3, section 2 and section 1 in that order.

In terms of communities, there are three obvious settlements that are the focus of attention. Stonehouse sits squarely in section 3. It now bleeds into the new Great Oldbury development to its immediate west and into section 2. The village of Whitminster lies on the very eastern edge of section 1. Saul Junction stands close to the villages of Saul and Frampton, also in section 1.



Map does not show any new re-routing of canal. It is intended only to show the areas defined under each section of the restoration. OS 2023



# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

## Accessing the canal

### Access

Canals were never designed to allow access to great numbers of people looking for recreation and relaxation. They were working waterways and while the locals that lived along their length might enjoy a walk along the towpath, access was limited to the public. The only places they would have been able to access the towpath would have been via the bridges that crossed the canal.

Elsewhere it was those engaged in the trade and day to day running of the canal who would have access via the wharves, basins and boatyards.

Today, not really much has changed. Access points on Phase 1B in particular are often restricted to bridging points. Saul Junction at present is the only location that provides direct access for a greater number of people, whether arriving by car or on foot.

While Fromebridge Mill welcomes a significant number of people, more work is needed there to welcome and guide people to the canal.

The proposed developments mentioned previously at Hyde's Basin and Eastington/Pike Bridge will greatly improve access to the canal for a greater number of visitors.

In sharp contrast to Phase 1A, Phase 1B is a rural canal. West of Stonehouse it passes through the fields and meadows of the Severn Vale. Given the flatness of the landscape there are far fewer locks than Phase 1A and less canal structures and general architectural features.

The greater concentration of all of these things in Phase 1A, led to the design of almost twenty interpretation panels to cover the sites, structures and other things of interest, which it was felt, required interpreting in some way.

Phase 1B will not require as many interpretation locations. Given its rural character, we should look in fact, to minimise the visual impact of interpretation along its length. Therefore, the emphasis for permanent interpretation, in whatever form it takes, will be focused on main gateway sites and a limited number of key towpath locations, where interpretation is really needed.

As well as providing interpretive material, any gateways can also provide information points helpful to walkers, cyclists, visitors, etc about the locality, the location of important services and facilities along the canal corridor and information on distance, time, etc.

This plan has considered the location and nature of access locations along Phase 1B and categorised them, based on the opportunities to welcome and engage a greater number of visitors to the canal.

Through the Community Engagement Plan, CCC will seek to engage with the widest possible range of communities, users, visitors, groups and individuals. This has to be the ambition of the interpretation also and as always there are key audiences and communities that become more of a focus. Those who do not regularly visit or use the canal, who have limited contact with nature, whose health and well-being would benefit from a greater connection with the outdoors. This includes the more vulnerable and those with special needs.

Some people may visit a cafe or canalside amenity by car., with no real intention of exploring much further. Their visit is more about the cup of coffee and a sandwich than the canal itself. We should seek to inform and engage them, nudging them towards a greater exploration of the canal corridor and what it has to offer.

Interpretation at these key public locations, can play an important role in this. It can allow us to welcome new visitors and introduce them to the whole canal and its situation within the landscape and heritage of the Stroud Valleys and Severn Vale.

The budget for interpretation needs to extend along the whole of Phase 1B and also include the involvement and contribution, where possible of the community, in its widest possible sense.

Focusing interpretation at main access locations means we can maximise what budget to reach larger numbers of people. This is helped with the proposed new cafe/eatery's at Hyde's Basin and Pike Bridge and the enthusiasm of Fromebridge Mill for the project.

We will look at all three, talk with respective owners and operators to see what we can do by way of interpretation, outdoors and indoors.

This does not negate any other sites where the stories/messages are important enough to warrant some form of interpretation. There are heritage sites along the whole phase and new habitat creation is part of the scheme. These sites will be looked at and considered, but we should not assume that every lock, every bridge, every aqueduct, etc needs interpretation. A simple label plus QR code with a link to further information might suffice.

Hand in hand with the welcome and the interpretation, there also needs to be basic access information for visitors to these locations and to canal towpath users. This information tells them where they are in relation to other things, what lies east and west from their location, how far it is to the next point of interest, next exit point, the location of canalside facilities/amenities (toilets, food, drink) and a sense of the time it will take.

This information needs to be suitable for a range of audiences, ensuring there is equity of access, not only for the those with visual and other physical impairments, but also those for whom English is not their first language.



# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

## Primary gateways (1)

### Hyde's Basin

Here we look at all of the potential locations that might be suitable for interpretation, in particular those gateway locations where a greater number of people will have access to the towpath.

Locations should be chosen where there is something to say of substance which informs, engage and inspires those that use the canal and the corridor it occupies, promoting and nurturing that sense of place, but we should also welcome visitors where they arrive in greater numbers.

The stories and messages conveyed at these arrival hubs, need not be specific to a particular site or feature, but are nevertheless important.

Two brand new public buildings are planned for Phase 1B. One adjacent to Pikes Bridge in Eastington and one at Hydes Basin. These will provide good access points to the canal, enabling larger numbers of visitors by car.

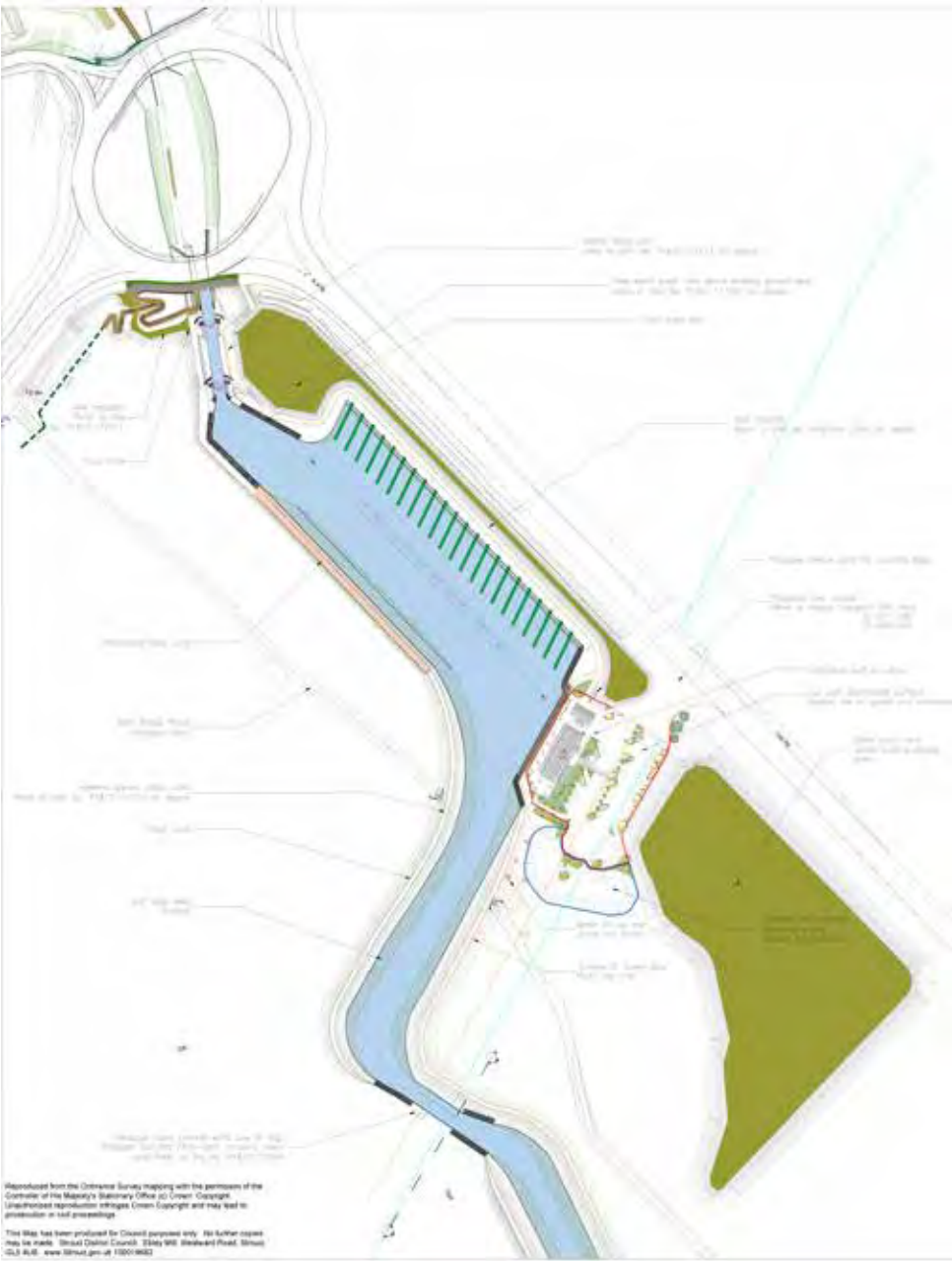
Both centres are close to the M5 and the A38 and easily accessed from the A419. It makes perfect sense to focus a good chunk of the interpretation budget on and somewhere adjacent to these centres where it can reach the largest audience.

The centres may also provide opportunities for interior interpretation. Aristic impresssions of the cafe at Hyde's Basin are in the public domain with plans for the immediate area around the cafe.

The cafe will be run by a private enterprise. There are opportunities to provide on site interpretation, both inside and out which encourages people to explore the towpath and surrounding area. Some visitors to the cafe may only be there for a beverage or snack.

Interpretation can help boost business and revisits by encouraging people to explore more. It can add value to the visitor's experience.

Conversations with the cafe owners should look at the potential for interpretation around the site.



Plan (May 2023) showing general layout of the Hyde's Basin site.



# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

## Primary gateways (1)

### Hyde's Basin

Plan (May 2023) in greater detail.

The development is in a key site.  
One minute from the M5 interchange.  
Adjacent to the A38.

Following the towpath through the lock (top left) and beneath the roundabout, one is immediately into the area of new habitat creation (scrapes, pools, ponds) close to Fromebridge Mill which is also a primary access location to the canal and itself a place to eat and drink.





# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

## Primary gateways (2)

### Saul Junction

The Cotswold Canals Trust already has two existing and well established heritage centres. One at Wallbridge in the centre of Stroud and more specific to the Phase 1B restoration, at Saul Junction.

Saul Junction is a very popular destination for people from all over the area. It is a bustling little hub for people and boats, with a cafe, marina, the heritage centre and lots of parking.

The heritage centre provides a vital interface with the general public. It is small and engagement with the public is limited. It has some small display pieces and various canal related literature and gifts.

The Gloucester- Sharpness Canal is owned and managed by the Canal & River Trust. There is already some interpretation on site at Saul with the appropriate CRT branding. We could explore the potential for interpretation specific to the Cotswold Canals close to the CCT Heritage Centre.

If the latter is not possible, the Cotswold Canals begins once people have crossed the bridge from the main towpath, beside Junction Bridge House.



Existing Canal & River Trust interpretation panel at Saul Junction. The entrance/exit to the Cotswold Canals is top right.

The Cotswold Canals currently ends after only a few hundred yards at Church Lane Bridge and the towpath the same. Beyond this, the current walk is a peaceful one. The canal is not always present. But where it is, it has more of the appearance of a river, its banks well vegetated and/or sheltered by trees.



The stretch of canal between Saul Junction and Bristol Road Wharf/ Fromebridge Mill, both now and in the future is a walk to be enjoyed by many.

It will also take you past the new areas of habitat being created by Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust.





# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

## Primary gateways (3)

### Eastington Cafe

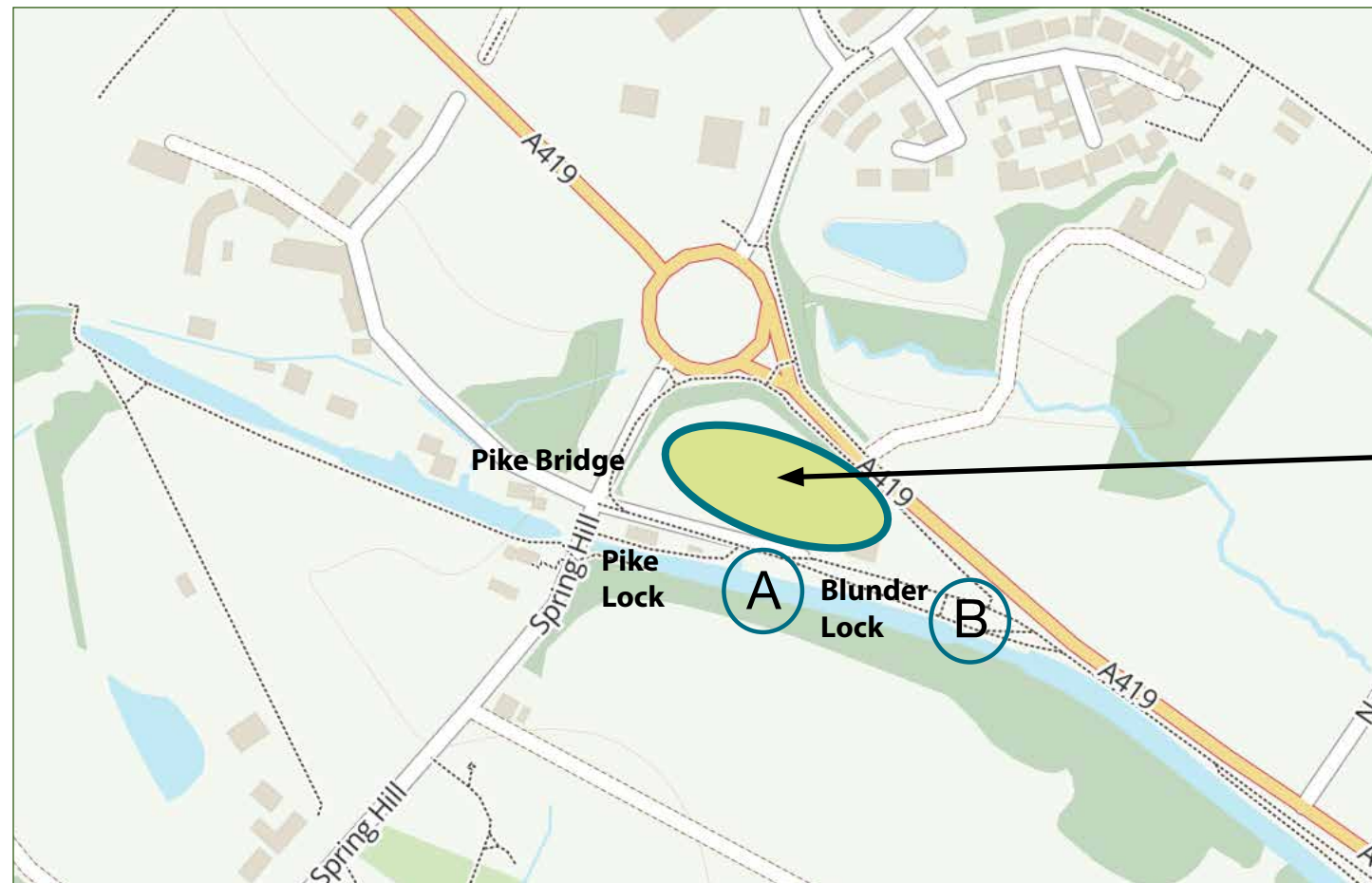
Plans are afoot to create a new cafe/eatery at Eastington with a good area for parking. Its location close to the first roundabout on the A419 when you leave the M5 motorway and travel towards Stonehouse and Stroud is ideal for attracting a significant number of people.

The new cafe/eatery will be close to Blunder Lock, Pike Lock and Pike Bridge. It's a very short walk to Chipmans Platt, to Dock Lock, John Robinson Lock and Westfield Bridge. Beyond Westfield Bridge, once the towpath is restored, the walk will take you towards and beneath the M5.

There are a lot of canal features to enjoy within a ten minute walk of the proposed site.

The existing plan (below) shows parking for over 60 vehicles accessed from Pike Lock Lane. There will be pedestrian access from the pavement on the A417.

The cafe will be run by a private enterprise. Cotswold Canals Trust may also look for some form of visitor point here.



The site is also very close to the new housing development of Great Oldbury, currently 1300 homes built or planned, but might grow. This is a community that can walk to the cafe.

Currently there is parking for a dozen or so cars on a Pike Lock Lane off Spring Hill (A) that leads towards Blunder Lock and gives immediate access to the towpath. The towpath is very close to the A419 at (B) and the canal is very visible from the road. There is also a lay-by beside the canal here



The plan also shows the proposed relocation of the historic cast iron/ riveted narrow boat 'Leviathan', from its current position on the slipway of the canal close by to a position on dry land close to the new building. This is a piece of interpretation in its own right, but opportunities will exist to make it a more engaging piece of interpretation.



# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

## Primary gateways (4)

### Fromebridge Mill

While this is a public house run by Greene King, the brewer and retailer is enthusiastic about the canal restoration on its doorstep and the potential business opportunities this brings.

The pub has a large car park and at the far end of this, significant numbers of people park to access the riverside path along the Frome.

This path will not be accessible in the future, as Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust develop the area beside the river for wildlife. People will be able to access the canal towpath, as they can now, by retracing the access lane to the pub, back to the A38 roundabout.

When restoration is complete the towpath will take visitors beneath the roundabout from Hyde's Basin to Bristol Wharf and on towards Saul Junction.

Greene King are happy to have some form of information on the canal displayed somewhere in and around the premises. This might look at the new and enhanced wildlife habitats being created in the adjacent fields and the immediate tow path walk west and east. It can also welcome and introduce visitors to the Canal in its entirety and its landscape context.



*The access road to the pub is on the left. the entrance to the towpath is centre right, beside the information panel*

*The car park is shown below. The parking area in the foreground is currently well used by people accessing the riverside path. The pub is in the background.*





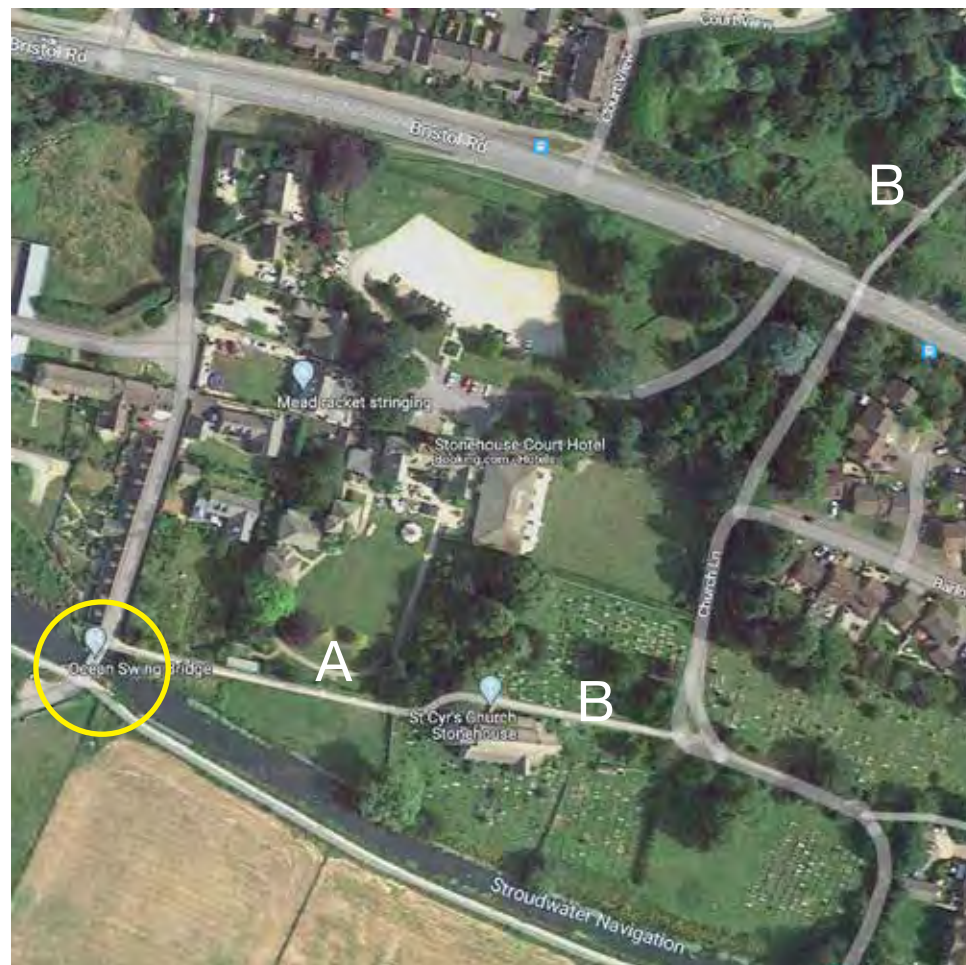
# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

## Secondary access locations

### The Ocean

There is no direct vehicular access to the Ocean at Stonehouse, but it is a popular location. Walkers on the towpath often dawdle here a while as they enjoy the setting. St Cyr's Church has to be one of the most photographed buildings in the area. It stands close to the banks of the canal, a picture postcard scene.

Adjacent to the church, the the back of Stonehouse Court Hotel, is a 17th-century Manor House is in its own stunning grounds. From both church and hotel there are views to the wooded Cotswold escarpment.



Guests to the hotel can access the canal from the back of the hotel (A), joining a lane that links to the A419 and across to Church Lane (B), joining Laburnum Walk into the centre of Stonehouse.

### Bond's Mill

There is a large car park adjacent to the canal at Bond's Mill bridge, but most of these are for those working in the various businesses that make up the Bond's Mill industrial estate.

It is sometimes possible to find car parking space here, but it does not appear to be encouraged. Only workers at the location and towpath walkers would be aware that the bridge and therefore access to the canal exists here.



### Roving Bridge

Pedestrian access only to the canal here where the towpath meets a footpath from alongside Eastington Park and a footpath from the tiny hamlet of Newtown, close to the Little Angels Nursery.

### Walk Bridge near Saul Junction

The first bridge east of Saul Junction carrying traffic between Saul and Frampton and Whitminster along Whitminster Lane. Once a new replacement bridge is built here, probably less about access as more people cross over the lane to follow the towpath east and west.





# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

## Housekeeping (the basics)

Canals and their towpaths are straight. Possibly the straightest walking routes that exist. They offer a unique experience to the walker, the cyclist, the runner and many other users and visitors. They exist from a period of great industrial change in the UK and as a result are of high historical interest.

They connected cities and towns, criss-crossing the countryside and therefore also offer people the opportunity to enjoy natural habitats and their wildlife.

But they also present challenges to those who are seeking to engage people using the canal to offer them worthwhile experiences. While there may be circular routes emanating to and from the canal, the main route is 'there and back'.

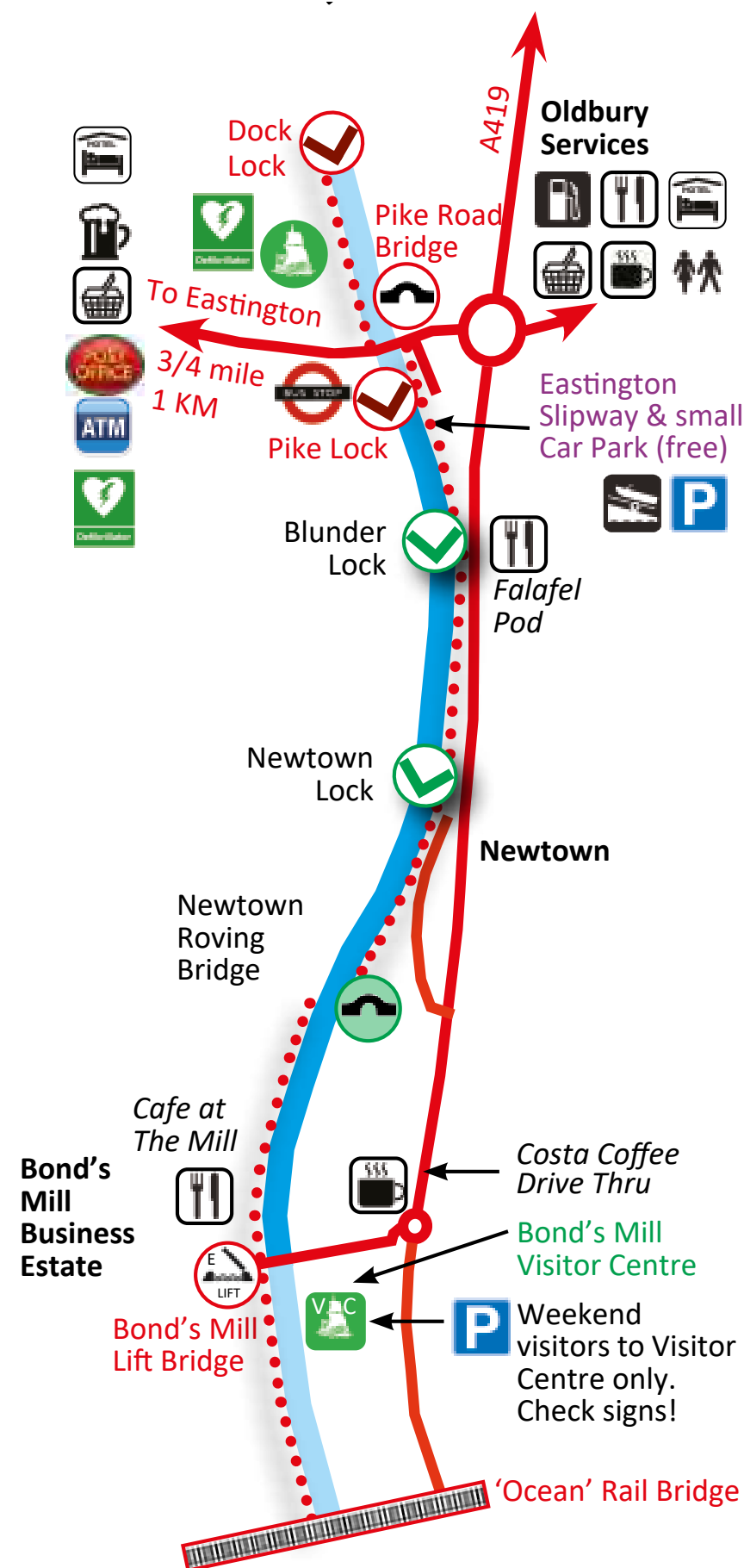
Unlike a circular walk through the countryside, there will be more limited access to a canal towpath. Along its length, there will be sections where you cannot leave the towpath. People will tend to access the path at the most convenient points. Some may be major people hubs, transport junctions, car parks. Bridges are often important places of access.

For these reasons, it is important that users feel at ease when they walk the towpath, that they are given the information they need section by section.

Just like a flight attendant before take-off telling passengers or a speaker at a conference talking to attendees on what they should in an emergency, we should reassure the public by providing basic information about the canal. Where they are in relation to other locations, walking distances and times, provision of safety equipment (life belts). This information extends to essential amenities - public/disabled toilets, eating places, nearby access and exit points.

We should seek to provide this kind of information. It will need to be clear, concise, uncomplicated and as universally understood as it can be. It should not be time sensitive.

We will need to decide what information is the most important for the widest range of towpath users. We could do this using bar codes and mobile phone technology, we could do it with permanent signage. We could do a combination of both.



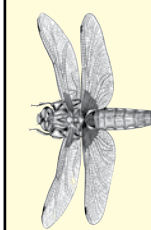
On the left is one section of canal taken from *Cotswold Canals A Guide for Users* produced by SVCC in 2021. This has the kind of information that people might like to be able to access at points along the canal.

We should avoid naming businesses (things change) and include those places and amenities which we are confident, will still exist in years to come.

The use of a universal iconographic system is important, as towpath users may include international visitors.

One thing missing from this is distance and time between points. This can be important to people.

Some aspects of this might be extracted and part of another form of interpretation. During its heyday The Thames and Severn Canal had milestones situated along its towpath. Could something like this be replicated in a different form? Might it be a little more engaging?

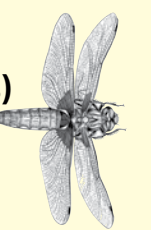


**As the dragonfly flies it is:**

**1.2 miles to Hyde's Basin (cafe, toilets)**

**2.2 miles to Eastington (cafe, toilets)**

**.5ml to Saul Junction (cafe, toilets)**



**As the kingfisher flies it is:**

**1.2 miles to Hyde's Basin (cafe, toilets)**

**2.2 miles to Eastington (cafe, toilets)**

**.5ml to Saul Junction (cafe, toilets)**

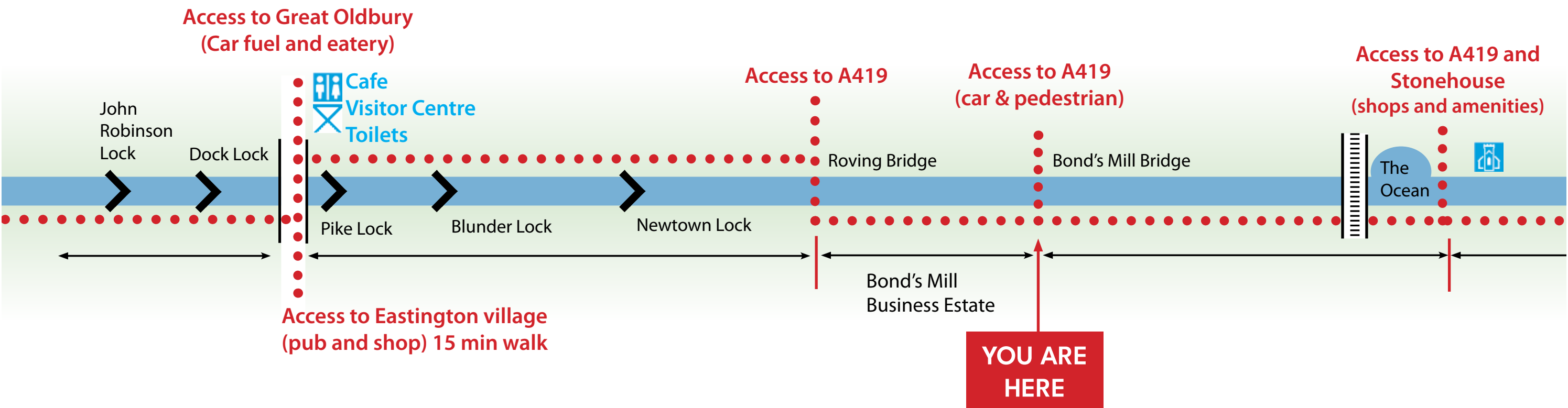




# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

## Housekeeping (the basics)

Below is one potential design showing how a basic map of the canal and its towpath might look. This is aimed directly at towpath users. Unnecessary details are excluded if they do not aid or help the towpath user negotiate their route along the canal providing information they need for distance, time, access and amenities.





# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

## Themes

1. Highways for people and nature
2. Natural Connectivity
3. Biodiversity
4. Stop Line Green
5. What's in a name?
6. Water under a bridge
7. West of Saul Junction
8. The dig
9. Who's in the picture?
10. Being out





# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

## Themes: Introduction

The themes for interpretation have been chosen after a process of thorough research and consultation with a range of people and communities. A great deal of groundwork was done as part of the original Phase 1b bid to HLF.

A number of community consultations and facilitated workshops captured the views, ideas and needs of members of the public.

- **Provide a picture of now and then- from transport of goods to disrepair, to leisure route**
- **Tell the story of the restoration**
- **Celebrate what is physically there that belies the stories of the people who worked there, then and now**
- **Shine the light on wildlife, naming things, understanding the corridor ecosystem**
- **Provide an immersive experience - engaging people on their terms, involving them and connecting them with their environment**
- **Provide a sense of ownership and help them feel they are allowed there and that the canal is theirs too**
- **Personify the voices of people and nature through time, showing what it's been like for them**
- **Create a sense that a journey can be for the journey's sake, taking time to stop and stare, slow right down**
- **Show us the nuts and bolts of where we are and provide information about facilities, distances, accessibility and entry points**
- **Create an atmosphere of shared space**

Some of that information has informed this plan, but there will be ample opportunity to build on this as we begin delivery of the plan over the next couple of years, in recognition that projects can evolve and change as they progress from the planning stage to the delivery stage.

Some themes are embedded in the history of the canals, their original construction, their use, the people that worked on and along them, their buildings and vernacular, their impact on the area and its people. We know quite a lot about this. We know less about the more ancient history of the area, about the Roman settlements that existed in the Eastington area. Archaeological excavations may reveal more.

Other themes develop and will continue to develop with the restoration itself. The re-routing of the canal to its original course and the engineering projects required to achieve this, particularly the construction of new bridges beneath major transport routes and the need for minimal disruption to road and rail users.

Some themes have been devised such that they may function as a kind of mystery trail, linking features together under a single heading such as 'what's in a name' and 'whos in the picture'.

Evidence shows that people do not dally too long to read what is presented to them at interpretation points. That is why the image is so important. The challenge to interpretation designers comes when the story is good but there is no existing visual to support it. Even more difficult if you believe the words should support the image.

The natural heritage of the canal and the landscape through which it passes was always going to be an important theme. Given where we find ourselves in 2023, this has to be an even more important. Our situation in a rapidly changing world where climate change and loss of nature have been elevated in their importance.

In September 2022, the Guardian online carried an article about the concerns of people about nature:

**'Most UK adults think nature is in urgent need of protection - poll'**

The poll was by YouGov. Carried out for the National Trust, RSPB and WWF in response to government policies (scrapping of EU environmental protection laws and lifting of planning rules), more than 8000 adults were surveyed.

Eighty-one per cent of those who responded said they believed that nature was under threat and that more was needed to protect and restore it.

The majority of respondents said they had witnessed a decline in nature and wildlife in their local area, 65% in the number and variety of insects they see, 58% in birds, 60% in mammals and 59% in green spaces such as parks and woodlands.

This is why the habitat restoration being carried out by Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust is a key part of the restoration of Phase 1B. While this is part of the legal and necessary mitigation process, it is now even more vital. This is focused around Fromebridge Mill and an area of the missing mile, but we should be looking to take care of wildlife along the entire length of the canal.

Other themes may arise through the engagement process with local communities and organisations. Footprint proposes holding a number of events where the public can consider the role interpretation plays along the canal and contribute information and ideas which can shape the development of the interpretation.

One theme that is included is the role of the outdoor environment in improving our health and well-being. How we experience and benefit from the natural world around us can vary:

**"If you are in a bad mood go for a walk. If you are still in a bad mood, go for another walk."**

Hippocrates

**"One Step at a time is good walking"**

Chinese proverb

**"It seems to me that the natural world is the greatest source of excitement; the greatest source of visual beauty; the greatest source of intellectual interest. It is the greatest source of so much in life that makes life worth living."**

David Attenborough

**"You don't stumble upon your heritage. It's there, just waiting to be explored and shared".**

Robbie Robertson



# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

## Theme 1: Highways for people and nature

### People and Nature - a sense of journey

The value of the restoration of Phase 1a to the people of Stroud and its surrounding villages and other visitors is self evident if you spend any time walking the restored towpath between Stonehouse and Brimscombe Port. It has become an important pedestrian route for many people and a well used cycle way. Other sections of the canal remain well used, but the footfall along the restored section is significantly higher.

Though it is not yet a bustling waterway for boats, the towpath is once again an important highway connecting people with people and people to places.

This theme of highways is an incredibly important one, relevant to the entire length of the canal from the Vale into the Stroud Valleys. Those highways are historic, some routed in ancient times, providing the catalyst for the growth of settlements along the valleys, close to the river and its bridging points. Hillside tracks and settlements grew up along the spring lines, that fed the brooks and streams, which emptied into the River Frome. The first textile mills were built along the the brooks, streams and River.

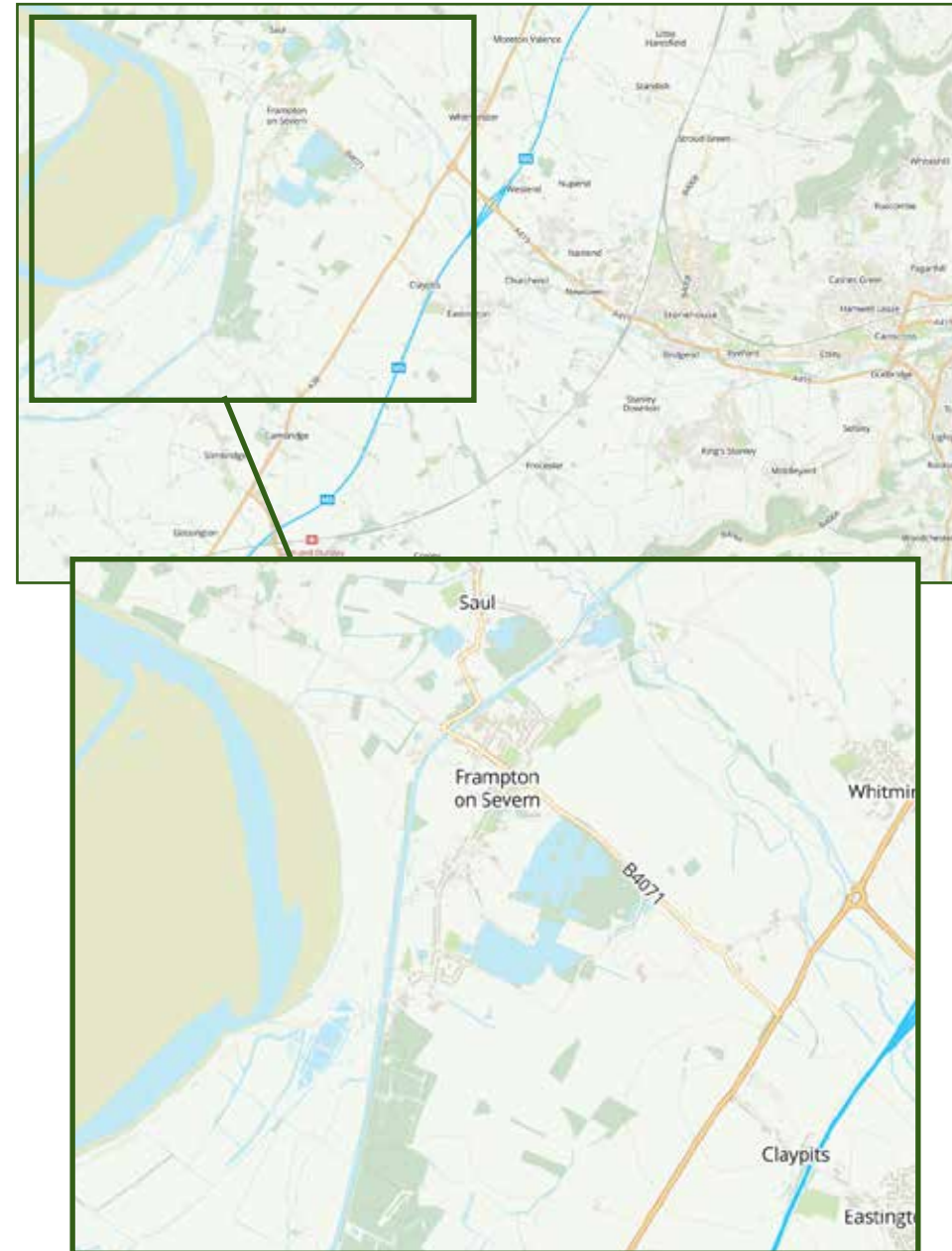
Given the topography of the area, the main highways have always had an east west emphasis, other routes take travellers into the valleys to their confluence in Stroud and then guide them east or west.

Today there are several highways running east-west. The River Frome, the A419, the Great Western Railway line between Cheltenham and London and the Cotswolds Canals. To the east, they all go their separate ways through the Cotswold countryside.

To the west, as the valleys widen into the Severn Vale, the river, road and canal remain close companions on their journey. The railway line curves to follow the line of the Cotswold escarpment north.

Out in the vale, river, road and canal all meet a second and far greater highway - the M5 motorway and its companion, the A38. Between them they carry hundreds of thousands of vehicles a day between some of the country's most important cities and towns.

Further west the river and canal join for a while. The canal meets another north-south highway, the Gloucester to Sharpness Ship canal, Beyond this lies the River Severn, the country's longest river, travelling north to south, winding its way to becoming one of the greatest estuaries in the country. The river continues on to empty its waters into the Bristol Channel.



The 'highways' theme will recognise the importance of these routes - all of them. Their history, their links, their importance to travellers - by car, train, boat or by foot. The potential for more tourism, bringing greater numbers into the valleys

There are others who use these highways, whom we should consider and to do so at this point in time, is incredibly important. Our wildlife.

Animals on the move follow recognised routes - whether that is a very short distance or hundreds of miles. A river, a canal, an escarpment, by air, by land, by water, they will follow an estuary, a valley, a ridge.

This might be on an annual migration or every single day. Look to the skies above Stroud to see large numbers of gulls flying west in late summer and autumn to roosting grounds in the Vale, returning eastwards the following morning, or Ravens following the valleys east and west. Explore the waterways and mill ponds on the valley floor to discover Little Egret, Cormorant and Goosander. Otters are steadily repopulating the rivers and streams of the area. Emperor dragonflies hunt over the canal close to Stroud town centre.



It is no accident these creatures are seen. The River Severn, its estuary and its vale are a major migratory route for birds. They are funnelled northwards along the river's course, between the hills of the Forest of Dean and the Cotswold escarpment. Many reside or stop off at places like Slimbridge or Frampton Pools. The River Frome and the canals are not very far away.

Habitat creation and enhancements to boost biodiversity for the Phase 1B restoration is a key element of the funding bid and delivery programme. This theme recognises that these must be seen in the context of the whole canal corridor and not just the immediate canal surrounds, but several miles either side of the canal line. It also looks at the close association of the canal to the river and the green, tree lined corridor both occupy.



# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

## Theme 2: natural connectivity

### Natural connectivity

Synonymous with the theme of wildlife highways is that of wildlife connectivity. One will struggle without the other. Just as between Phase 1A and Phase 1B, there are no imaginary boundaries, between one habitat and another, that flora and fauna require connectivity to move successfully from one place to the next, be that hedgerows, wild flower meadows, road verges, river or canal.

This rare Downland Bee Fly was photographed on a wildflower meadow beside the canal at Wallbridge in 2017, a two minute walk from Stroud town centre. The meadow was planted by the Town Council's Green Spaces team a few years ago.



The species was thought to be extinct during the latter half of the twentieth century, but was rediscovered in the Cotswolds in 2000, inhabiting the southern slopes of the local Stroud Commons. Even so, it has only been recorded a handful of times since then.

Rodborough Common stands high on the hills above Stroud, the closest of Stroud's commons to its town centre. It is likely the bee fly has made the jump from the common to the meadow, attracted by the wildflower species that have been planted there.

In the same way, provided there is connectivity of habitat with key plant species, insects will move along our watercourses, extending their range and breeding. With the insects come the birds and other predators. The clear, fast flowing waters of the Frome have good populations of insect nymphs, such as Stonefly, food for Dippers, which are regularly seen along the river throughout the valleys. Its fish are food for Kingfishers, a pair of which nest just a stone's throw from the town centre.

The most obvious examples of the above are those plants that line the canal - both the flowers and the shrubs and trees. There is usually a strip of vegetation between the towpath and the canal. One which most people never stop to look at or explore. Often it may be dominated by nettles - a really important plants for insects. In other places there is a varied mosaic of plants. To the eye of many people, many of these might

be defined as weeds, invasive species that are generally scorned at by gardeners and ground maintenance supervisors. Again many of these have a high value in respect of insect species and pollinators.



Traditional interpretation is likely to focus on the more exciting species seen along the canal - the iconic species that may be rarer. This theme looks at the mosaic of species that exist along the towpath, many overlooked by most passers by.

This theme would need to consider the plant species both before and following restoration. During the many years that large sections of the canal have remained derelict, plant communities have had lots of time to establish themselves. Some of these will be grubbed up and destroyed by the restoration, banks laid bare for a while. On this disturbed ground, some of the same endemic species will re-colonise. But new species will also appear.

Key to this theme will be alerting towpath users to the ecology that's around them:

- Identifying commoner species of flora and fauna
- Emphasising their existence along the canal corridor
- How this brings connectivity, allowing wildlife to move
- How this can be upset and species suffer if pressure is put on their ability to follow the watercourses

Further east, of Phase 1B, close to the canal at Lodgegmore Mill, the importance of the waterways and the network of remaining mill ponds and brooks to the movement of wildlife is reflected in an interpretation panel produced by Stroud Nature.





# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

## Theme 2: Natural connectivity

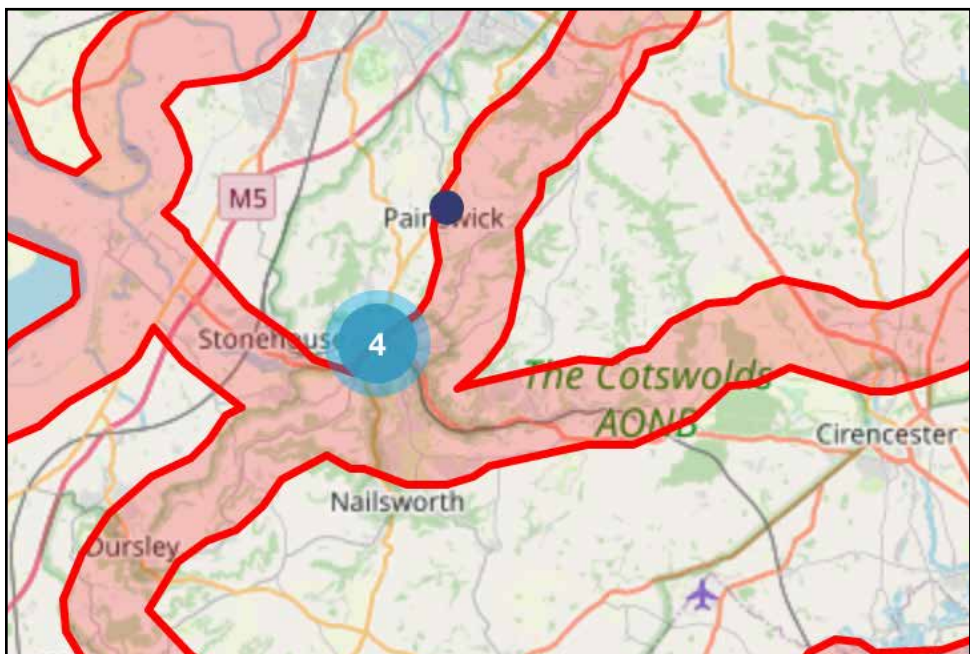
### B-lines

B-Lines are an imaginative and beautiful solution to the problem of the loss of flowers and pollinators. B-Lines are a series of 'insect pathways' running through our countryside and towns. It is an initiative created by the international charity, Buglife.

Although they are called b-lines, these insect routes refer to all kinds of invertebrates that have a role in pollinating our wild (and cultivated) flowers and plants. Buglife is the only organisation in Europe devoted to the conservation of all invertebrates. The charity is actively working to save our rarest smallest creatures, everything from bees to beetles, worms to woodlice and jumping spiders to jellyfish. To halt the extinction of invertebrate species and to increase sustainable populations of invertebrates.

Buglife seeks to achieve this through:

- Promoting the environmental importance of invertebrates and raising awareness about the challenges to their survival.
- Assisting in the development of legislation and policy that will ensure the conservation of invertebrates.
- Developing and disseminating knowledge about how to conserve invertebrates.
- Encouraging and supporting invertebrate conservation initiatives by other organisations in the UK, Europe and worldwide.
- Undertaking practical conservation projects that will contribute to achieving their aim.



A nationwide map of the most important b-lines has already been created by Buglife. A small portion is shown below left.

It can be no surprise to many of us, that the Severn Vale and the Stroud Valleys feature on this map. Insects populations will generally follow areas where flowering plants are already in greater abundance. These tend to be more lowland areas along river vale and river valley.

Insects will also follow landscape features such as rivers and hedgerows. They will follow the Canal and its neighbour, the River Frome. These are lined with a range of flowering plants, shrubs and trees.



*Large stands of plants like Hemp Agrimony are common along the canal. These are a magnet for a wide range of insects, particularly hoverflies.*



*Hoverfly: Helophilus pendulus on canalside near Fromebridge Mill*



*Painted Lady on Canal towpath near Newtown Lock*

While Bug Life has identified these B-lines, the project is seeking to encourage other organisations (councils, conservation bodies, community groups) to build on this. To plant new areas of wildflowers and link to those already existing.

This can reap real benefits for wildlife and people. Take the wildflower meadow at Capels Mill on Phase 1A. It has been in place now for a number of years and attracts a wide variety of insect pollinators. It is also enjoyed by those that spend time at the site and those passing through on the canal towpath.



*Clouded Yellow butterfly at the wildflower meadow at Capels Mill*



# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

## Theme 3: Biodiversity

### Habitat restoration

We could have chosen any number of different words/terms for this theme, for we have now reached a point in where one can no longer talk about biodiversity, without addressing the critically serious issues that now threaten our environment - the loss of habitats and decline in wildlife, the breakdown of ecosystems that undermine our own existence.

If you accept this, then you can appreciate the importance of waterways as vital ecosystems.

The connectivity of the canal/river corridor to other wildlife habitats has a huge influence on what species will use the corridor and extend their ranges along the corridor. In its existing state, a number of very important and scarce or rare species are benefiting from the habitats it provides and as consequence moving along the corridor close to more urban settlements. There will be destruction and damage to some of these habitats as a consequence of the restoration. Some will naturally regenerate during the years that follow, but a newly dug and dredged canal can look pretty barren for a while.

Vital therefore that there is some form of ecological off-setting as part of the restoration project through the creation of new wildlife habitats and the enhancement of existing. This is being carried out by Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust.

The loss of existing habitats and the affect on wildlife will be of concern to many people, particularly because the River Frome and the canal share the same channel in places.

There will be an important story to be told in respect of this and how the habitat creation scheme will off set this. Towpath users and other visitors will need to know :

- What is planned
- What are the aims and projected outcomes
- What species are present, will remain, which new ones can be attracted

This information should be early on in the restoration process, so some temporary interpretation would help to convey these really important messages.

It is important that the wildlife interpretation is specific to the canal and the various locations along it, not just generic. Even more so on this project due to recent surveys that have identified the presence of key species along stretches of the Stroudwater Navigation west of Stonehouse. These include:

Water Vole  
Scarce Chaser  
Emperor dragonfly  
Hairy Dragonfly (*Brachyton pretense*)  
Greater Horseshoe Bat  
Lesser Horseshoe Bat

Both bat species use some of the old WW2 pill boxes.

The main areas identified for habitat creation by Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust are directly to the west of the A38 roundabout and close to Fromebridge Mill on land between the canal and the River Frome. Here the intention is to provide water meadows and scrapes to attract wetland bird species such as Curlew, Snipe and Sandpiper.

East of the A38 roundabout, south of the canal and north of the River Frome is another area for which GWT have provided plans for new habitat creation.

In addition to the creation of water based habitats, the trust is also working to restore and improve an Pocket's Orchard, north of the canal opposite the proposed habitat creation area, west of Fromebridge. GWT have been coordinating work by volunteers here and at other sites along the canal. Adjacent to the orchard is a field rich in plant species.

<https://www.gloucestershirewildlifetrust.co.uk/blog/peter-savage/cotswold-canals-connected-environmental-volunteering-stroudwater-canal>





# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

## Theme3: Biodiversity

### Species

Evidence of the importance of the canal corridor for wildlife is shown by the range of species seen along it. These sightings cover Phase 1B and 1A (riverside vegetation, towpath and close to towpath)

Water Rail  
Large red damselfly  
Migrant hawk (dragonfly)  
Male common Darter (dragonfly)  
Broad bodied chaser m& f (dragonfly)  
Blue tailed damselfly  
Common Blue damselfly  
Comma butterfly  
Marbled white  
Cabbage white  
Meadow brown  
Small brown  
Coot with young in nest  
Moorhen with young in nest  
Mute Swan  
Male Kingfisher  
Grey wagtail  
Pied wagtail  
Chiffchaff  
Willow warbler  
Grey heron  
Tortoiseshell  
Red admiral  
Peacock  
Female Emperor Dragonfly  
Mal Emperor Dragonfly  
Mallard  
Swift  
House martin  
Swallow  
Small skipper  
Wren  
Oarsman  
Sedge warbler  
Little Egret  
Terrapin (yellow bellied slider).

Red eyed damselfly  
White legged damselfly (?)  
Male and female beautiful Demoiselle.  
Brown hawk  
Ringlet  
Holly blue  
Painted lady  
Cabbage white  
Gatekeeper  
6 spot Burnett  
Ruddy darter  
Banded Demoiselle  
Blue-tailed damselfly  
Juvenile pied wagtail  
Juvenile Robin  
Juvenile Whitethroat  
Cetti's warbler 1 seen poss up to 3 heard with PS GWT.  
Mallard  
Ringlet  
Juvenile pied wagtail  
Juvenile Robin  
Juvenile Whitethroat  
Coot  
Young grass snake  
Ermine moth caterpillar  
Elephant hawkmoth caterpillar  
Perch  
Roach  
Pike  
Drone Fly (hoverfly)  
Helophilus pedulus (hoverfly)  
Volucella plucens (hoverfly)  
Empiis Tessallata (predatory fly)  
Long-winged conehead (cricket)  
Short-winged conehead  
Roesel's Bush-cricket  
Alder Fly  
Clouded Yellow  
Dipper  
Kingfisher  
Black Dancer caddis fly  
Painted Lady  
Otter





# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

## Theme 4: Stop Line Green/World War II

This theme has already been covered to some extent at Bonds Mill gatehouse and on an interpretation panel opposite the gatehouse.

Bond's Mill gatehouse is the most striking and unique of sixteen Second World War pillboxes that were built along the Stroudwater Navigation.

Built in 1940, the Gatehouse was part of a nationwide network of linear defences to prepare for a German land and air attack of Britain from the south east. It was one of around 370 pillboxes planned or built as part of the Stop-line Green.



The Stop-line Green was constructed to protect Bristol and the Port of Avonmouth from an attack. It ran for approximately 90 miles and in addition to the pillboxes, included 18 miles of anti-tank ditch and over 250 road blocks. Wherever possible it followed existing land features such as rivers, hill ridges and canals.



The map above shows the concentration of pillbox sites on the western section of the Stroudwater Navigation. Ten of these remain and six have been demolished.

There is really good information on these pillboxes in a document written by the Gloucestershire Society of Industrial Archaeology for the Cotswold Canals Restoration in 2007.

*'This report has been produced by volunteers from the Gloucestershire Society for Industrial Archaeology.*

*The report reviews the WWII pillboxes situated along the Stroudwater Canal, examining thereasons and purpose for their construction and locations as part of the overall defence strategyof the period.*

*The design and construction of each pillbox is individually reviewed and illustrated,identifying particular features of interest.*

*The historical significance of the pillboxes at local level and as part of our national militaryheritage is discussed and considered in relation to their long term conservation as part of theproposals for the restoration of the Stroudwater Canal!'*



Location	Upper Framilode	Notes
Grid Reference	SO 7523 1009	Situated on north bank of the River Frome near Framilode Mill. The pillbox faces back towards Saul, rather than away from Bristol. Possibly an error by the builders at the time of construction. The entrance is blocked; however the interior appears in good order. Constructed with prefabricated concrete shuttering panels with a brick protective porch.



Location	South of canal near A38 Fromebridge Mill entrance road	Notes
Grid Reference	SO 7721 0748	
Gen Description	Pillbox	
County	Gloucestershire	
Parish	Whitminster	
Build Date	Summer 1940	
Type	FW3/24 Shellproof	
Materials	Prefabricated panels with concrete infill	
Direction	Faces North	
Condition	Fair	
Access	No access	
Date Visited	Nov/Dec 2006	
Visited by	A & S Strickland	
SMR Ref.	14097	
NMR Ref.	1422131	



Location	Bond's Mill road bridge	Notes
Grid Reference	SO 7933 0527	Adjacent to Bond's Mill Bridge
Gen Description	Pillbox	Octagonal in shape, 2 storey pillbox. Approx Diameter 4 metres. Lower section of concrete and upper of brick with roof parapet. Some original embrasures (with concrete lintels) remain in situ. Signs that entrance had a protective blast porch, now removed. The roof parapet is thought to have been used for an AA gun position. Currently contains the controls for the hydraulic raising mechanism for the GRP bridge. External staircase to 1 <sup>st</sup> floor.
County	Gloucestershire	
Parish	Stonehouse	
Build Date	1939/1940	
Type	Special	
Materials	Concrete and brick	
Direction	All Round Vision	
Condition	Good.	
Access	From Towpath	
Date Visited	Nov/Dec 2006	
Visited by	A & S Strickland D. Viner T and J Peters	
SMR Ref.	6820	
NMR Ref.	1422134/1246357	



# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

## Theme 5: What's in a name?

We are all so dependent on names to guide us through our daily lives. Place names, road names, rivers, buildings, etc, etc. We may often forget the origins of those names and what they say about the place or building we are in.

We aim to rationalise the interpretation for a number of canal structures and architecture, by bringing them together under this theme. This covers most of the locks and bridges along a section of canal between Stonehouse and Saul, where the name has a story behind it. Unless it is relevant to the name, the information will not go into technical details relating to the structure.

Suggested structures:

- Walk Bridge
- Stonepits Bridge
- Occupation Bridge
- Newtown Lock
- Pike Bridge
- Pike Lock
- Blunder Lock
- Chipmans Platt
- John Robinson Lock
- Roving Bridge

Just this list of names provokes curiosity as to the origin of 'Stonepits' or 'Pike' or 'Chipmans Platt' or 'Blunder' or 'Occupation'. Where is 'Newtown'? I have lived in Stroud for 26 years and didn't know where Newtown is/was. I do now.

Initial research points to a variety of stories relating to individuals, to local industry, to the original construction.

We recognise that some existing structures will be replaced by new ones, so it may be important to record what the current ones look/looked like.

### Blunder Lock

In late 1777, during construction of the canal, the number of locks and the rise of each was left to the resident engineer, Edmund Lingard. He planned three locks above Pike Bridge, Eastington. Relations between Lingard and the Canal Company deteriorated seriously that autumn and he was dismissed. When his replacement took over the work, he decided that only two locks were necessary. He soon discovered that Lower Nassfield Lock was already being excavated, and at the wrong level, thus maintaining the need for three locks! While it is possible that this error was accidental, it seems likely that Lingard had decided to teach his employers a lesson. Once news of the costly error became common knowledge, it caused great hilarity among the navies and contractors. The lock was soon dubbed "Blunder Lock", a name which was eventually accepted by the Company.

### Chipmans Platt

The hamlet of Chipman's Platt is close to the A419 and the Spring Hill roundabout but the dwellings are separated from these roads by an area of pasture. The canal runs along the southern border. The hamlet includes William Morris House – a thriving Camphill Community.



### Newtown Lock

Newtown is located on western boundary of Stonehouse boundary. It is a small canal and roadside group of late 18th and 19th century brick cottages; one is the New Inn, which had opened by 1839. The hamlet is easily missed today among the modern units of Oldends Industrial Estate. The towpath guide by Handford and Viner, page 69, says that Newtown Lock has been incorrectly named because of its nearness to

Newtown, but this was never the name given by its users, and seems to be a 19th century mistake: 'today it is commonly referred to by its correct name of Nassfield Lock'?

These are just three examples and as it happens are all in the Eastington section of the Stroudwater.

### Engaging communities and canal users

Establishing the names of the structures as the entry point to the on site interpretation, can create the sense of a mystery trail between them. This might lend itself to some form of quiz for canal users or local schools.

### WHAT'S IN A NAME MYSTERY TRAIL

Pike Bridge and Pike Lock are named after:

1. *The predatory fish of the same name*
2. *A turnpike House beside the road built in 1803*
3. *A long sharp stick used in the past as a weapon by soldiers on foot.*

This is Stonepits Bridge. A new bridge built on the site of an older one.



*The bridge was so named because .....*

In respect of bridges, this theme crosses over with the following theme 'Water under a bridge' such that the bridges listed on this page could sit within both themes.



# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

## Theme 6: Water under the bridge

### Ocean (Jubilee) Railway Bridge

The original bridge was built in 1842-43 to carry the Bristol to Gloucester railway line over the canal.



*The original bridge on the Ocean side of the towpath (looking west)*

When the canal was closed, it was replaced in 1968 by an embankment. Two circular 'pipes' allowed water and pedestrians to pass through



*The two tunnels for water and towpath pedestrians (looking east)*

Building a new bridge that carries a busy main line railway is a major piece of engineering with some demanding logistics, both in terms of planning and construction. The design of the bridge, its installation, the minimising of disruption to rail services and local communities.

How this was achieved is a story worth telling. The accolades go to Network Rail for this and thankfully they have recorded the whole process from beginning to end in a series of stunning pictures



The new bridge was officially opened on 2022 with a ribbon cutting ceremony in time for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Weekend.



# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

## Theme 6: Water under the bridge

### Westfield Bridge and lock

For as long as many can remember, Westfield Bridge has stood part-submerged in the middle of a field. It is not something you see everyday. This is a story in itself. The bridge earned the name ‘The Bridge to Nowhere’.



The Phase 1B restoration will restore the route of the original canal beneath the bridge on route towards the motorway.

Westfield Lock (now John Robinson Lock), was built in 1777, the first in a flight of five locks that carries the Stroudwater Canal up the hill past the village of Eastington. A walkway was originally attached to the lower gates for pedestrians using an ancient footpath that linked the hamlet of Westend and the parish church.



Westfield Lock and Bridge in the 1960s

The story as to how a bridge remained land-locked is the story of the lady who owned the land on which it stood. Having opposed successfully its demolition as part of the M5 motorway construction scheme (which saw the line of the canal restored to agricultural land), she also stood on the bridge when a demolition man arrived to blow both lock and bridge up. Her efforts saved the bridge from demolition.

### Westfield Paddock

Adjoining Westfield Bridge, there was a narrow strip of land 150 yards long that was owned by the Stroudwater Company. Named Lime Kiln Piece in 1781, it was evidently the site of the Company’s kiln that helped to produce the lime mortar used in building and maintaining the locks and bridges. In 1841, the Committee ordered the kiln to be moved to the nearby maintenance yard, and by the 1880s the Company was buying in cement.

Later the paddock became a centre for bathing following a long running campaign of work to reduce the amount of sewage that leaked into the canal. In 1897, a dressing shelter was set up in the paddock for the Eastington Bathing Club, and boys were still learning to swim in and around the lock in the 1930s.

At the start of the Second World War, a pillbox was built beside Westfield Bridge as part of a line of structures along the canal intended to defend Bristol. One day a cow got inside, and the farmer had great difficulty

getting it out. The pillbox was cleared away after the war, but some remains of the base can still be seen. There was another pillbox further north where the motorway is now.

### Restoration

Late in 2023 work began on excavating the land around the bridge. Those excavating knew that beneath the soil, lay the remnants of the lock which stood immediately east of the bridge.





# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

## Theme 6: Water under the bridge

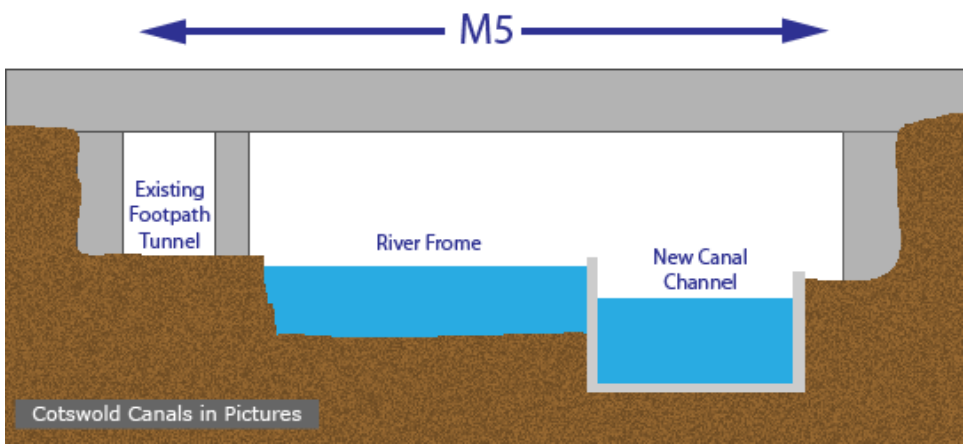
### The M5 Motorway

To prevent the huge expense and disruption of constructing a purpose-built canal bridge beneath the M5, the preferred solution here is to use the existing River Frome underpass.

A new concrete canal channel will be added alongside the river. The level of the canal would be lower than the normal river level to achieve the required headroom. A new lock is required east of the M5 near John Robinson Lock to lower the level of the canal to provide sufficient headroom through the existing River Frome M5 underpass.



The River Frome where it passes beneath the M5 motorway



River Frome passing beneath the M5, will be joined by a new canal route, engineered as above. The existing tunnel footpath tunnel will remain



### The A38 roundabout

In 2019, when the previous interpretation plan was written, the proposals for the routing of the canal straight through the roundabout on the A38 near Fromebridge Mill, existed only as a plan accompanied by some digital visualisations.

Now, after the construction of two new bridges, there is a stretch of water lying within the roundabout. A major junction with a constant traffic flow, this was a logistical challenge to ensure that vehicles were able to negotiate the roundabout safely and without major inconvenience. A new lock will be built immediately to the east of the roundabout.





# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

## Theme 6: Water under the bridge

The Jubilee Bridge, M5 underpass and the A38 bridges have a significant impact on the immediate vicinity and its will not take long for people to forget what it looked like before.

The **before/after** comparison could be an interpretation theme in its own right. This can relate to bridges, locks and other structures. This might be explored as a supplementary piece of interpretation or available in some form.

‘Water under a bridge’ does have the additional meaning in respect of the passing of time and this may be sufficient to look at the before and after scenarios.

In addition to the more major bridge engineering projects described, other existing bridges will need to be replaced/upgraded.

This theme can also accomodate these recording the passing of time, the changes in the canal, the years of neglect and now the years of postive change and the buidling of replacement bridges to bring new life to the waters and surrounds.

New bridges are needed at the western end of the project close to Saul Junction. Walk Bridge ( road bridge) on Whitminster Lane and Whitminster Bridge (pedestrian) a short distance away from Walk Bridge.



*Walk Bridge carries the Whitminster Road over the canal*

Walk Bridge is a low-level road bridge is the first major obstruction when travelling east from Saul Junction. It will be replaced with a high-level fixed bridge, probably in 2024 or 2025.



*Whitminster Bridge*

Whitminster Bridge is adjacent to Whitminster Lock this was once a farm access swing bridge, which is no longer operational. A Public Right of Way crosses the canal here. This will be replaced with a manually operated lift bridge similar in design to Lodgmore Bridge in Stroud, except it will have two overhead balance arms, not one.



*The new Whitminster Bridge will be very similar to the new one at Lodgmore (above)*

This design of bridge will also be used as a replacement at Bond's Mill.



*Bond's Mill Bridge*

This theme lends itself to the idea of before and after comparisons. The construction of a new bridge will likely have a greater visaul impact than the repair of a lock for instance. It may also have an impact greater than the structure of the bridge itself, affecting its surrounds and affecting the view more significantly.

What existed before can be easily forgotten in a short space of time. We should bear this in mind. That what was in place five years ago and has now gone has quickly become history. Looking at the interpretation in In 10 years time, 15 years will have elapsed.



# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

## Theme 7: Saul Junction and westwards to the Severn

The Cotswold Canals restoration has always intended to restore the canals from Lechlade to Saul, connecting the Stroudwater Navigation with the River Severn via the Gloucester/Sharpness Canal.

Historically the Stroudwater went all the way to the Severn, continuing westwards from Saul to join the Severn at Upper Framilode. There are no plans to restore this 1.3km section.

Having identified Saul as one of the main gateways to the Stroudwater, it would seem logical to provide some information on this at Saul.

The web site - 'Cotswolds Canals in Pictures' has this to say about this section of canal:

'The length of canal between Saul Junction & Upper Framilode whilst being a pleasant walk, doesn't have many points of interest. Some of the canal has been infilled, most notably nearest to Saul Junction. There are no plans to restore this section of canal, as boat traffic would use the Gloucester and Sharpness Canal to access the River Severn.'

This may be so, but to ignore this short section is to not fully tell the story of the canal.

Vessels that carried raw materials along the canals to the mills and businesses along the Stroud Valleys, first had to negotiate the tricky waters of the River Severn. The river has a huge tidal range, fierce currents, rapid changes in flow and many sand banks.

Their access to the Stroudwater was a lock and basin at Framilode. Entering and leaving the lock would not always have been easy. Once through the basin the trows entered the Stroudwater Navigation through a swing bridge.



*A fleet of Severn Trows on the River Severn*



*Framilode Lock River and basin levels at same levels.*

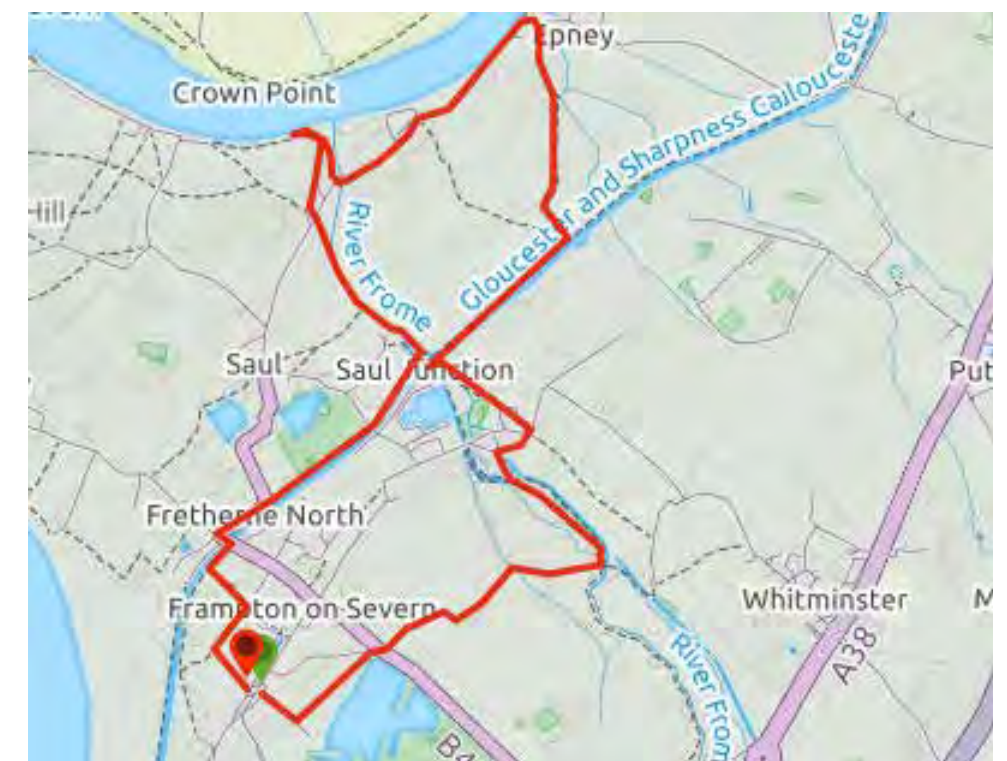


*Framilode Lock as it looks today*

Today the lock has been infilled and is almost lost beneath silt and vegetation. The basin lies beneath the gardens of local residents.



There is a walking route between Saul and Framilode and as the map below illustrates, this can be part of a circular route. A restored canal east of Saul Junction, would make the Stroudwater and the Gloucester-Sharpness canals main features of the full figure of eight walk shown.



This theme would look at the story of the trows - where they came from, where they were going, at the very beginning and at the very end of their journeys along the Cotswold Canals. The content can be widened to consider where and when Saul Junction itself fitted into the scheme of things.



# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

## Theme 7: Saul Junction and westwards to the Severn

The busy little hub of Saul Junction with its moorings, marina, cafe, heritage centre and boatyard, did not exist before the construction of the Gloucester-Sharpness Canal

The G&S Canal opened in 1827 — at 86ft 6in wide and 18ft deep, taking craft of 600 tons (with maximum dimensions 190ft long and 29ft wide), it was the biggest canal in England, a true ship canal.

The canal's path cut straight through the existing Stroudwater. Therefore a junction was needed.

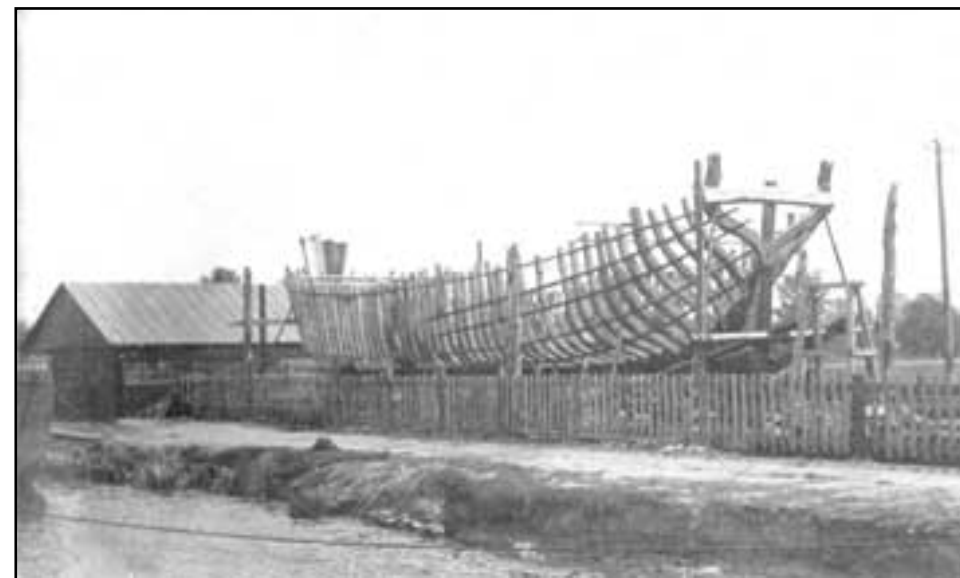
To form the Junction, the level of the Stroudwater Canal had to be raised about four feet locally to suit the level of the Gloucester Canal, and this required the construction of a new lock. A house was built at the for the official who collected tolls from vessels passing from one canal to the other and who opened the foot-bridge over the Gloucester Canal.



This old picture of Saul Junction (early 1900's), shows the Junction Lock (crossed by the towpath bridge) on the left, the footbridge across the Gloucester & Sharpness Canal in the centre and the Junction House on the right.



This current view shows the lock (now derelict) on the left and a more modern footbridge over the Gloucester & Sharpness Canal.



In the 19th century, this site was a centre for building and repairing barges and small sailing vessels, and the shed was the base for the Canal Company craftsmen who made and maintained the wooden canal bridges and the lock and dock gates.



Now a single company occupy the whole site, including the shed which replaced the old one following a fire. The work is now all concerned with building and repairing pleasure craft.

Because of the size of the Gloucester-Sharpness Canal here, it's easy to associate everything here with that canal, forgetting that the reason it is all here, is because the Stroudwater Navigation existed here first. A number of visitors to Saul wander along the short section of the Stroudwater towards Walk Bridge and then turn around. For many it must be just a short finger of the G&S, that provides access to the marina.

Once Walk Bridge is replaced and the canal restored east of the bridge, people will see the canal continuing beyond and we should encourage them to explore further.



# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

## Theme 8: The dig

### The Romans in Stonehouse and Eastington

The re-routing of the canal across the missing mile has created further interest due to the potential for archaeological discoveries, particularly in relation to Roman settlement and activity in the immediate area.

Several Roman settlements and villas have been identified within 10km of the canal at Eastington.

These include the late Iron Age settlement and Roman villa of Frocester (100 BC–AD500), a farm at the M5 motorway, Eastington (AD 100-400), a settlement and iron production site at Fox's Field, Ebley (AD 1-400) and a farm and iron production site at Stonehouse Wharf (AD 250-400) (data from the Rural Settlement of Roman Britain database 2016). In addition, an evaluation at Bristol Road, Stonehouse, found 1st-2nd century AD ditches (which formed part of an enclosure) and a possible trackway.

It is likely that the manors of Alkerton (Eastington) and Stonehouse were in existence during the early medieval period (AD 410-1066), prior to the Domesday survey of 1086. Both were mentioned in the Domesday book, the manor of Eastington having 13 households and Stonehouse having 34.

In relation to the missing mile, archaeological explorations were carried out as part of the planning submission by Ecotricity for their proposed Eco Park and football stadium adjacent to the M5 at Junction 13.

Ten skeletons and a host of artefacts dating back to Roman times were uncovered at the site. Roman coins, pottery and jewellery were also found.



South of the A419, more recent excavations as part of the canal restoration project have also uncovered evidence from Roman times. No skeletons, but a number of small artefacts. These are the excavations close to the A38 roundabout near Fromebridge Mill, at the western end of the missing mile.



The excavation was headed by Archaeology England/Wales and also involved Cotswold Canals Trust volunteers and members of the Cotswold Canals Connected team.

Professor Mark Horton was also on hand to bring his experience to the dig:

*"It's been really fascinating, because we knew there was quite a lot of Roman activity on the other side of the road [north of the A419] but nobody knew quite how far it was going to extend. What's coming out is a mass of ditches, a building – all of it early Roman. We've got early Samian pottery here, and this whole area of the Severn valley is crammed with Roman occupation...."*

*....The A38 is a Roman road, so we would expect stuff close to it, but the sheer concentration of material here is fascinating."*

Artefacts that were discovered by volunteers were proudly displayed on the day, ranging from relatively crude locally produced kitchenware through to Samian ware imported from Gaul, an area of France under Roman control.

*"We've found pottery from Gaul and Dorset (the darker burnished ware), just a tiny fraction of the finds, but it proves there was a massive amount of international trading even then – this is close to the Severn and the River Frome was navigable,"*

Dr Spencer-Phillips (volunteer)

Many of the finds represent domestic rubbish from Romano British people living at the site and will help understand how they lived, including what they ate, farming practices, potential local industries and trade links.





# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

## Theme 9: The heyday of the canal: people and heritage

This theme seeks to bring to life the everyday comings and goings along the canal during its heyday. The people that worked on it, the goods and the trade carried east/west/east across the area. The industry it served, the communities along its length and how it was administered.

It is an opportunity to link with and utilise the resources developed by SNAC, including those contained in the Archive.

People should be at the heart of this. The owners of the trows, their crews, the company officers maintaining the canals, the toll collectors, the canal engineers, etc.

It might be useful as with the previous '*what's in a name*' and '*water under the bridge*' themes, to find a common thread to this theme. We will not be able to present every facet of the heritage of the canals that is contained in the the Stroudwater History web site and archive.

If it's to be about people, then how about:  
**'Who's in the picture?'**

There are a number of original photographic images showing some of those individuals and groups engaged in work along the canal. This can be the starting point.

### Who's in the picture?



**John White.** Lock keeper at Pike Lock. Lock keepers lived in Company houses at Framilode, Eastington, Ryeford and Dudbridge and looked

after specific lengths of the canal, managing water levels and ensuring that no bye-laws were broken. Their responsibilities are similar to those of volunteer today's length persons who look after particular sections.

### Who's in the picture?



The name of **Frank E Cookley** is just readable on the side of the narrowboat he owned, was a coal merchant based at Framilode during the early 1900s. Coal was one of the main goods carried along the canal, particularly when the textile mills became steam powered.

### Who's in the picture?



**The Chippenham (Chipmans) Platt maintenance crew.**

Although seen here working on Ryeford Double Lock, the crew was based at Chippenhams (Chipmans) Platt. Today the Cotswold Canals Trust's Western works depot stands just a few metres from Chipmans Platt. Here CCT workers and volunteers work to repair and maintain parts of the 'infrastructure.

### Who's in the picture?



**The official** who opened the bridges and recorded traffic passing from one canal to the other. He also collected tolls on vessels.

We might extend this theme to introduce those working on the canal in the present day and as part of the restoration project. Not by name but as group of people. Volunteers widening and resurfacing the towpath near Roving Bridge.





# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

## Theme 10: Being outdoors (health and well-being)

### 'It's good for you'

It's a fact! Being out of doors closer to nature is good for you. We have all known it for a long time. Now doctors, GPs and other health practitioners are telling us so.

If we are to encourage more people from all walks of life to enjoy the outdoor experience and in particular a walk or run or cycle along the canal towpath or some form of activity on the water, we must promote the value of these things to the public.

The majority of towpath users will be walkers to varying degrees. We take walking for granted but it has an intrinsic health and well-being value in putting one foot in front of the other.

Allowing people to walk on their own terms, at their own pace, in their own space, with their own thoughts. Walking for walking's sake can provide mindfulness- clearing minds and creating headspace, encouraging positive thoughts, memories and creative thinking, as well as the physical benefits of boosting the heart rate and general bodily fitness.

### 'I can only meditate when I am walking'

*Jean-Jacques Rousseau - Confessions*

### '...walking is not the action by which one arrives at knowledge, it is itself the means of knowing'

*Robert MacFarlane - The Old Ways*

Countless thinkers and creative people have been avid walkers – Socrates, Plato, Aristotle. Darwin walked what he called his “thinking path” twice daily. Dickens walked all over London, three or four hours at a time. Beethoven... Tchaikovsky... Lin-Manuel Miranda – the Hamilton lyrics were written during Sunday walks with his dog”

Taking a walk in the fresh air is a known way of clearing the head, unscrambling some of the clutter and pressures of daily life.



Can we devise some means - a scheme that runs the entire length of the canal, that invites towpath users to recognise the health and well being benefits of walking for walking's sake, of being out in the fresh air with nature around them. While walking is good, we can also encourage people to slow down, relax, take their time, take in what's around them.

The idea of 'the journey' is one of life's greatest ideas. That we are all on a journey every day of our lives. It is the basis of countless numbers of writings, stories, tales, movies, etc.

Every journey has milestones (the T & S Canal had milestones sited along its entire length) or stepping stones. In our own lives, these stepping stones take us closer to happiness, success, rewards. Of course, what may be a small step for some is a giant step for others. A step that can only take with support from people around them. This maybe an idea we can develop in some form, re equity of access to outdoor experiences.

GOALS  
HUMOUR  
FOCUS  
PASSION  
HAPPINESS  
FULFILMENT  
PRAISE  
ACHIEVEMENT

An important part of engaging people in this sense of well-being will be nurturing a feeling of personal safety and comfort. By this we mean having the information around them that makes them feel secure, tells them where they are, etc. This refers back to the earlier section on 'housekeeping'

The scheme may also encourage users to slow down, to look and observe, to photograph, to share their thoughts and images with others. This can link to some of the community engagement events and activities that can promote and nurture mindfulness for those individuals and groups that take part.

However there are many people who use the towpath and do not wish to be engaged by others at events, workshops, etc. They want to experience and enjoy what it has to offer on their own terms at their own pace. That is not to say they consciously recognise the health and well being benefits of being 'out and about' in nature.

Improving health and well-being is crucial to any sense of equity of access. While the canal towpath offers a flat, level walking surface for a greater number of people, there are other groups and communities for whom this will be difficult if not impossible due to a lack of physical mobility.

One such community are those catered for by Boatmobility. This is covered later in the document, but is worth raising here in respect of recognising the inherent value of this approach to any interpretation provided for Boatmobility.

Accessing the towpath at one of its main gateways will be easier with parking close by. Within minutes you can be walking or sat beside one of the quieter stretches of canal.

There are opportunities here to work with GP and other health professionals in the realm of social prescribing, in finding means by which we can engage and empower people to do this.



# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

## Temporary interpretation (keeping people informed)

1. Notice boards

2. Works notices





# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

## Temporary interpretation and information

### ‘Temporary’

The permanent interpretative installations will be based on themes that are not time sensitive, intended to be in place for a minimum of 10 years.

We will use the term ‘temporary’ here, to describe the conveyance of any information that is in place for a limited period only, or where the facility exists to remove or replace the information easily.

There are many facets to the restoration, a large number of organisations directly involved in delivering it. There are a variety of users/stakeholders in the canal and its restoration- local communities, councils, charities, interest groups, etc. As a consequence there is a reliance on a good communication system that can inform, engage, enlist, empower a wide range of people.

In addition, as the restoration proceeds, the situation on the ground will be constantly evolving.

### Notice boards

The provision of a number of notice boards was included in the planning stage of the project coordinated by CSCIC. A number were ordered, of which all but one have been installed at locations along Phase 1B.

Both in terms of the backing materials used on these and the graphic approach, there is much to improve.

These are notice boards to provide temporary/ongoing information to canal users. Some contain historic information about the sites where they stand, maybe because at present there is nowhere else to display this information.

This is something the interpretation plan will look at, rationalising the visual appearance of the information to provide quick and easy access to a range of content.





# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

## Temporary interpretation and information

The visuals shown here seek to take away the clutter of the existing displays, to provide clear, concise and succinct information on the many facets of the project and present it in a way that is more accessible to a wider range of people, ie following legibility guidelines in terms of a colour palette, font style and size.

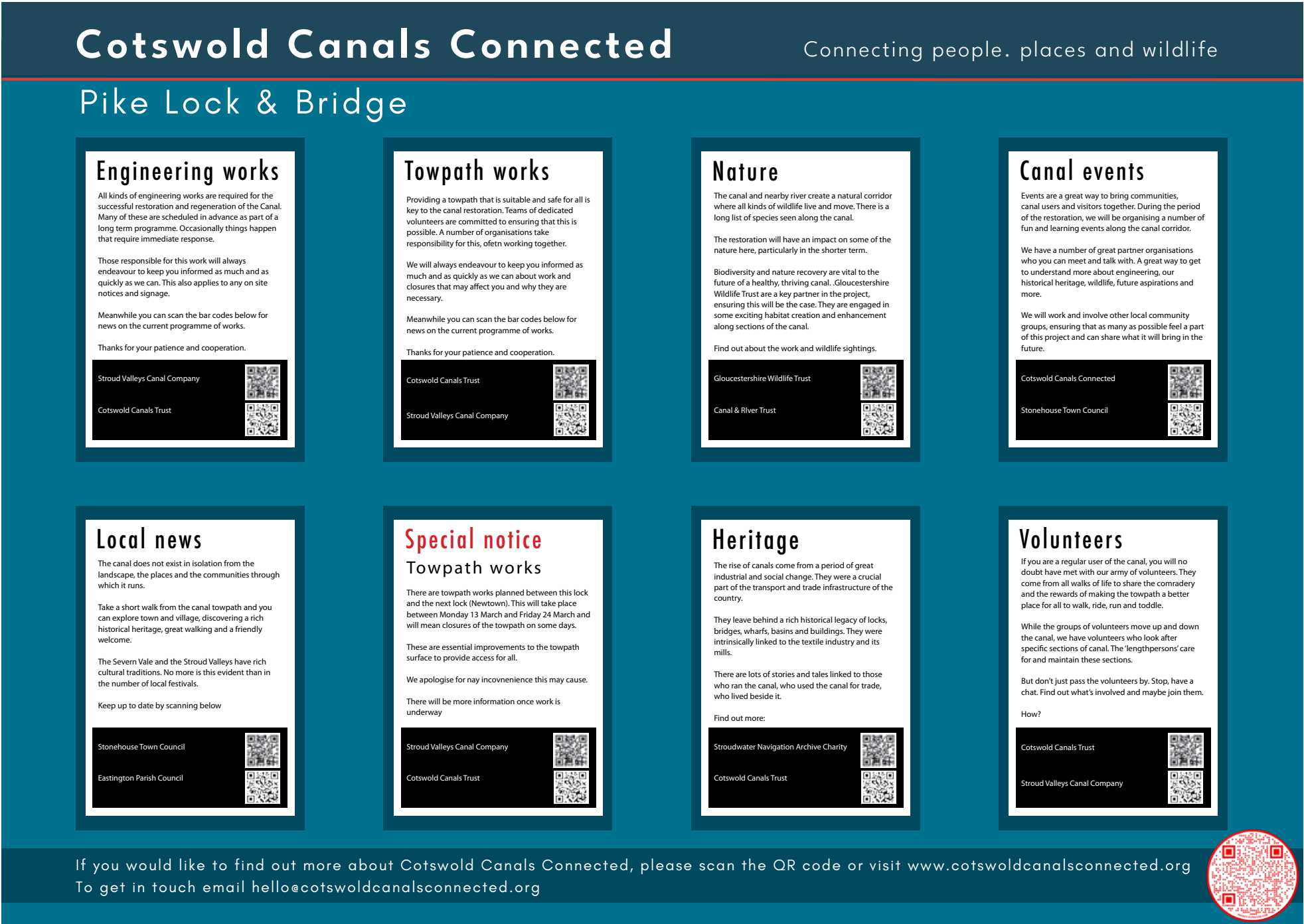
It also seeks to put in place a more practical system that does not require someone needing to constantly change the information.

The design links to the branding proposals contained elsewhere in this document.



Above is the blank printed backing board on to which sheets cotaining information are pinned. The backing board might be a double thickness correx, although we will look at more sustainable materials. Correx is good for drawing pins. Double thickness means the pin can be pushed in further.

There are eight pre-printed A4+ panels on which to pin A4 sheets of paper. Here we assume the paper is white, for ease of printing. We also suggest that the paper is a heavier gammage, ie 150gsm.





# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

## Temporary interpretation and information

The visuals on this page link to the established colour palette of Phase 1A. They meet established accessibility/visibility guidelines.

### Towpath works

Providing a towpath that is suitable and safe for all is key to the canal restoration. Teams of dedicated volunteers are committed to ensuring that this is possible. A number of organisations take responsibility for this, often working together.

We will always endeavour to keep you informed as much and as quickly as we can about work and closures that may affect you and why they are necessary.

Meanwhile you can scan the bar codes below for news on the current programme of works.

Thanks for your patience and cooperation.

Cotswold Canals Trust

Stroud Valleys Canal Company



## Cotswold Canals Connected

Connecting people, places and wildlife

### Pike Lock & Bridge

#### Engineering works

All kinds of engineering works are required for the successful restoration and regeneration of the Canal. Many of these are scheduled in advance as part of a long term programme. Occasionally things happen that require immediate response.



Those responsible for this work will always endeavour to keep you informed as much and as quickly as we can. This also applies to any on site notices and signage.

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Cotswold Canals Trust

Stroud Valleys Canal Company



#### Nature

The canal and nearby river create a natural corridor where all kinds of wildlife live and move. There is a long list of species seen along the canal.



The restoration will have an impact on some of the nature here, particularly in the shorter term.

Biodiversity and nature recovery are vital to the future of a healthy, thriving canal. Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust are a key partner in the project, ensuring this will be the case. They are engaged in some exciting habitat creation and enhancement along sections of the canal.

Find out about the work and wildlife sightings.

Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust

Canal & River Trust



#### Canal events



Events are a great way to bring communities, canal users and visitors together. During the period of the restoration, we will be organising a number of fun and learning events along the canal corridor.

We have a number of great partner organisations who you can meet and talk with. A great way to get to understand more about engineering, our historical heritage, wildlife, future aspirations and more.

We will work and involve other local community groups, ensuring that as many as possible feel a part of this project and can share what it will bring in the future.

Cotswold Canals Connected

Stonehouse Town Council



#### Local news

The canal does not exist in isolation from the landscape, the places and the communities through which it runs.

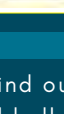

Take a short walk from the canal towpath and you can explore town and village, discovering a rich historical heritage, great walking and a friendly welcome.

The Severn Vale and the Stroud Valleys have rich cultural traditions. No more is this evident than in the number of local festivals.

Keep up to date by scanning below.

Stonehouse Town Council

Eastington Parish Council



#### Heritage

The rise of canals came from a period of great industrial and social change. They were a crucial part of the transport and trade infrastructure of the country.

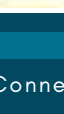

They leave behind a rich historical legacy of locks, bridges, wharfs, basins and buildings. They were intrinsically linked to the textile industry and its mills.

There are lots of stories and tales linked to those who ran the canal, who used the canal for trade, who lived beside it.

Find out more.

Stroudwater Navigation Archive Charity

Cotswold Canals Trust



#### Volunteers

If you are a regular user of the canal, you will no doubt have met with our army of volunteers. They come from all walks of life to share the camaraderie and the rewards of making the towpath a better place for all to walk, ride, run and toddle.

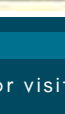

While the groups of volunteers move up and down the canal, we have volunteers who look after specific sections of canal. The 'lengthpersons' care for and maintain these sections.

But don't just pass the volunteers by. Stop, have a chat. Find out what's involved and maybe join them.

How?

Cotswold Canals Trust

Stroud Valleys Canal Company



#### Special notice

##### Towpath works

There are towpath works planned between this lock and the next lock (Newtown). This will take place between Monday 13 March and Friday 24 March and will mean closures of the towpath on some days.

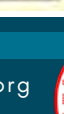

There are essential improvements to the towpath surface to provide access for all.

We apologise for any inconvenience this may cause.


There will be more information once work is underway.

Stroud Valleys Canal Company

Cotswold Canals Trust



If you would like to find out more about Cotswold Canals Connected, please scan the QR code or visit [www.cotswoldcanalsconnected.org](http://www.cotswoldcanalsconnected.org)  
To get in touch email [hello@cotswoldcanalsconnected.org](mailto:hello@cotswoldcanalsconnected.org)





# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

## Temporary interpretation and information

Brining visual and colour to the notices.  
Scanning the QR codes will take people to relevant organisations where the emphasis is on the subject portrayed.

### Volunteers



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A number of the partner organisations involved in the restoration have volunteer support

But don't just pass the volunteers by. Stop, have a chat. Find out what's involved and maybe join them.

How?



### Cotswold Canals Connected Pike Lock & Bridge

Connecting people. places and wildlife

#### Groundworks

All kinds of engineering works are required for the successful restoration and regeneration of the Canal. Many of these are scheduled in advance as part of a long term programme. Occasionally things happen that require immediate response.

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Thanks for your patience and cooperation.

#### Towpath works

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#### Volunteers

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A number of the partner organisations involved in the restoration have volunteer support

But don't just pass the volunteers by. Stop, have a chat. Find out what's involved and maybe join them.

How?

#### From the lengths persons

As well as an army of volunteers that work up and down the canal, specific sections of canal have dedicated volunteers devoted to looking after their 'length'.

We keep an eye on all aspects of the canal, in particular the towpath and its borders, maintaining them to ensure they are kept clean, tidy and safe for those using the towpath.

We can become quite attached to our length of canal and will be happy to chat to you should you come across us.

We are Hugh and Ann.

#### Local news and events

The canal does not exist in isolation from the landscape, the places and the communities through which it runs.

Take a short walk from the canal towpath and you can explore town and village, discovering a rich historical heritage, great walking and a friendly welcome.

The Severn Vale and the Stroud Valleys have rich cultural traditions. No more is this evident than in the number of local festivals.

Keep up to date by scanning below

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# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

## Temporary interpretation and information

### Works notices

While the notice borads can alert people to towpath work/closures in the vicinity, we also need site specific notices wher the work is taking place.

The design on the right provides a template for these. This example has already been used during February and March 2023 for works close to Fromebridge Mill.

It seeks to provide clear information and guidance in a friendly, approachable manner. Printed at A2, the smaller text shown is 24pt for legibility and equity of access.

Maps used will be simple and uncluttered so as to focus on the locations and diversioanry routes.

It can be tweaked in due course.

Cotswold Canals Connected

Connecting people, places & wildlife

A38 ROUNDABOUT - STONEPITTS BRIDGE

TOWPATH CLOSURE

WHAT

We are improving access through a muddy 'dip' in the towpath by building up the ground level and replacing the gate.

WHY


To make the towpath more accessible and enable future dredging and flood bank construction in this area. Measures are in place to minimise impact on ecology and livestock, including water voles, swans and cattle.

WHEN

The towpath will be closed intermittently from Monday 13 February 2023, for approximately three weeks. If the access is blocked then the path is currently closed.

ALTERNATIVE ROUTE

A suggested alternative route is shown below.




YOU ARE HERE

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PATIENCE AND UNDERSTANDING

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Get in touch at [hello@cotswoldcanalsconnected.org](mailto:hello@cotswoldcanalsconnected.org)



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# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

## Where is interpretation needed

1. Primary gateways
2. Pedestrian access
3. Natural resources
4. Built Heritage
5. Section plans/locations





# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

## Where is interpretation needed: main access points 1

### Main access points to canal

These are locations/sites where the greatest number of people are going to access the canal towpath on a daily basis.

A simple consideration; why spend time and financial resources on more isolated locations, where far fewer persons will see the installation and where the installations may impose on a more sensitive environment, when we can reliably reach more persons at locations where major construction and building has already taken place.

This does not mean we ignore other sites, when we consider the story or the message to be of significant enough importance.

#### Hydes Basin - cafe, moorings, canalside amenities

At this point in time, there is not a lot of detail about the building and the opportunities it presents for interpretation. It will be run by a private enterprise. But we should consider where and how we might provide interpretive resources for visitors.

Sitting between the M5 and the A38, it has the potential to draw in significant numbers of people, local and from further afield. It will provide amenities for boaters, etc. CCC will work with its owners to explore where and how interpretation can play a role.

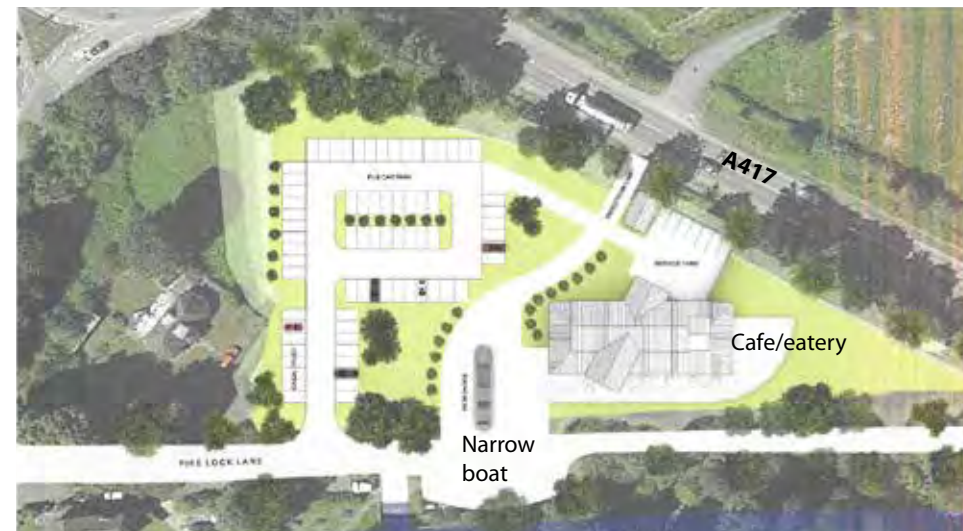


#### Land adjoining Oldbury Lodge, Pike Lock Lane, Eastington

This area is the focus of a planning application for some form of cafe/pub/eatery. At time of writing this plan, the current proposal was for a storage and exhibition facility for the Cotswolds Canals Trust enabled by a combined pub/restaurant with limited rooms for letting on two storeys.

CCT have previously shown their approval and see the site as place for interpretation and information. This may link directly to their other visitor centres at Saul Junction and Wallbridge in Stroud, in terms of branding, look and resources.

CCT have also proposed the re-location of the historic cast iron/riveted narrow boat Leviathan, from its current position on the slipway of the canal close by, to a position on dry land close to the new building. This is a piece of interpretation in its own right, but opportunities will exist to make it a more engaging piece of interpretation.



We have bundled in the access to the towpath at Blunder Lock and Pike Bridge with this, although from Pike Bridge one can access the towpath beside the Western CCT depot, travelling west through Chipmans Platt, past Dock Lock, John Robinson Lock and through Westfield Bridge towards the M5.

#### Fromebridge Mill

Currently direct access to the towpath is possible from the pavement on the A38 roundabout. Once the canal is linked up completely beneath the roundabout, walkers already on the towpath will not need to use this access point. They might exit the towpath here to go/return to Fromebridge Mill Public House.

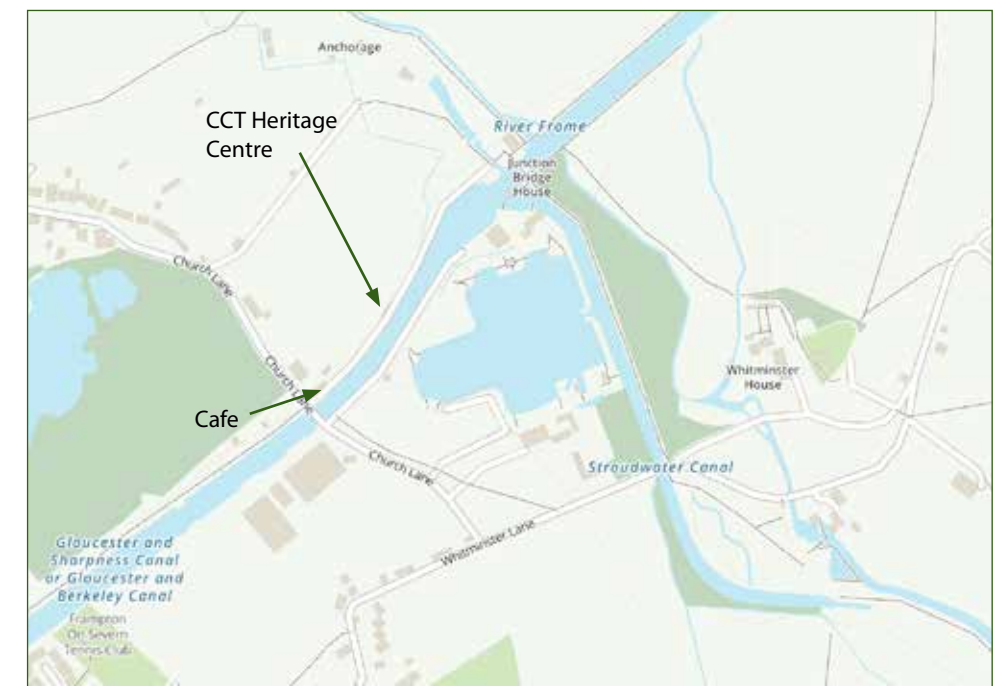
Conversely, visitors to the pub will have to walk up the lane from the pub to the roundabout to access the here. Then they can go east towards Saul or west towards the new hub at Hyde's Basin.

Information at Fromebridge Mill will need to convey these directions.



#### Saul Junction

With ample parking, the CCT Heritage Centre, cafe and large marina, this is a very busy hub for visitors, towpath walkers and boaters. People can already explore the route of the Stroudwater Navigation from here, but it will be an even better start and finish point to follow the restored towpath east towards Fromebridge Mill.





# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

## Where is interpretation needed: access points 2 and built heritage

### Access points - pedestrian

#### The Ocean

There is an existing interpretation panel at the Ocean designed and installed as part of the Phase 1A restoration scheme and as such, it follows the design template of all those along Phase 1A.



There is also an interpretation panel installed adjacent to the new Jubilee Railway Bridge. This is a one off relating to the construction of the Jubilee Railway Bridge. We will need to review this site and look at how interpretation can combine the historic content (above) with the work carried out on the bridge and present both in a consistent, permanent way.



The story of the railway bridge (in two previous forms) and the construction of the new Jubilee Bridge is a really important one, making this an important location.

#### Bond's Mill Bridge/gatehouse

There is existing interpretation at Bond's Mill. The gatehouse that stands on the northern banks of the canal has graphic displays about its role as World War II gun emplacement and the role of Bond's Mill as a shadow factory. This is also covered in lesser detail on a lectern panel across the bridge on the opposite bank.



The Ocean and Bonds Mill sites do not provide parking for access to the canal (see page 10 of this plan).

There are of course other locations along Phase 1B where access to the canal is and will be possible - west to east, these are **Roving Bridge** at the eastern end and **Walk Bridge** at the western end. Between the A38 and Saul, there are one or two footpaths that link to Whitminster and other hamlets in the area. Footfall at these locations is low in respect of direct access, although a significant number of people cross over Walk Bridge as they follow the route of the canal east of Saul Junction.

Whitminster Lock and Whitminster Bridge are close to Walk Bridge. The lock will be restored and both bridges replaced with new ones. Some form of interpretation will be needed for this. Where the interpretation is sited will be looked at.





# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

## Where is interpretation needed: resource 1 (habitat creation)

### Priority1: Habitat creation near Fromehall Mill (Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust)

This is the most significant and crucial wildlife scheme of the whole 1B project. The site itself will not be a major access point as with the other priority locations, although it is close to Fromebridge Mill. Once complete, the Hydes basin complex will also be close.

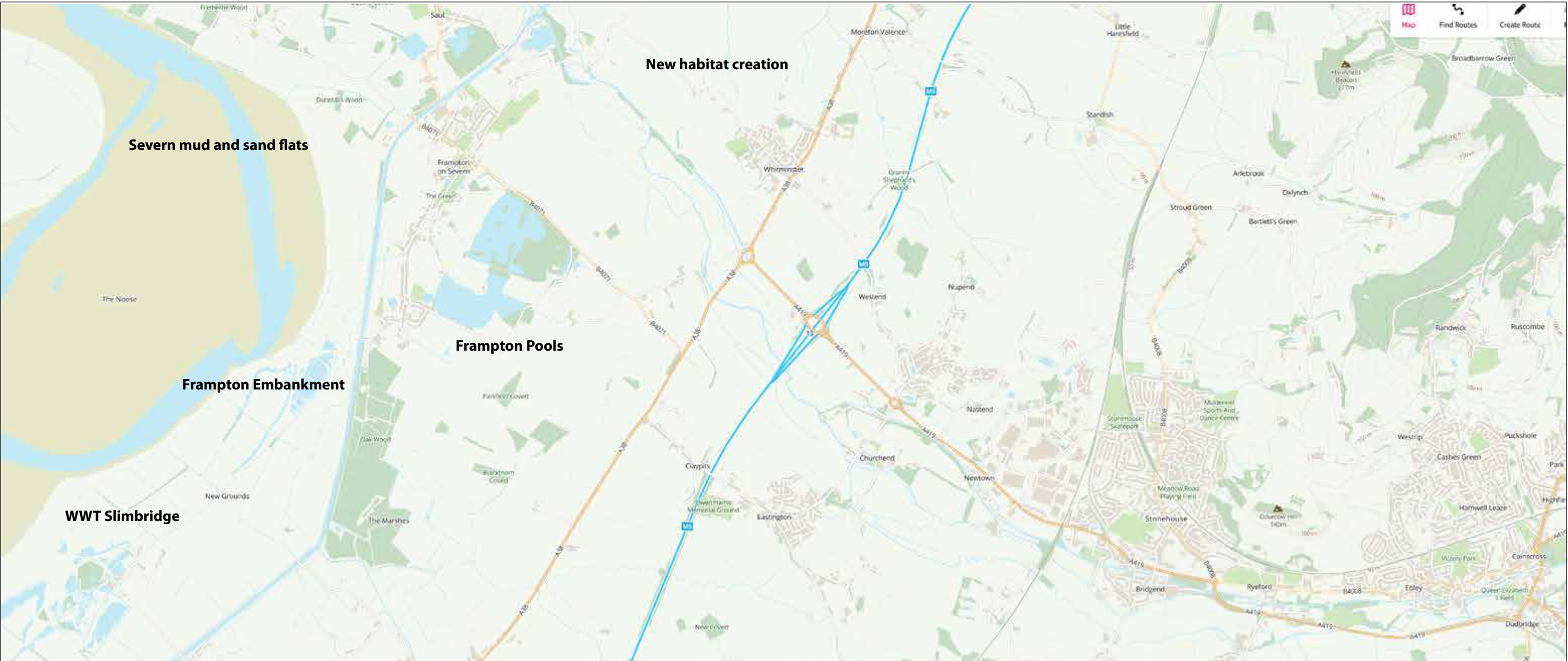
Fromebridge Mill is a very popular pub, just off the busy A38 Bristol to Gloucester road and a couple of minutes off Junction 13 of the M5 motorway.

The pub has a large car park which people use to access the riverside path along the Frome. The towpath cannot be accessed directly from the pub. Access is currently off the A38 roundabout. When restoration is complete the towpath will take visitors beneath the roundabout from Hyde's Basin to Bristol Wharf and on towards Saul Junction.

This will take them past the wetland habitats that are being created by GWT, two fields away from the pub. If you accept that the Phase 1B restoration will damage, certainly in the short term, some of the existing canal habitat along its length, then this habitat creation is vital to offset some of this and people need to know why it is happening and the ambitions for this piece of the overall project.

There will no access to the new area of habitat. A drainage ditch (ryne) separates it from the towpath. The towpath sits slightly higher than the field and therefore affords views across it. Interpretation here can relay stories of the habitat creation, the species being attracted in the context of restoring nature loss.

There is also the message of natural connectivity to convey. The new habitats are not too far away from existing wildlife hotspots, such as WWT Slimbridge and Frampton Pools and the floodplain of the Severn at Frampton. The whole area is criss-crossed by ditches and drainage channels. The potential to attract greater biodiversity to the new site is very high.





# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

## Where is interpretation needed: resource 1 (habitat creation)

### Priority1: Habitat creation near Fromebridge Mill

#### (Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust)

1. Species rich grassland. Already some plant species of note. Conserve and enhance to increase species diversity (flora and fauna)
2. Existing orchard. Conserve and improve for fruit trees. Bounded by existing hedgerow habitat and canal on southern edge. Work will also increase biodiversity. There is a willow screen with a cut-out to view wildlife at the entrance to the orchard.
3. Line of ponds between canal and rhyne which will provide dispersment habitat for water voles and new habitat for a range of flora and fauna species
4. Area of new wetland habitat creation - scrapes, pools, depressions, etc. Opportunity to attract a wide range of bird and invertebrate s in particular. Many of which already visit nearby sites closer to the Severn.

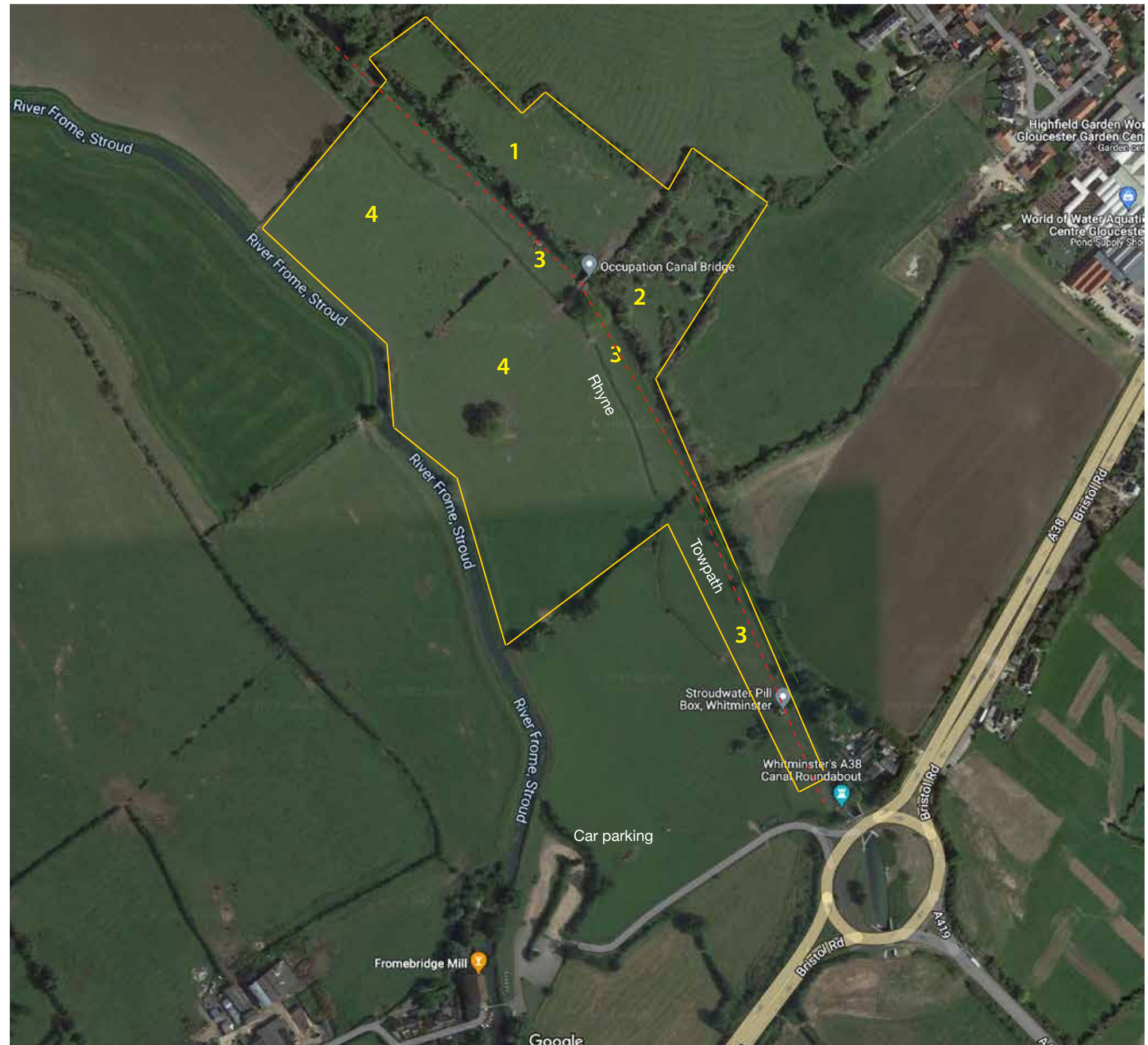
Together all of these habitats will provide a significant offset for the loss of habitat in the canal itself resulting from excavation. This loss will be more pronounced in the short term.

The towptah is shown in a red dotted line. This will take walkers close to the ponds (3). The rhyne will prevent access to the habitats (4). GWT plan to build a bird hide close to the towpath which will enable views across the habitat at 4.

All of this work will involve volunteers, both in the creation of the habitats and their upkeep.

The importance of nature in Phase 1B cannot be under-estimated and this is will be a wonderful place to celebrate and promote the wildlife of the area and the work that will go into making it so.

Discussion with GWT will ensure that we are on message with any interpretation, meeting their ambitions for the site and inspiring towpath users.





# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

## Where is interpretation needed: resource 2 (built heritage)

### Stonehouse and Eastington

Between Roving Bridge and Westfield Bridge there is a concentration of built canal features (locks, basin, aqueduct and bridges).

Johnson's Lock is adjacent to Westfield Bridge. It is the westernmost and lowest lock of a flight of five locks that carried boats up and down a hill past the village of Eastington. The top lock (once named so) at the eastern end is Newtown Lock just west of Roving Bridge. Between them, west to east are Dock, Pike and Blunder locks.

We have separated the flight into two sections. One section east of the road known as Spring Hill and one section west of Spring Hill.

#### Roving Bridge, Newtown Lock, Blunder Lock, Pike Lock/ Bridge

These features are all fairly close together east of Spring Hill, along a fairly popular section of towpath, well used by local people in Stonehouse, Eastington and Great Oldbury. The towpath is directly accessible at Roving Bridge, Blunder Lock and Pike Lock/Bridge.

These features need some form of interpretation. They are close to the proposed cafe development at Pike Bridge and this may affect considerations re interpretation

### Dock Lock, Chipmans Platt, John Robinson's Lock and Westfield Bridge

These are all close together in the eastern section of the missing mile, west of Spring Hill.

Chipmans Platt (a dry lock), Dock Lock and John Robinson's Lock will all be restored. The latter stands immediately adjacent to Westfield Bridge, which as plan is being written, is being excavated having been totally buried by soil for many years.

The bridge itself has been partially buried and has become something of an icon as the 'bridge in the field'. Once more water will flow beneath it. A little way west of the bridge, a new lock will be built in order to control water levels for the canal to pass beneath the motorway.

The bridge, dry dock and locks taken together support a number of stories. The section of land they are located in will also undergo significant change both physically and visually with the restoration of the missing mile.

This section of the canal will be close and easily accessible from the new visitor centre planned for land at Pikes Bridge and is therefore is likely to be well used.

### Whitminster

#### Bristol Wharf, Pillbox 1, Occupation Bridge, Site of Stonepits Bridge, Pillbox 2, Whitminster Lock, Whitminster Bridge, Walk bridge

Once the canal has negotiated the M5 motorway and the new A38 road bridges, it travels through a flat landscape at the foot of the hill rising towards Whitminster. We should look at all of the above features and decide which individual ones (or which combinations) need interpreting.

We should not assume that every one needs something said about it.

Bristol Road Wharf was used mainly for the unloading of coal. There are two pillboxes. These relate to the Stop Line Green story covered at Bond's Mill. Occupation Bridge is a bridge in the typical Cotswold Canals vernacular.

Whitminster Bridge and Lock are very close to each other, just east of Walk Bridge (Whitminster Lane). Both bridges will be replaced and the lock restored to allow the passage of boats. This may be the story for these once completed.

*All photos: Cotswold Canals in pictures*



Roving Bridge

Newtown Lock



Dock Lock, Chipman's Platt

Meadow Mill overflow weir, Chipman's Platt



Blunder Lock

Pike Lock



John Robinson Lock

Westfield Bridge



Bristol Road Wharf

Type 26 Pillbox



Whitminster Lock

Walk Bridge



# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

## Interpretation locations: Section 1

### Saul Junction

Welcome information, introduction to and guidance to Cotswold Canals

Canal amenities, resources, distances

### Whitminster lock/bridge

Small panel/plaque re Whitminster Lock and Bridge

Canal amenities, resources, distances

### Saul Junction

Subject to conversations with Canal & River Trust, we would seek to welcome visitors to Saul Junction, introduce the Cotswold Canals to them and guide them to the towpath of the canal.

This would be conventional panel based interpretation/information, extolling the attractions along the Cotswold Canals, the walking experience, the landscape, habitats and wildlife and other heritage

Potential for two panels. One close to CCT Heritage Centre and one at main car park.

Interpretive panels would be accompanied by a linear plan of Section 1 of Phase 1B, indicating YOU ARE HERE and showing distance, time, amenities, etc

### Habitat creation

Interpretive features re habitat creation and wildlife species (panel plus more creative installations). Opportunity for creative interpretation re the habitat creation by GWT. Careful thought to over-intrusion in a sensitive area, but need to inspire and empower people re nature.

### Fromebridge Mill

Welcome, introduction to canal, route, landscape, heritage, wildlife (Interior and exterior)

Canal amenities, resources, distances

### Section 2

Bristol Wharf

Notice Board



## Interpretation locations: Section 2



## Hyde's Basin

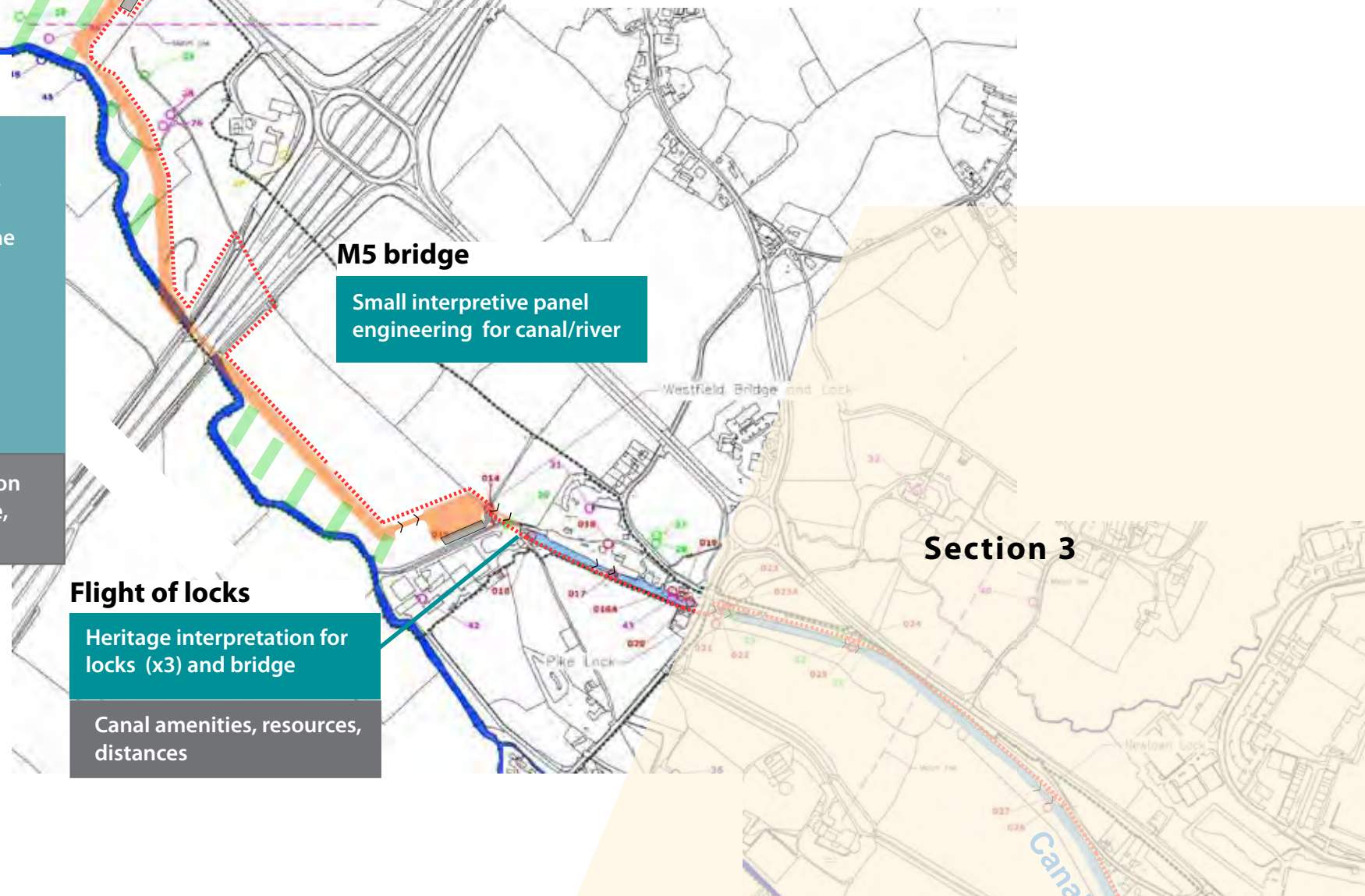
There may be a number of opportunities for interpretation at the Hyde's Basin site, both within, directly outside and close to the cafe.

This should welcome visitors to the canal, provide an overview of the canal's history, wildlife and restoration.

Potential for creative installations (sculptural, furniture) developed with other creatives, students, etc.

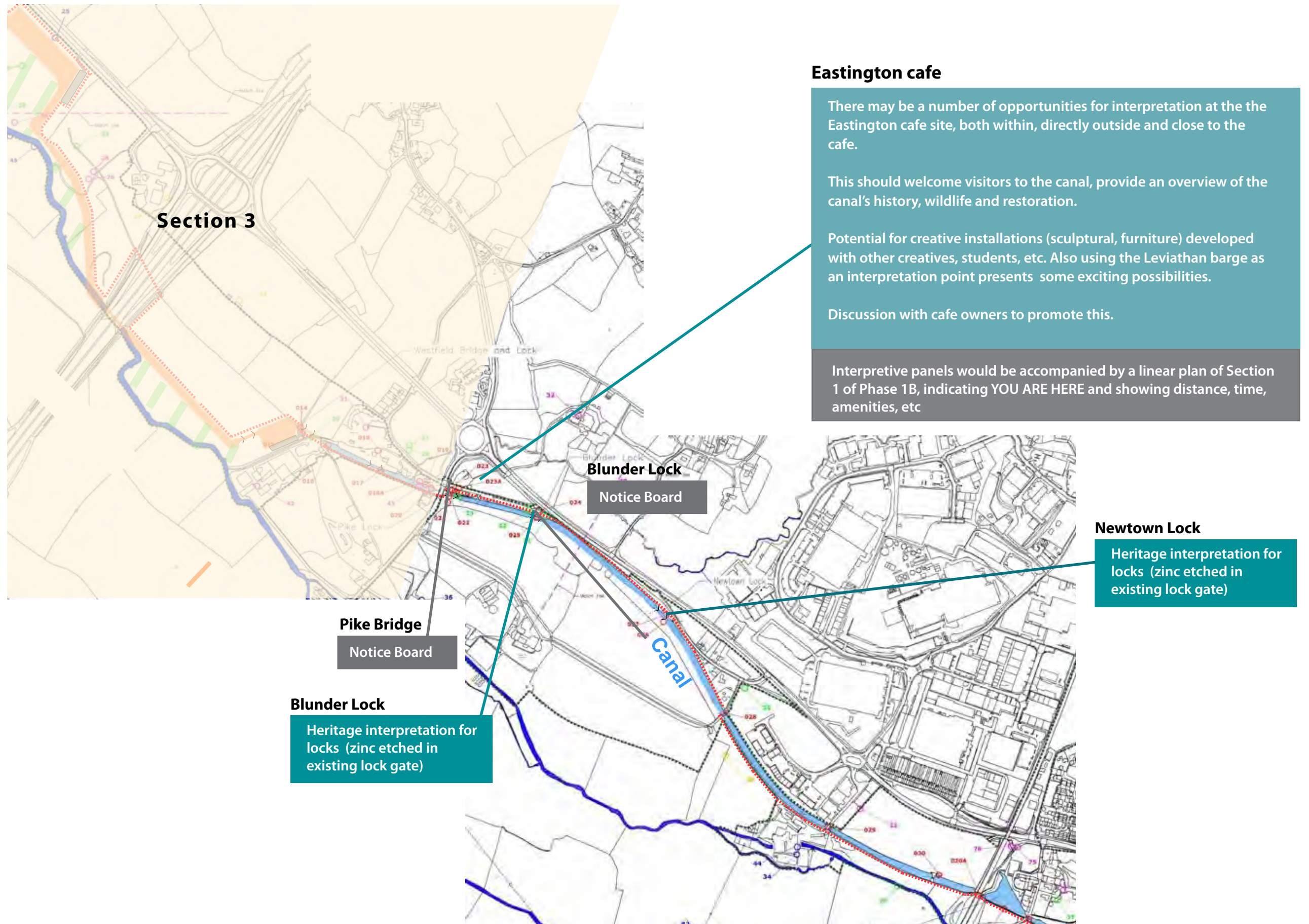
**Discussion with cafe owners to promote this.**

Interpretive panels would be accompanied by a linear plan of Section 1 of Phase 1B, indicating YOU ARE HERE and showing distance, time, amenities, etc





## Interpretation locations: Section 3





# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023



## Design

- 1. Branding (overview)
- 2. Continuity with Phase 1A
- 3. Phase 1B (design tweaked)



### Nature's highways

Footprint has always believed in the importance of the image. Illustration provides one of the best pathways to a greater understanding of nature. If the purpose of the illustration is to inform, educate and inspire, then we need to be clear what form the illustration takes.

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Your wildlife images



Tom Stone, Stonehouse      Kate Wood, East

### Who's in the picture?

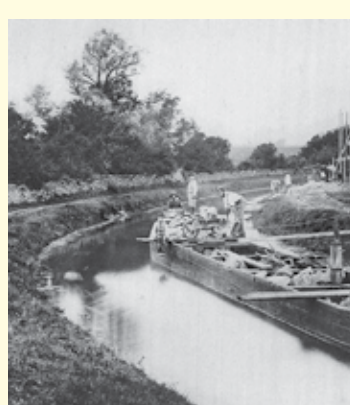
#### James Smart

James Smart owned a small fleet of barges and narrow canal boats, which were mainly used to carry coal, road stone and general cargoes to wharfs along the Stroud Valley and up into the Cotswolds from the 1870s until the early 1900s. Although he operated from his base in Chalford his barges carried goods to ports in the upper Bristol Channel.

His father died in a drink related drowning. He never drank and one of his barges was named *Temperance*. One of his barges, *Industry* travelled to and from Bristol and Cardiff, but was lost after colliding with the Severn Railway Bridge in 1898.

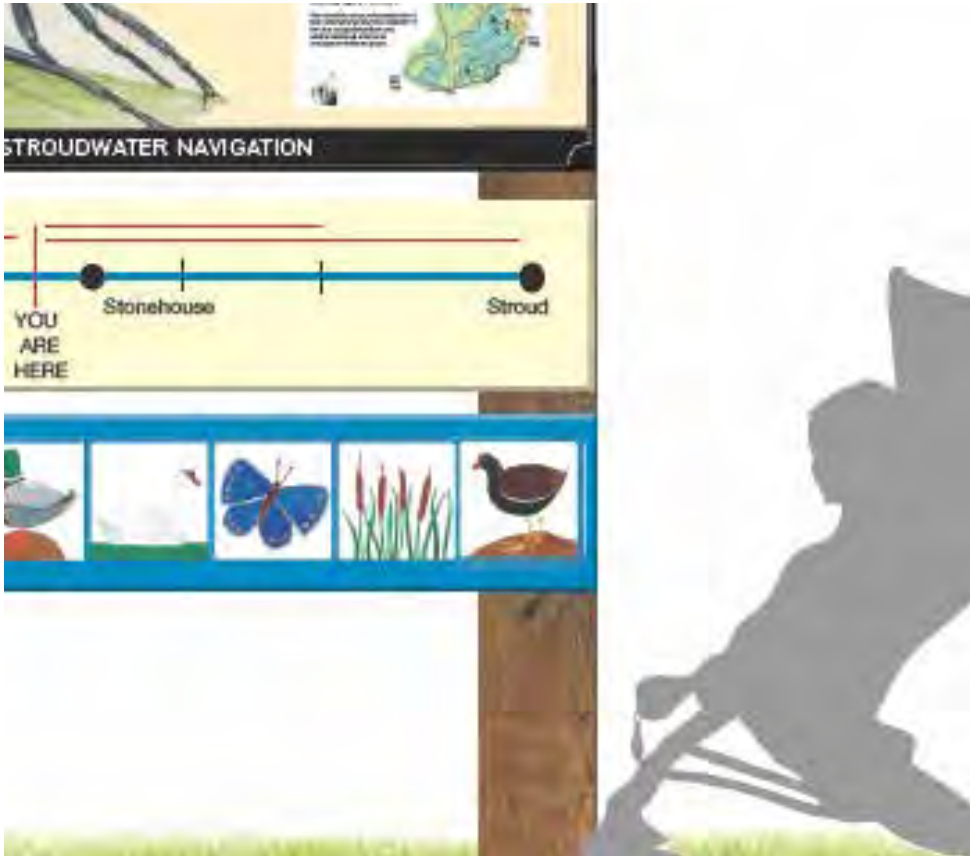
James Smart has a large number of listings in the document archive of the Cotswold Canals Trust, held in Gloucester.

<https://catalogue.gloucestershire.gov.uk/records/D4367/2/2>




Credit

For more information on Newtown scan the QR code (right)  
<https://snac.eastface.co.uk/newtown>



### Cotswold Canals Connect

# The Canals



Thames & Severn



# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

## Branding

Looking at an effective linear system of information for users of the canal, leads us to consider the branding of this information. In fact, in the case of the canal restoration, the branding in its entirety, so as to clearly define and identify responsibilities and convey these in a clear, unambiguous way to the public.

A number of organisations have been/are directly involved in the Cotswold Canals restoration. This can cause some confusion for those not directly involved, ie members of the public.

In the Stroud area, the Cotswold Canals Trust are going to be the most familiar name to people here. Their partners in the restoration of Phase 1B are the Stroud Valleys Canal Company; The Proprietors of the Stroudwater Navigation Company; Stroudwater Navigation Archive Charity (SNAC), Canal and River Trust, Stroud District Council and Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust.

Confusion may arise when we consider 'Cotswold Canals Connected'. This is the project name for this phase of the restoration, the banner under which all organisations are coming together to plan and deliver Phase 1B. It represents a partnership approach to the project.

The partners above wish to see it remain so for the duration of the restoration (three years) and beyond. There is a logo.

We do not need to look at the individual organisations. They have their own web sites, their own logos. We do need to look at situations where a number of these organisations are represented when conveying aspects of the restoration project.

This is true of the notice boards described in the previous pages. The template being put forward for these requires the contribution of a number of organisations. The branding proposals here should be carried forward to everything else.

Whatever is put in place has to stand the test of time. This is why we propose dropping the Cotswold Canals Connected logo. It suggests the existence of a body or organisations of that name. It is of this time, highly stylised, is not really representative of the scope of this project (1B). It is an awkward logo to use in any design.

But '**Cotswold Canals Connected**' can still be the headline. It is after all the *raison d'être* behind the restoration and has always been so. It is more than the title for this particular Phase 1B project, it is the ambition and has been the ambition of those who have been working on the canal since the very first groups of volunteers began their work in the last century and the Cotswold Canals Trust was first formed.

It is more than linking the Thames and Severn Canal to the Stroudwater Navigation and if the River Thames and the River Severn are eventually linked, it is more than that.

Implicit in the words 'Cotswold Canals Connected' is the joining of communities, places, people and wildlife across the entire county of Gloucestershire.

Within the Interpretation Working Group, we have agreed on a new tag line to accompany the main Cotswold Canals Connected banner that reflects this:

### 'Connecting people, places and wildlife'

Without a long, drawn out sentence that tries to include every facet of the restoration, we feel this encompasses everything. Implicit in the phrase is the connecting of people with people, of people with their heritage (including the canal), of people to nature, of town to town, village to village, south of the canal to north of the canal, of nature to nature, habitat to habitat.

Taking all of this on board and working with other members of the Interpretation Working Group, we have already begun to feed these ideas into some of the things we have been asked to look at produce.

### 'The canal'

The Cotswold Canals. The generic name for the historic Thames & Severn Canal and the Stroudwater Navigation. Together, they crossed the County of Gloucestershire for almost 37 miles, linking the two great rivers of the Severn and the Thames.

The two canals met in Stroud at Wallbridge. We say 'met' because now after two successful major phases of restoration, they are as one. While history will continue to recognise the existence of two named canals

there is now, in essence only one canal. One single waterway, one towpath between Saul and Brimscome Port.

This is the only canal in the area. Do we need to refer to them as separate canals anymore, particularly when promoting them to the public as a community resource, local amenity or visitor attraction. This extends to how we signpost the canal. Would it not make sense to say '**this way to the canal**' or '**welcome to the canal**'. It is a much friendlier and inviting introduction and less clumsy to design with.

Nobody ever asks 'which way to the Thames & Severn Canal?' or 'which way to the Stroudwater Navigation?'

The original names of the canals can remain in supplementary information, historical texts, on web sites and general interpretation, but the welcome is a welcome to 'the canal'. There will be no confusion.



# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

## Design concepts: Continuity with Phase 1A

The first and most obvious form of interpretation to consider along Phase 1B is a continuation of the panel designs already in place between The Ocean at Stonehouse and Brimscombe as part of the Phase 1A restoration. One already exists at the Ocean and another at the Bond's Mill Gatehouse site on Phase 1A as part of an earlier project.



Along Phase 1A the existing panels cover a large diversity of subjects. There is an emphasis on the buildings and canal structures, both past and present and other content is generally linked to this.

This may be the case for Phase 1A also, keeping these panels canal related - to its history, its architecture, working parts and to its restoration., falling under the afore-mentioned themes like the 'Stop Line Green, Water Under a Bridge' and 'What's in a name" themes, although the panel at the gatehouse and the interpretation inside it, already cover the Stop Line Green and the World War II history of this site in some detail.

Sited at the identified gateways, they could also cover the adjacent sections of canal and the sites and things of interest there:

### Eastington/Blunder Lock

This could cover the canal section between Pike Lock/Bridge and Newtown Roving Bridge

### East of A38 Roundabout

Content relating to the habitat restoration and enhancements in that location, new section between there and the motorway bridge and the relationship with the River Frome.

### West of A38 Roundabout

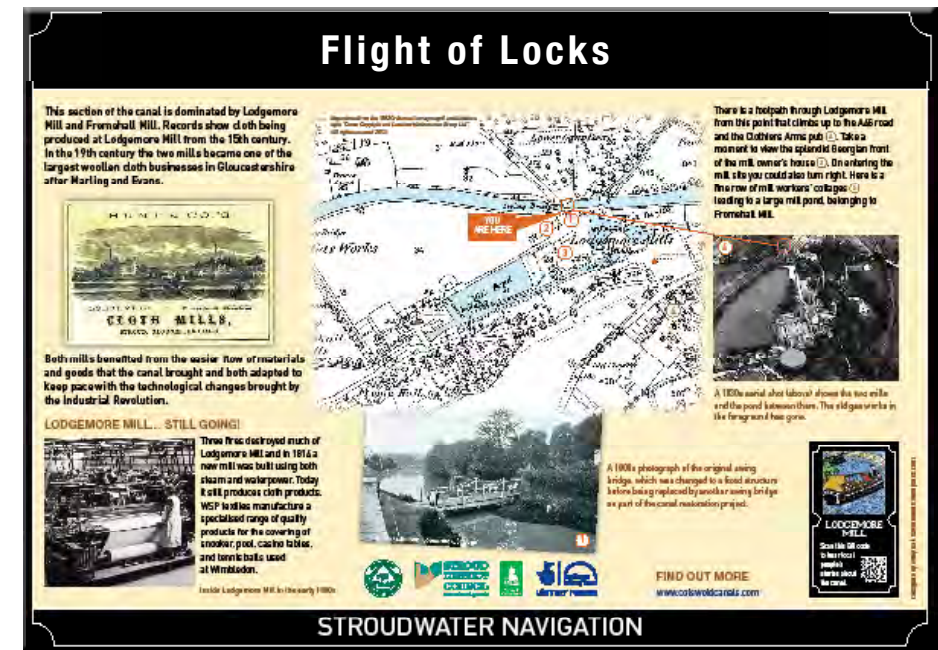
Bristol Wharf, pillbox, Occupation Bridge, Lockham Aqeduct, Woodland walknear Whitminster Lock

### Saul Junction

Historic route of Stroudwater beyond Saul to meet the River Severn, Severn Trows accessing the Stroudwater from the Severn - where from, why? General introduction to the Cotswold Canals to encourage exploration.

Our preference is always for lectern style panels, for ease of visual access for able bodied and the disabled and for reduced visual impact on the environment.

However there is here a case for upright panels if this allows us to develop the structures to give visitors and users other information they need, ie amenities, facilities, distances, etc. If these style panels were to be the only ones installed on the canal, then combining the interpretive information with that on distances, facilities, etc would make good sense.





# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

## Design concepts: Continuity evolving

The original design template for Phase 1A was influenced very clearly by the industrial heritage of the Cotswold Canals. This was probably more appropriate for 1A, given the urban landscape and the built heritage through which it passes. In addition, while there was some subject matter on some boards relating to nature, the majority of the content related to the built heritage and working parts of the canal, historic and present day.

However Phase 1B is very different. Yes, we will acknowledge the major engineering projects such as the Ocean railway bridge, the canal route beneath the M5 and the double bridging on the A38 roundabout at Fromebridge Mill. However, the rural character of the canal, the landscape through which it passes, the natural habitats along this phase and the associated wildlife, prompt a reappraisal of the design and look of any interpretation panels.

Adding more power to this idea are two further considerations:

- The focus on community engagement on Phase 1B and incorporating this into the interpretation. Something missing entirely in the Phase 1A interpretation.
- The critical need to engage people in their appreciation and ownership of the natural world around them. A natural world that is struggling. A natural world that many more are coming to realise, is crucial to their continued good health, well-being and existence.

So we need to inspire, show nature in its glory, use art and creativity as a portal to a greater understanding and respect for the flora and fauna on our doorstep, in the area, emphasising how everything is connected and how nature cannot survive in small isolated pockets.


*Create a sense of place with scenes, which can also convey ecosystems, natural processes*

In the draft design below, the black name plate border present in Phase 1A, has gone. This opens up the design. We can use the full width of the panel, we can bleed off the edges. There is a greater sense of space. We can cut images through the top banner. The design can be less blocky.

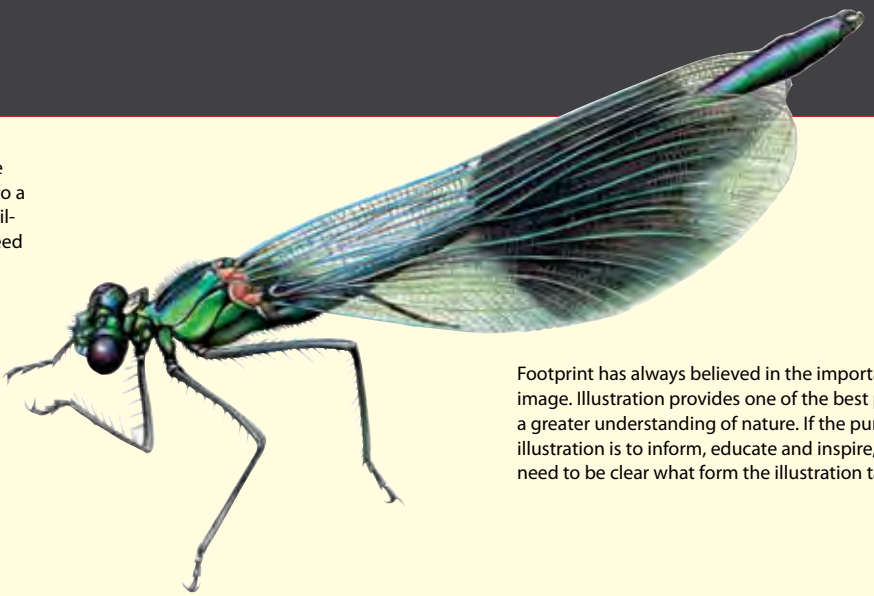
*High quality, impactful images to grab and draw people in. Inspire as well as inform.*

### Nature's highways

**Above, on and below**  
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#### Your wildlife images



Tom Stone, Stonehouse



Kate Wood, Eastington



Ben Gravel, Stonehouse

### Cotswold Canals Connected

Connecting people, places and wildlife

*The cream background for accessibility, remains, the stark black of Phase 1A is now a deep grey, almost imperceptible from the black but it has an important visual affect*

*Use community contributions wherever possible and relevant*



## Design concepts: Continuity evolving

## The dig: archaeological finds

Connecting people, places and wildlife



# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

## Design concepts: Built heritage

There are themes that lend themselves to a larger format in respect of the nature and quality of the images available or through new origination. These tend to be the more over-arching themes that cross different topics, timelines, etc. Where these are sited will be key as they might not be specific to one place.

We also have a ribbon of historic structures that were/are part of the canals working infrastructure - locks, bridges, wharfs, basins.

### What's in a name

It is probably right to say that those volunteers, lengthspersons, engineers, etc working on various structures - locks, bridges, basins, etc, can form an attachment to the built heriatge they are restoring or looking after. They will come to know the history, the stories, the quirks of that structure and this will add to the attachment.

What of the less well informed who walk the towpath, passing one lock after another. Each lock will look the same. The individual charm or attraction of one over another may come for its setting or the landscape around it, but without some knowledge of the lock, they may not attract any significant attention.

**What's in a name** is a concept that seeks to create a kind of trail of structures by focusing on their names. After all, what is the first thing that identifies every building, street, village, town, city - its name. That name often has some connection to the history of that building or place. There is a story behind it. Why was it chosen?

Just looking at this list of canal structures:


- Roving Bridge
- Newtown Lock
- Blunder Lock
- Pike Lock
- Chipmans Platt
- Dock Lock
- Westfield Lock
- Westfield Bridge

### What's in a name: Blunder Lock

Its present name is due to the fact that it was originally built at the wrong level. The engineer responsible for this did so having previously been given notice by the company to quit.

**blunder**  
*a serious mistake, usually caused by not taking care or thinking*

Formerly known as Lower Nassfield Lock, this was an original lock of the Stroudwater, designed to cater for Severn trows and was about 16 foot wide and 68 feet long. The lock had a rise of 7 feet 5 inches.



STROUDWATER NAVIGATION

These visuals retain continuity with those on the previous pages.

Each structure is identified with an A2 or A3 panel. The name is explored. This is the lead in to a succinct history of each structure. There is one dominant image/map, possibly a second smaller one. A QR code linking to more information is included.

This would likely be the [stroudwaterhistory.org](http://stroudwaterhistory.org) site.

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### Newtown Lock

#### What's in an name:

Maybe you can find a sign somewhere close by that tells you are in Newtown. Just a few houses squeezed between the canal and the A417 and a couple on the other side of the A419 make up the tiny hamlet of Newtown. You will find it marked on a modern OS map.

Perfect sense therefore to call the lock by the same name. However, when it was first built (1778), it was known as 'Top Lock'. It is the highest lock in a flight of five that raises the canal up the hill past the village of Eastington.

Newtown Lock was the first lock on the Stroudwater Navigation to be fully restored and the first boat passed through it in 1991.



1880 OS map (National Library of Scotland)

STROUDWATER NAVIGATION



# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

## Design concepts: Canal life and stories

### Who's in the picture

This theme can be treated in the same way as 'What's in a Name'. Smaller nuggets of information presented in a traditional form as interpretation panels, possibly A2 or A3 in the same branding.

The designs below and right, show what this might look like.

The information does not need to provide a detailed description or life history of the individual. The 'who' is the way into the story and we can look at boats, locks, buildings, etc.



#### Whos in the picture?

John White  
(lockkeeper)  
at Pike Lock.  
There were a number  
of lockkeepers .....


### What's in a name: Blunder Lock

In this photograph, the name of the owner of the narrowboat is just readable on the its side. Frank E Cookley was a coal merchant based at Framilode during the early 1900s.

Coal was one of the main goods carried along the canal in its early years of trading. The coal came from Bristol, South Wales and the Midlands.

The trade of coal was boosted in the 1810s when tramroads opened in the the Forest of Dean bringing coal down to small docks at Bullo Pill and Lydney. These soon provided the main source of industrial coal for the Stroud Valleys.

This is the site of Bristol Wharf



STROUDWATER NAVIGATION

We cannot stop people taking photos of themselves, family, relatives and friends for personal reasons or for social media.

The 'whos in the picture' theme may allow us to use a few locations where we encourage this in a fun and learning way.

We can provide interpretive installations where people might like to sit, stand, etc to have their photos taken, maybe fun, creative seating.

'Face in the hole boards' have seen a revival in recent years. We should not ignore the attraction of these, particularly for children. Thought would be given to the characters/people/situations being portrayed.


### Newtown Lock

#### What's in an name:

James Smart owned a small fleet of barges and narrow canal boats, which were mainly used to carry coal, road stone and general cargoes to wharfs along the Stroud Valley and up into the Cotswolds from the 1870s until the early 1900s. Although he operated from his base in Chalford his barges carried goods to ports in the upper Bristol Channel.

His father died in a drink related drowning. He never drank and one of his barges was named *Temperance*. One of his barges, *Industry* travelled to and from Bristol and Cardiff, but was lost after colliding with the Severn Railway Bridge in 1898.

James Smart has a large number of listings in the document archive of the Cotswold Canals Trust, held in the...



Credit

STROUDWATER NAVIGATION



#### Whos in the picture?

Possibly the Toll clerk at Saul Junction.  
All vessels entering the Stroudwater Navigation from the Gloucester and Berkely Canal, had to pay a toll at the toll clerk's house .....





# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

## Design concepts: The big picture (main access hubs)

‘Sense of place’ is the most often used term in interpretation. It is exactly that. How a person is able to connect with a particular site/location. At the very least an appreciation that here is a place where something special happened or a place with a unique natural heritage. But it can go deeper to a more emotional bond.

This is what the interpretation design consultant strives to achieve. It is not always possible, depending on the project and site(s).

Interpretation placed along the canal will seek to develop senses of place specific to its location.

What of the primary access points identified previously (Saul Junction, Fromebridge Mill, Hyde’s Basin and Pike’s Bridge). These will be busy hubs with people coming and going by car, by foot, by boat. What kind of interpretation do we seek to engage people with here?

The first most important thing will be to provide some form of overview of the canal, focused on the particular location, but putting it into its wider context, extending the story along the canal in either direction.

We need to place the visitor/user in their current location and then inform, engage and encourage them to explore the canal and other local heritage.

Added to this will be the basic information proposed earlier, that tells them where everything is along the canal, other amenities, resources, attractions and how it is accessible.

At this point in time, we do not know the full potential of these sites for interpretive elements, so we must be flexible and adaptable as they develop.

### Cotswold Canals Connected

Connecting people, places and wildlife

## Welcome to the canal at Hyde’s Basin

The Cotswold Canals. The generic name for the historic Thames & Severn Canal and the Stroudwater Navigation. Together, they crossed the County of Gloucestershire for almost 37 miles, linking the two great rivers of the Severn and the Thames.

The two canals met in Stroud at Wallbridge. We say ‘met’ because now after two successful major phases of restoration, they are as one. While history will continue to recognise the existence of two named canals there is now, in essence only one canal. One single waterway, one towpath between Saul and Brimscombe Port. Saul marks the the western end of the Phase 1B restoration and Brimscombe Port, the eastern end of the Phase 1A restoration,

From here at Hyde’s basin, you can explore the canal in either direction. Whichever you choose, there is much to discover and enjoy.

The canal corridor provides a valuable highway for all kinds of wildlife such as dragonflies, water voles and otters

### To the west

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The canal corridor provides a valuable highway for all kinds of wildlife such as dragonflies, water voles and otters

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The canal corridor provides a valuable highway for all kinds of wildlife such as dragonflies, water voles and otters

### To the east

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The canal corridor provides a valuable highway for all kinds of wildlife such as dragonflies, water voles and otters

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The canal corridor provides a valuable highway for all kinds of wildlife such as dragonflies, water voles and otters

SAUL JUNCTION

YOU ARE HERE

STONEHOUSE

STROUD

The canal corridor provides a valuable highway for all kinds of wildlife such as dragonflies, water voles and otters

The canal corridor provides a valuable highway for all kinds of wildlife such as dragonflies, water voles and otters

The canal corridor provides a valuable highway for all kinds of wildlife such as dragonflies, water voles and otters



# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

## Signposting the canal

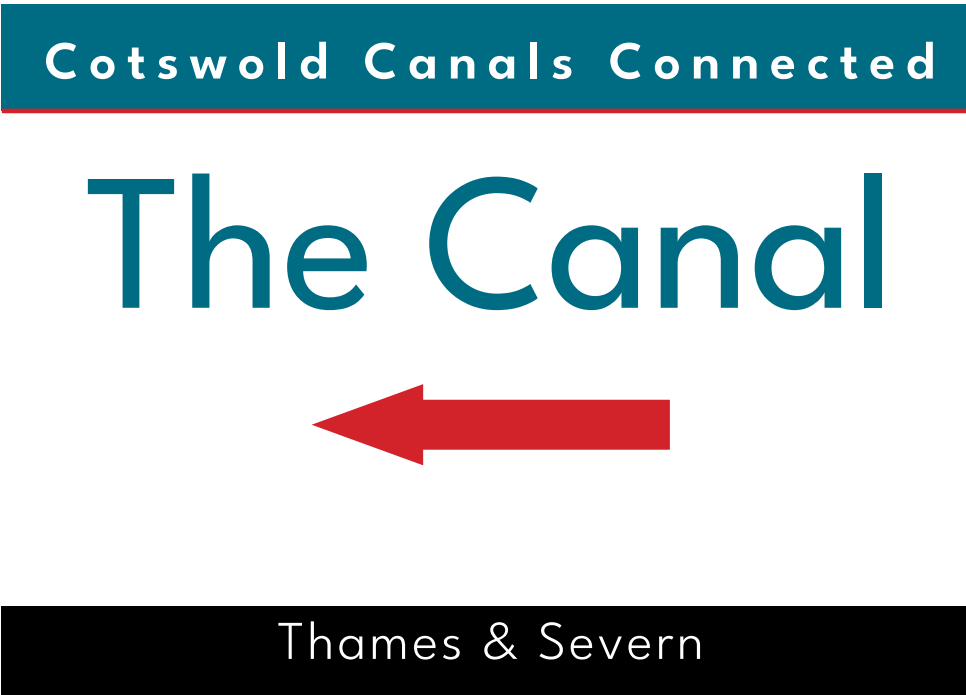
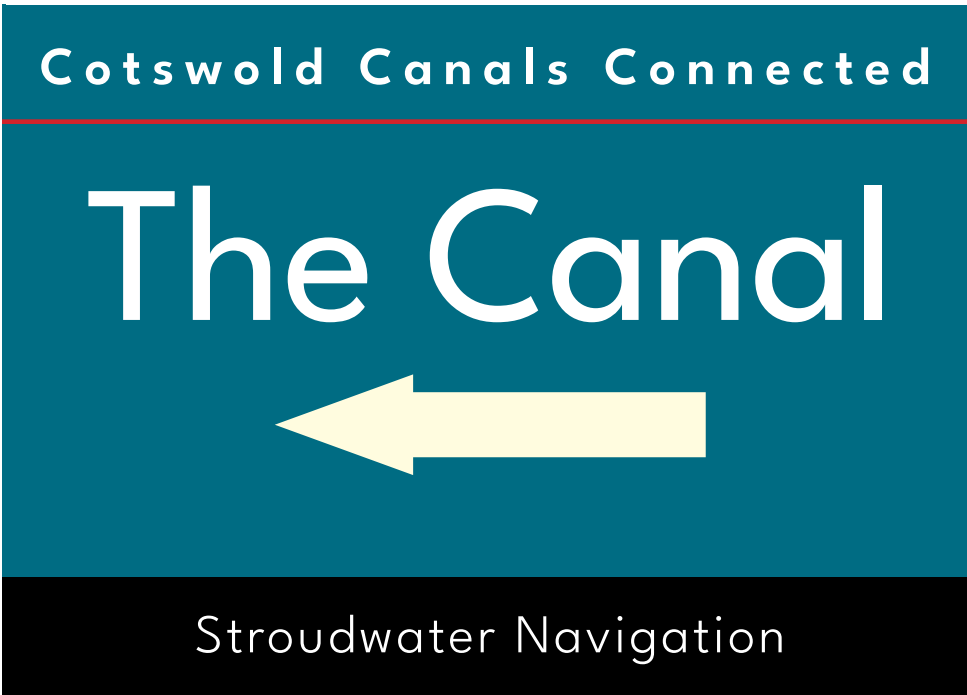
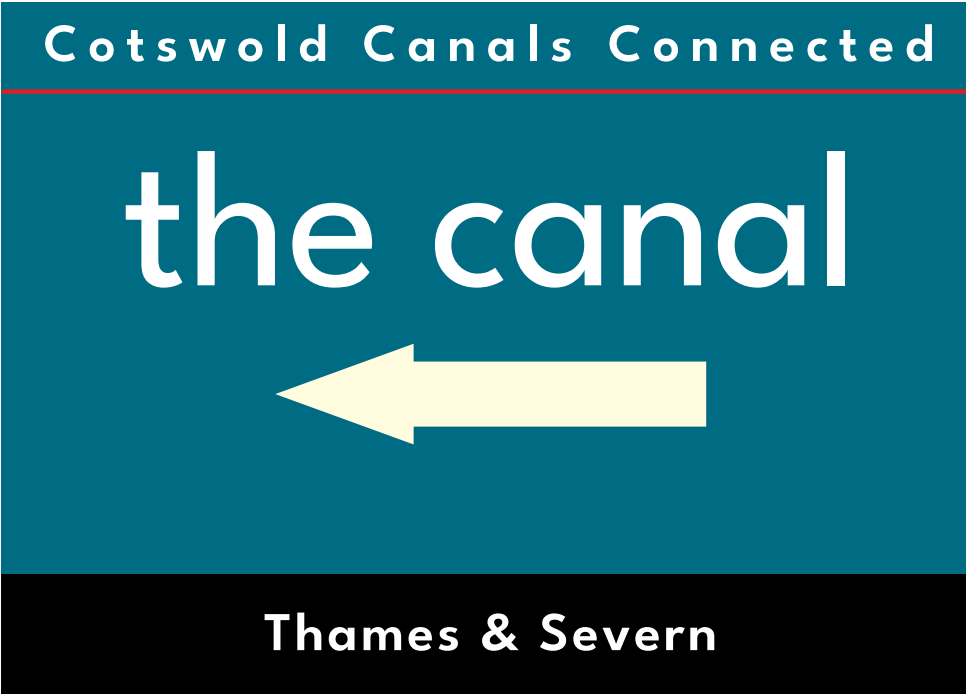
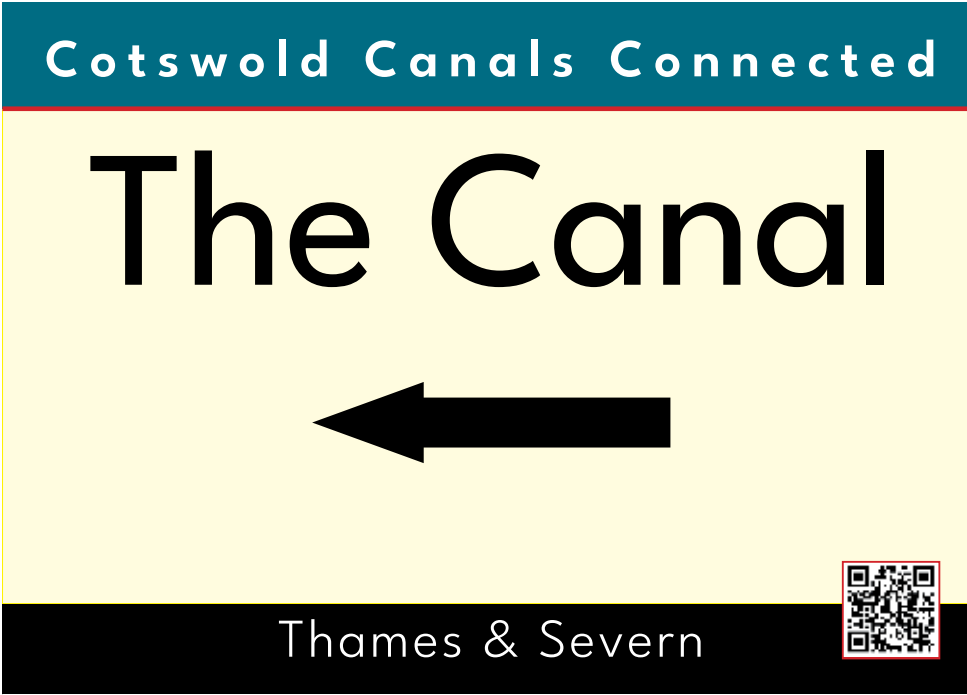
### ‘Excuse me , where’s the canal’

The Cotswold Canals. The generic name for the historic Thames & Severn Canal and the Stroudwater Navigation. Together, they crossed the County of Gloucestershire for almost 37 miles, linking the two great rivers of the Severn and the Thames.

The two canals met in Stroud at Wallbridge. We say ‘met’ because now after two successful major phases of restoration, they are as one. While history will continue to recognise the existence of two named canals there is now, in essence only one canal. One single waterway, one towpath between Saul and Brimscome Port.

This is the only canal in the area. Do we need to refer to them as sepaerate canals anymore, particularly when promoting them to the public as a community resource, local amenity or visitor attraction. This extends to how we signpost the canal. Would it not make sense to say *‘this way to the canal’* or *‘welcome to the canal’*. It is a much friendlier and inviting introduction and less clumsy to design with.

The original names of the canals can remain in supplementary information, historical texts, on web sites and general interpretation, but the welcome is a welcome to ‘the canal’. There will be no confusion.





# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

## Design concepts: examples for discussion





# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

## Design concepts: Not just panels

If we accept that there needs to be some continuity between Phases 1A and 1B, in terms of conventional interpretation panels, then we can ensure that the public make that connection, although as shown previously, we feel things can be tweaked for Phase 1B. Leaving the actual visual branding proposed aside.

Although some of the existing panels on Phase 1A contain information and illustrative references to wildlife, we do not think their corporate design is best suited to conveying this kind of information. Given the importance of ecology along Phase 1B and its rural character, we have looked at other ideas to convey the ecology.

We believe that every organisation involved in any project where the environment and wildlife are key elements, has an obligation to inform, engage and inspire others to appreciate the natural world around them, seeking to empower them to take a role themselves, in caring and conserving it.

The waterways that run east from the Stroud Valleys into the Severn Vale (Cotswold Canals and River Frome) are vital routes for wildlife - in the water, on the water, above the water). Though there are pinch points where development squeezes the corridor, these waterways are generally tree lined with natural, vegetated banks.

The canal and the river are constant companions, from Sapperton, several miles east of Stroud to Saul in the west. At times they share the same channel.

Their relationship is really important to the health of both waterways and the ecology of the area. Area being the correct term, for their influence is extensive, affecting the character and ecology of valley bottoms in around Stroud, a green lung that spreads its fingers along the brooks and streams emptying from the hills.

The waterways provide a highway for wildlife which then connects to other green corridors in the town of Stroud, bringing otters to Stratford Park, goosanders to Arundel Mill Pond, The same birds that feed along the trees of the Frome, do so in the trees that line the smaller streams and brooks.

How do we convey this message to those people that use the towpath and canal.

When trying to somehow capture the wonders of the natural world around us and distil it into some form of printed representation, the image is everything. Wildlife film makers the world over, bring stunning, high resolution video into our own homes. Professional and amateur photographers fill the web with stunning imagery of the world's flora and fauna

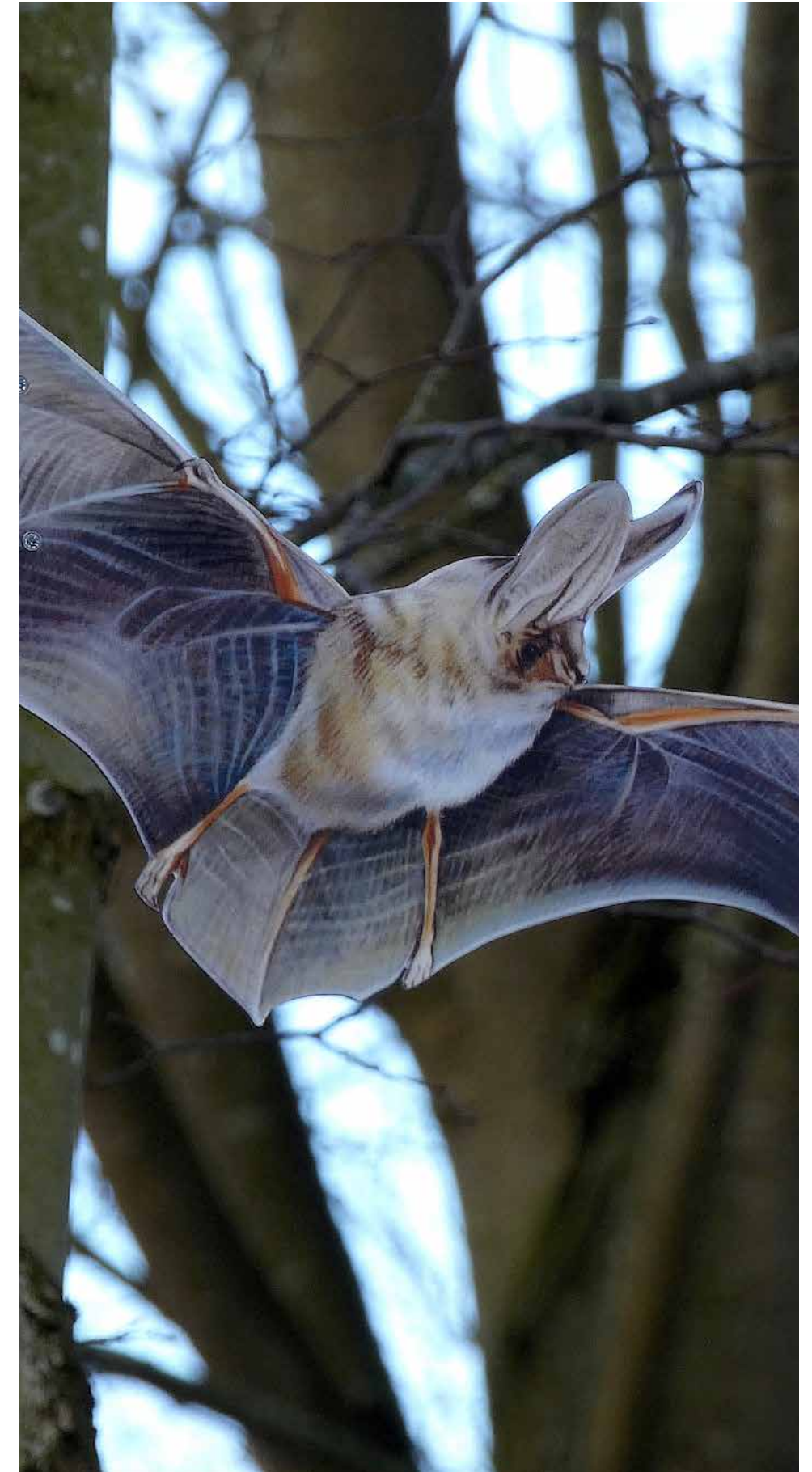
Yet so much existing traditional interpretation, reduces these wonders of nature to stylised thumbnails, to space fillers, lost in the blandness of a corporate design. In locations where one is surrounded by nature itself we reduce the wildlife imagery to small, banal representations of the species, often highly stylised so as to do little to aid identification or provoke interest and enthusiasm.

Here there are opportunities to truly celebrate the biodiversity, both existing and the species attracted through future habitat creation and enhancement.

If we are to excite and enthuse towpath users about the wildlife, through static interpretation, we need to do just that!

There are iconic wildlife species that are residents along the canal corridor, others who are seasonal visitors. Each species is a wonder, each a crucial part of the ecosystem of which they are part. Many will go unseen by most towpath users, so let's show them off in their full glory. Let's excite the kids, the parents and everybody else that walks the towpath.

Illustrations can be commissioned from local artists that show these species off to their best. Each panel contains one large illustration of a species. This is accompanied by other information about the species and other related species. There may be opportunities to involve local art students in this.





# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

## Design concepts: Wildlife and the environment

### Concept ideas Natural heritage and ecology

A number of different pieces already exist along the canal/river corridor, that have sought to interpret wildlife in a more interesting way, while still being realistic and accurate in their portrayal, so as to encourage people to explore and identify what they see.



Produced as part of HLF funded Local Heritage Project some 13 years ago, this installation stands on the Stroudwater Navigation near Ebley Mill. It has remained unblemished by any kind of vandalism. Maybe people respect the quality of the image.

Close to Stroud and produced for a project for a local environmental charity, the Dipper and the Daubenton's Bat are high quality illustrated, larger than life cut outs, sited in places where these species are seen or known to exist.



The sites are chosen carefully. They are not forecast or highlighted in any way, They are visible, but require the walker/visitor to use their eyes as they walk the riverbank or towpath. They have often appeared on social media as people discover them.



There are a great variety of species along the Stroudwater corridor. that could be highlighted in this way, not least the greater and lesser horseshoe bats that roost in two of the World War II pillboxes.



# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

## Design concepts: Wildlife and the environment

As well as the two-dimensional illustrated or photographic image, we should also consider three dimensional, sculptural forms of interpretation. This can of course take many forms.

Art for art's sake is important. Some art does not require an explanation or a story. If we choose to provide three dimensional forms of interpretation along the canal corridor, we should be sure of its role.

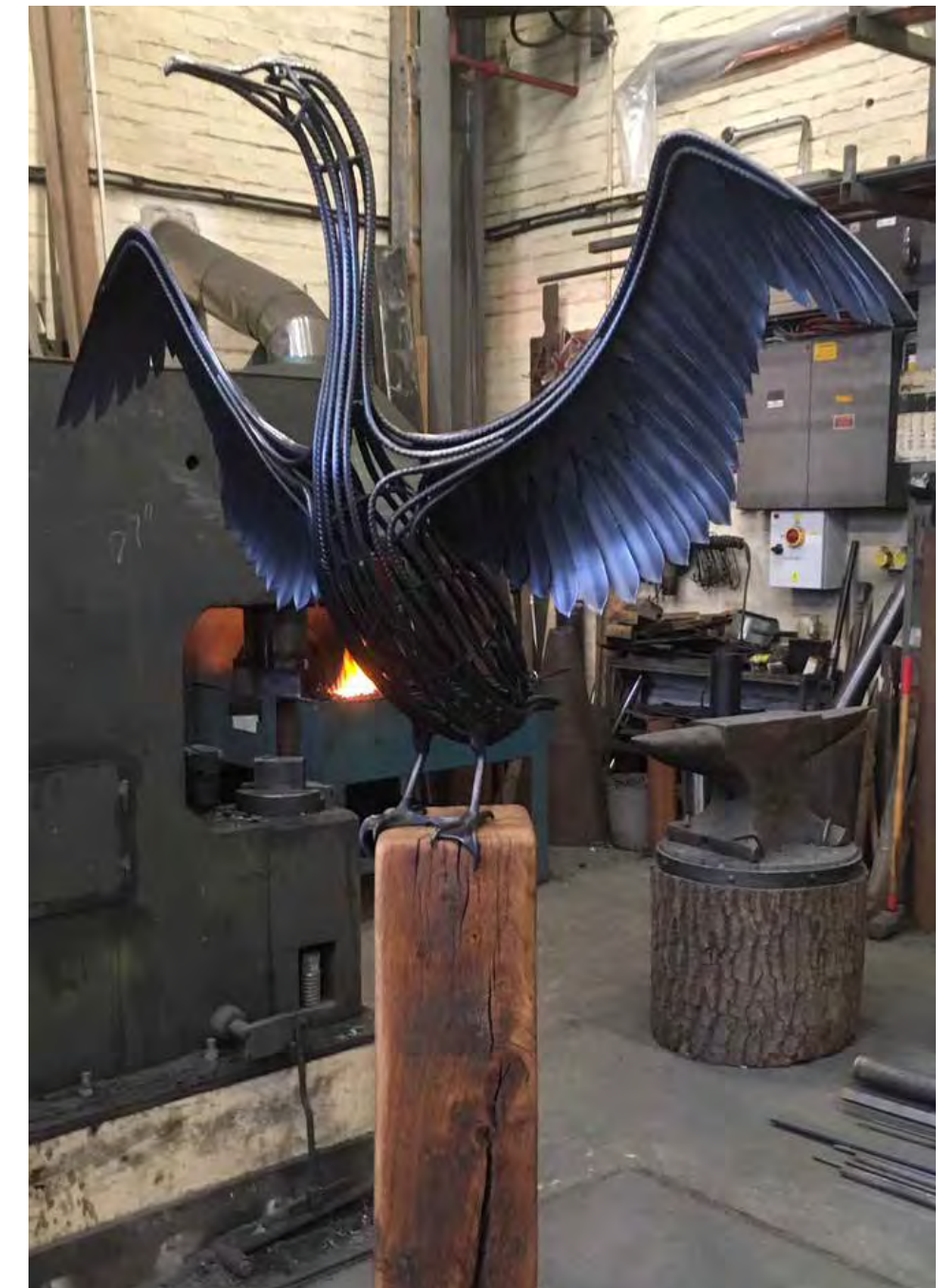
- What function it is intended to perform.
- What is its relevance to the canal and its wider corridor,
- What is the message
- Why is it located in a certain spot.
- Who is it intended for.
- How long will it remain in good condition
- Is it resilient to the natural elements and human interference

Should more sculptural forms of interpretation be an option for this project, we have shown some examples here of the kind of work that might be relevant.

This allows us to involve other artists and creative practitioners - professional, amateur, trainee.

We are blessed in the Stroud Valleys. It has a higher than average concentration of creative people.

Budgets may be the defining factor in how far we can go. We should also explore the potential for business sponsorships and additional dedicated funding





# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

## Design concepts: exterior interpretation samples

Some samples of previous exterior interpretation are shown here.

### Right: Priory Park, Dudley

The traditional interpretation panel is still an important way to engage people. One can be creative with the structures on which the panel sits, designing them in a way that reflects the nature of the site and content of the panel.

### Far right: Cotswold Water Park

The Coots head is constructed out of oak planks. The eyes are added for a playful use, for kids to clamber through. Between the two heads there is a flat seat. Sitting here one can view the lake, where there are plenty of coots to observe.

### Below/right/far right: Dartington Deer Park

The deer park's origins date back to Norman England. These interpretive installations were part of an HLF restoration project.

1. Seven leaping fawns guide people from Dartington Hall to the Deer Park.

2. Full size Fallow deer leaping (distance and height real). Kids can see how far they can jump and measure against the base board.

3. One of a family of deer (female and fawn not too far away), visible in the woodland.



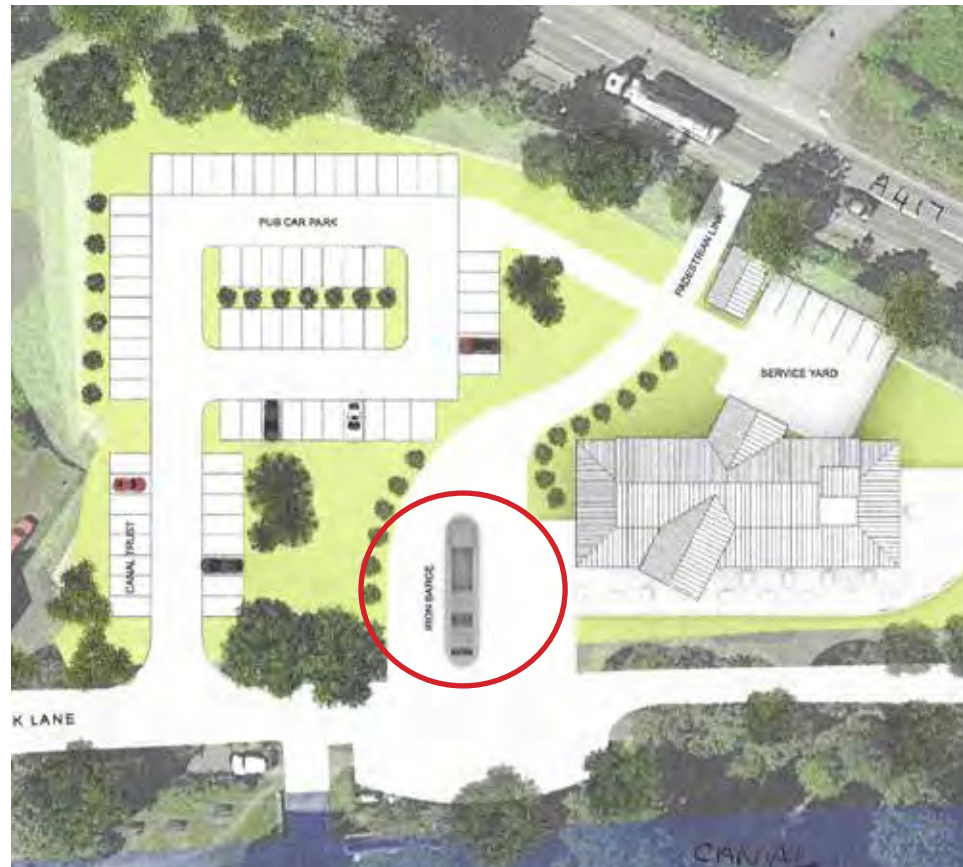


# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

## Design concepts: exterior interpretation opportunity

Should the proposed development adjacent to Pike Lock happen, then it is likely that the barge Leviathan will be moved a short distance from its current resting place by the slipway across the lane.

CCC have already identified a location for this close to the proposed eatery (see below) and considered the barge as a potential interpretation point.



This presents a great opportunity. A dedicated point in its own space at a location where a significant number of canal users and visitors, local, regional and national will move through, although

How we use this opportunity will take great thought. We will need to see what can be achieved practically with the physical hull itself and ensure that all health and safety considerations are put in place.

Then look at how we can engage others in the process of providing interpretation for the site.



The barge is 60' long and almost 7' wide. This in itself means there is ample space to add some visual interpretation along the length of its hull. If, however, as CCC intend, we are able to access its interior, then the opportunities for interpretation are multiplied significantly.

Should this site not be developed as currently proposed, then maybe the barge can be relocated elsewhere?



# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

## Design concepts: existing exterior interpretation phase 1B

In showing the samples on the previous pages, we need to consider some of the things that are already there on Phase 1B.

There are a number of interpretive installations that were installed during the planning stage of the project before the post-covid reboot.

Two of these are sound posts with the sound system in each case built into a totem like pole at the Ocean (below) and a lock gate at Blunder Lock (right).



may get overlooked as being a sound post. The inclusion of a graphic panel, possibly in the central window (a zinc etched one might be more sympathetic) might attract more attention.

We do need to look at these installations and assess their value and their current locations.

Below. Also at the Ocean, close to the totem, maybe too close to the totem, the rudder from a boat stands as a piece of sculpture in its own right.



Each sound post has three soundtracks. The figures for how many times the buttons have been pressed for each are below. They were installed in Spring 2021.

<b>Ocean Mast:</b>	
1 'Welcome to The Ocean'	2855
2 'Ginormous Yellow Crane'	2035
3 'Poem for The Ocean'	1731
<b>Total</b>	<b>6621</b>
<b>Blunder Lock Gate:</b>	
1 'Blunders of Blunder Lock'	479
2 'There's Work To be Done' - poem for volunteers	284
3 'Motorbike' - volunteer interviews of restoration lock finds	335
<b>Total</b>	<b>1098</b>

These numbers will not represent how many times each soundtrack has been listened to and for how long. Buttons are pressed for the sake of pressing buttons.

The variance in numbers is probably due to the visibility of each post. The pole is highly visible in its location, the lock gate far less so and it



# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

## Design concepts: Interior interpretation samples

With the building of two new canalside eating places and the existing Fromebridge Mill pub, we have three potential sites where interior interpretation/information may be possible.

Straightforward wall mounted displays would be fine for this, such that no floor space is occupied, being free for the businesses to go about their daily work unhindered. But interest can be added to the graphics with the use of small relief details (right).

The units below can be moved around the barn when space allows. As well as being a unique, historic barn that welcomes schools and other groups, it is also a wedding venue and community hub.





# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

## Design concepts: Interior interpretation - miniature museums

We cannot at this point say with any certainty what opportunities for indoor interpretation will exist at venues along the canal, existing and yet to be built.

Working with local schools may provide an opportunity to introduce the 'miniature museum' concept for use with schools.

'Miniature Museums takes a creative approach to heritage interpretation in the form of an interactive cabinet of curiosity with a mixture of objects, images, sounds, automata, lighting and written word, designed to evolve with feedback and contributions from visitors as part of a longer project'.

The experience of MM, particularly with schools is best used as part of the Skills and Learning strategy and this can be developed further.

We will need to consider where the resource is best used. Will it be semi-permanent, being able to be moved between different venues. The Museum in the Park has an annual footfall of between 50,000 and 60,000 and might be an ideal location for such a resource.

We will need to ensure that there is some link with the themes and stories being promoted through the overall interpretation strategy, including nature.

We should also look at adding value to the resource. What can be added to make it more engaging and inspirational. This may come down to the objects that can be included in the resource.

As well as historic heritage items/artefacts it would be good to include natural/wildlife objects. First hand experience of this tells me just how how excited and inspired children can become when they are able to handle such things. They are also a great way to engage children of many ages in art based activities leading to a wider understanding of the flora or fauna in question.



### Invitation to host... The Miniature Museum of Memories: WATER



**Water** is a Tara Downs & Bart Sabel project conceived in association with *Walking the Land* and *The Museum in the Park*, and is funded by the *Cotswold Conservation Board*.

*The Miniature Museum of Memories (MMM)* takes different themes and forms, and moves location. This year it manifests itself in an old Museum collectors' cabinet. The theme is water in stories of our area, past and present, with a miniaturised mix of factual and fictitious interpretation...

As visitors explore its drawers they discover a mixture of historic items, created curiosities and snippets of knowledge, memories and feelings about water and place. Opening drawers triggers lighting and recordings. Some material is from the Museum in the Park's stores, donated or loaned by other organizations and individuals.

This is a growing and symbolic collection: we invite people to contribute, and encourage visitors to post their own watery memories, images and tiny objects directly into the miniature museum whenever they visit, or to bring them to our collecting days, when we record and gather.

We aim to arouse curiosity, involve others and delight in the detail. Material we receive may inform, inspire and be included in future exhibitions and interpretive installations.



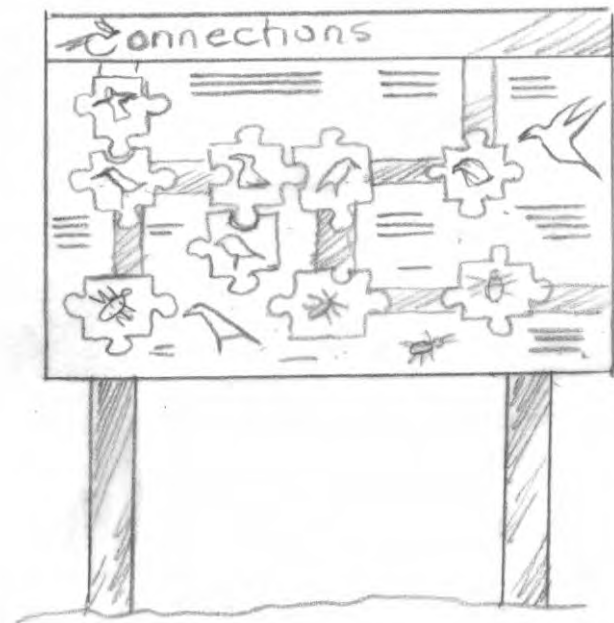


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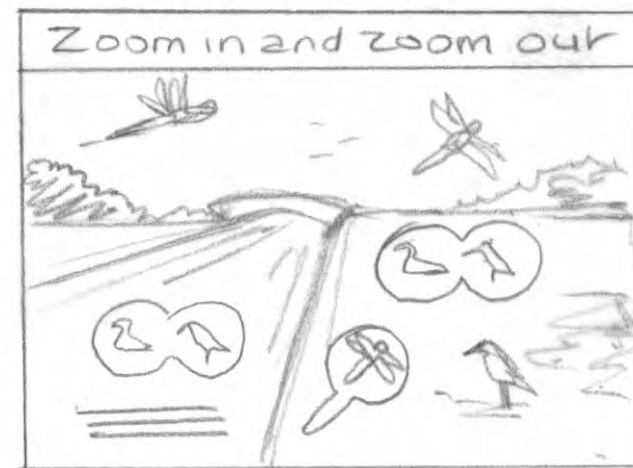
## Visual sketches

These few pages are in no way intended as designs or ideas that will end up along the canal or elsewhere close by. Some may be taken forward, adapted, tweaked, developed with other practitioners, communities, school or college groups if that is how things evolve. Some may provide a backstop or things for the future.

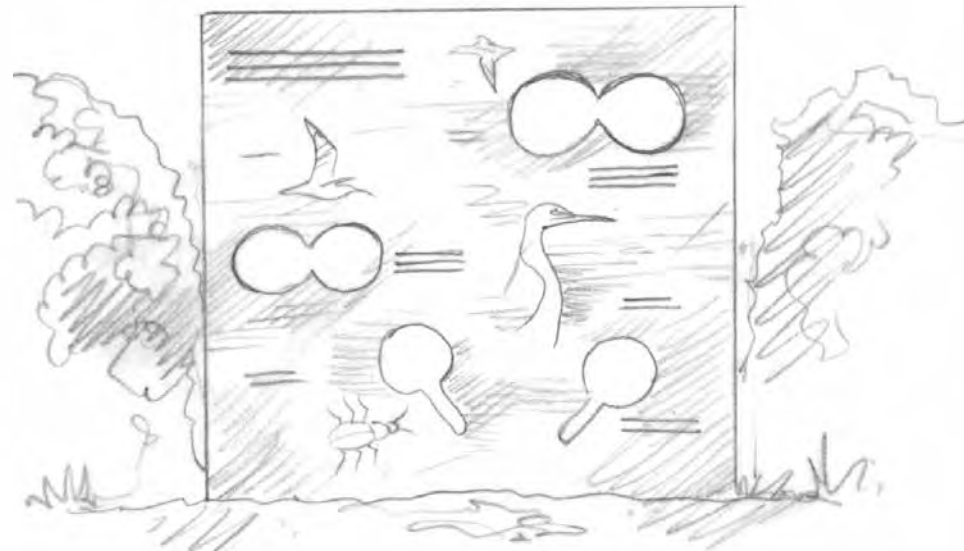
As such they provide some starting points for discussion and creative thought.



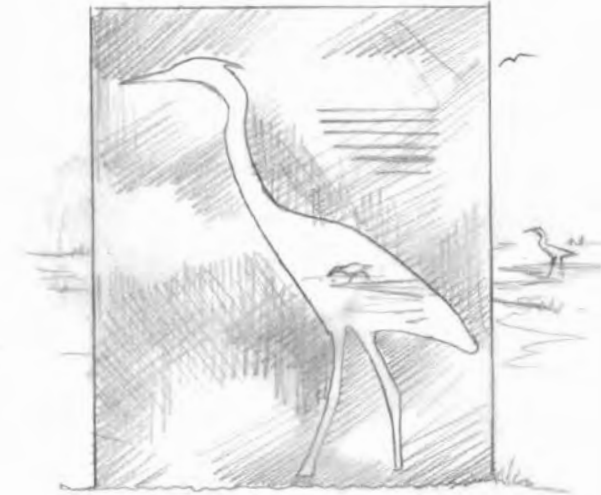
The theme of connectivity



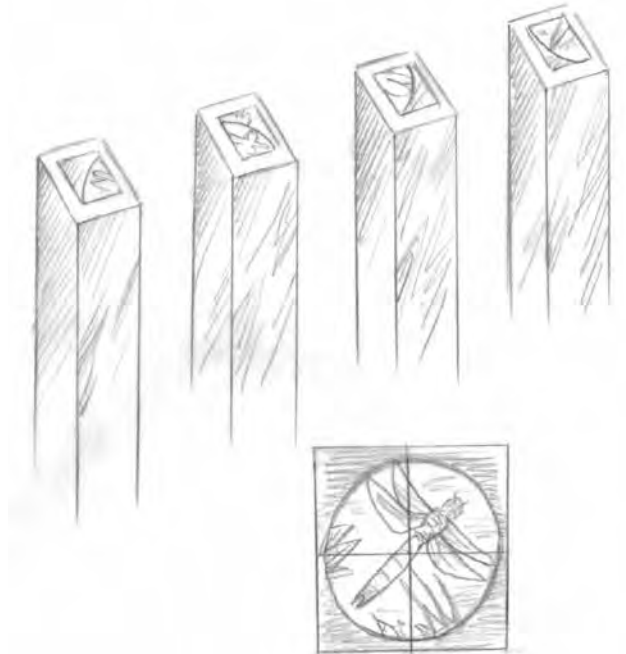
Interpretation panel



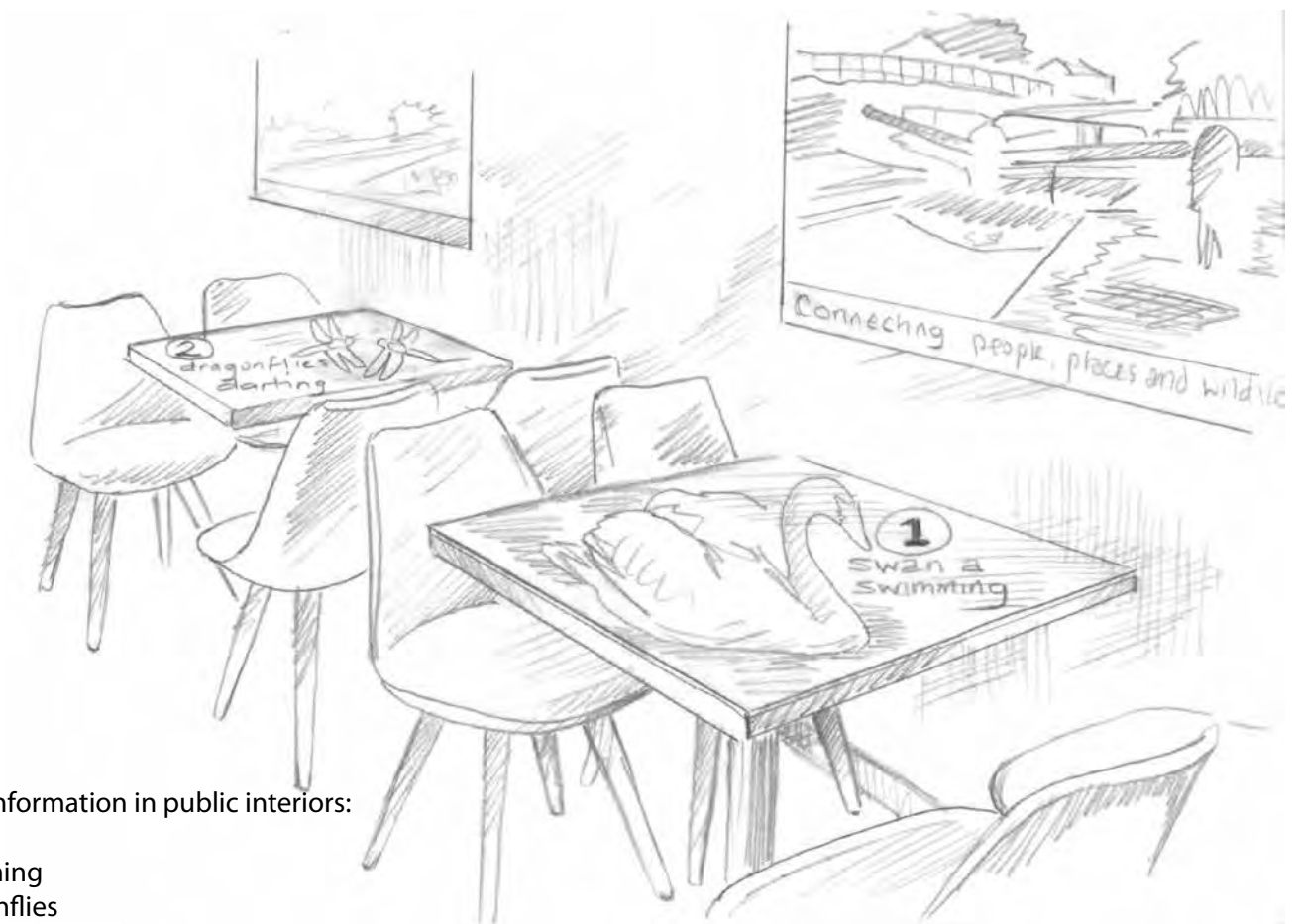
Viewing and interpretation combined



Corten steel view through



Rubbing trail



Interpretation/information in public interiors:

Table numbers:

1 swan a swimming

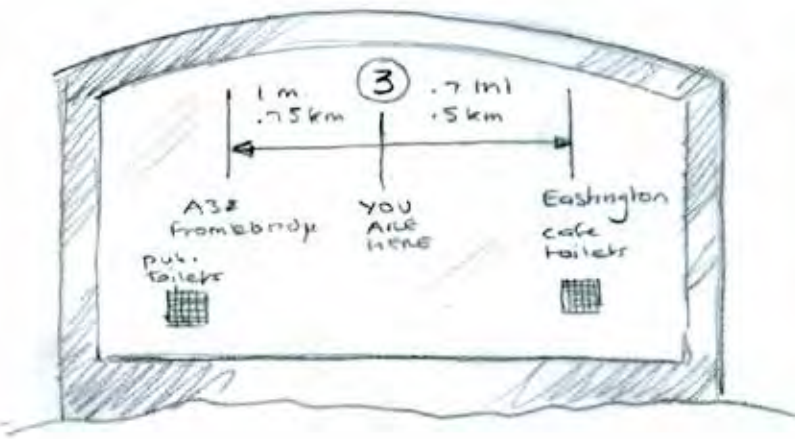
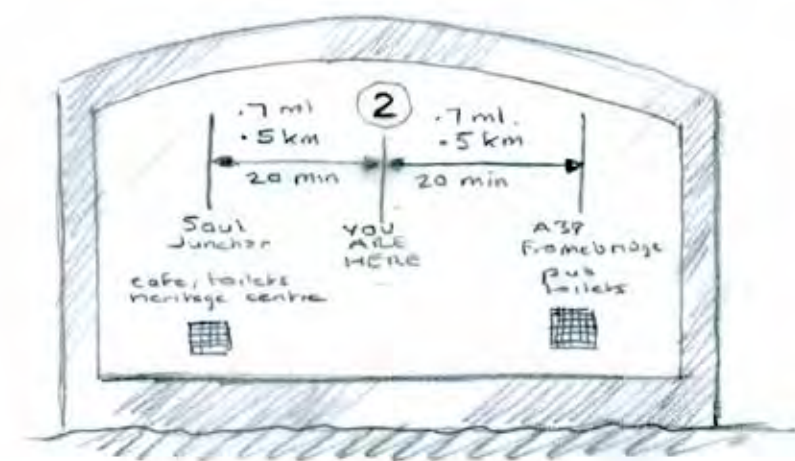
2 darting dragonflies

3 ducks diving

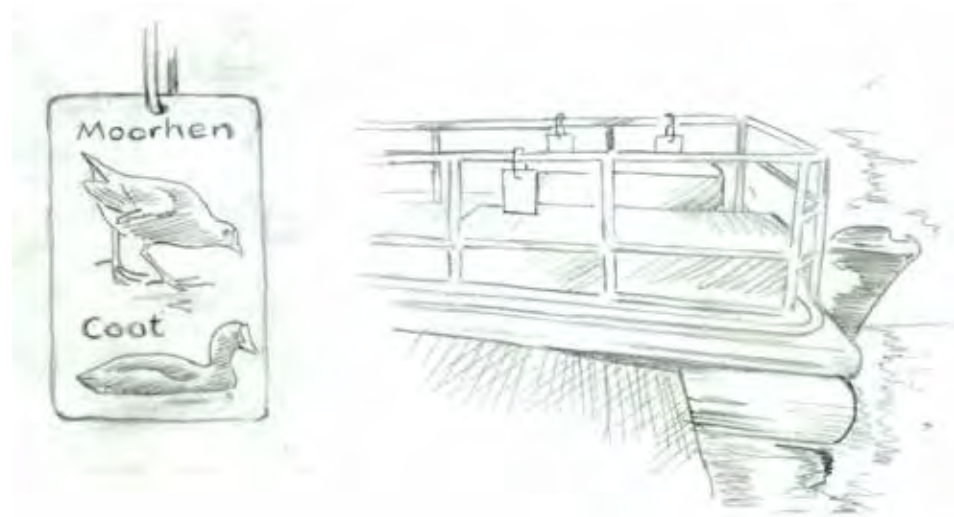


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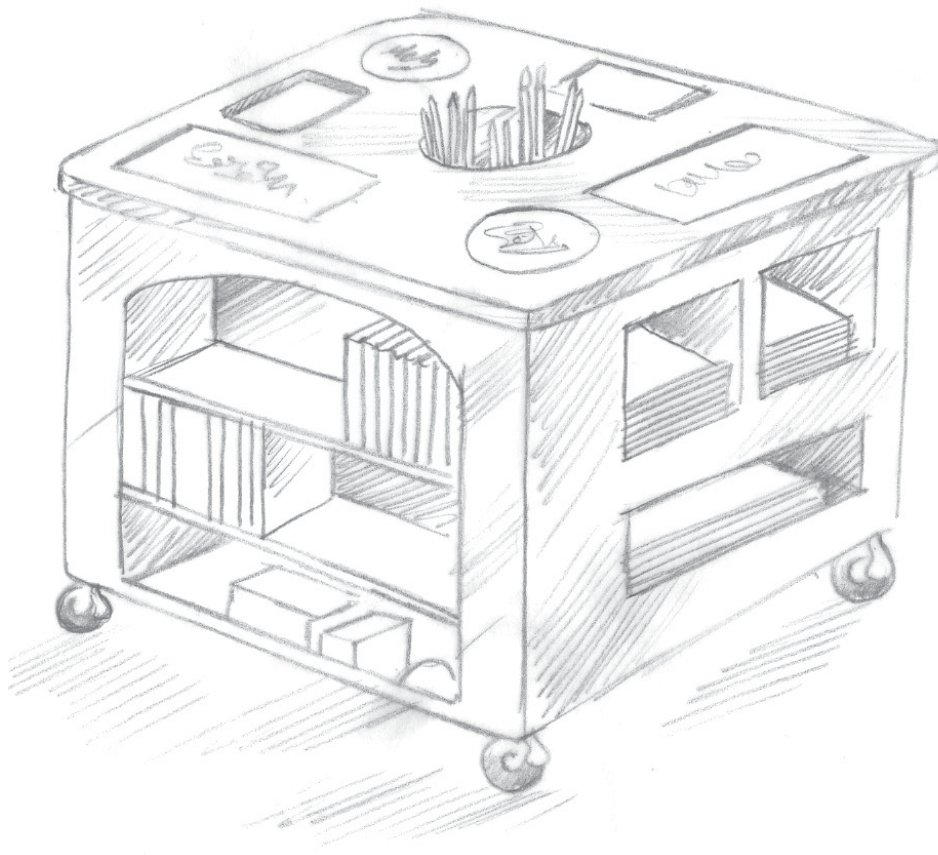
## Visual sketches



A new kind of milestone.  
Primadura on Oak



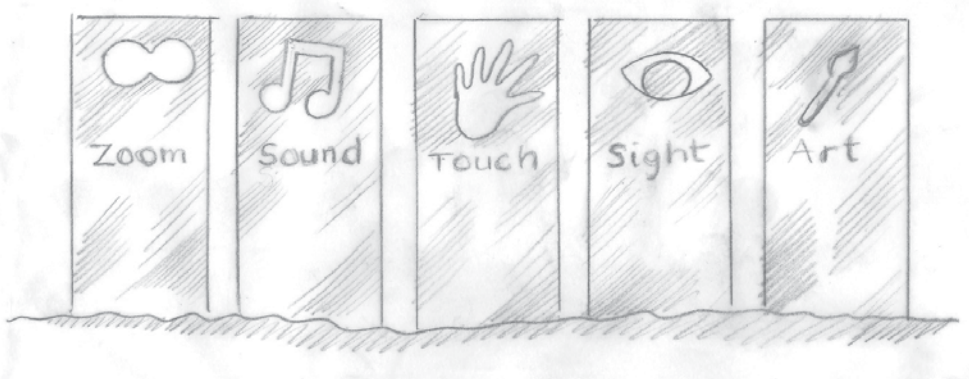
Boatmobility: A4 graphic plaques with fixing to boat framework. Can be removed and changed with different designs. On a strap for convenience and safety.



Portable multi-activity desk station



For younger children/toddlers.  
Blocks spin. have four related images



Sensory provocations as part of trail.



# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

## Community engagement in the interpretation process

How we engage local communities in the interpretation process requires great thought. The number of locations and situations where interpretation is both essential and practical are always limited. Whilst we need to ensure that as many people as possible get to feel a part of this, we need to ensure that there is good spread of interpretation that meets the needs of particular sites and the themes and messages related to those sites.

Who are the communities we might seek to involve:

- **Local residents (canal-side and beyond)**
- **Canal users**
- **Interest groups, hobbyists**
- **Schools, colleges and nurseries**
- **Business**
- **Special need and vulnerable groups**

Within these broad categories there will be other smaller groups; mothers and toddlers, bird watchers, photographers, fishermen, art groups, etc.

The degree to which members of these communities might wish to be involved, will vary. Some may be very enthusiastic and wish to contribute in a significant way. Others may be happy just be kept informed to varying degrees.

We should look to be as creative as possible, but remember that there needs to be a consistency and continuity in the things we put in place. That the content and the structures/formats that carries that content, need as a rule, to be in place for a minimum of ten years. That the materials we use have to be durable and fit for purpose.

Experience tells that these things considered, we should seek to engage people in developing the content, ie the creation of images, illustrative and photographic that can be included in the final designs. But that the choice of materials and the form it takes should remain an executive decision.

However there may be opportunities to work with other creative practitioners, such as sculptors, painters, graffiti artists, mural artists, etc, whose work dictates the medium, materials and the form an interpretive piece might take.

### Canal Spring Festival 2023

This festival is planned for the weekend of 13/14 May. The second day on the Sunday gives those involved in the restoration, the opportunity to engage first hand with the communities of Stonehouse in particular, but others nearby and potentially, from further afield.

Engagement with the people of Stonehouse is crucial to the success of the Phase 1B project, so the Spring Festival will be important in kick starting this process. The people of Stonehouse and those who administer the town, are very keen to forge stronger links to the canal and maybe in so doing, with Stroud itself.

This plan will be presented to the Executive of CCC at the end of March. Footprint will be at the festival with copies of the final plan and various supplementary material to begin the process of gathering comments from the public, but also inviting them to get involved in that interpretation.

Ahead of this, working with others on the CCC team (SB, EN, SW), we will begin to promote a process by which residents of Stonehouse can learn about these opportunities, so that some will already be informed when they visit the stand at the festival.

This can be done through providing on site information at important locations in the town or forwarding this information to other organisations in the town, who can distribute this to others through established routes.

### Stonehouse Library and Community Centre

One good location is Stonehouse Library. At a meeting in February, we saw the potential of the space here for storytelling, graphic displays/exhibitions and also on screen information loops. Those who look after the library were really enthusiastic and keen to provide creative learning activities and events for a wide range of users during the restoration project and beyond.

Short term and with the Canal Spring Festival in mind, CCC could display information about the festival. This could include the ideas around the interpretation.



*Local author Katie Fforde at the re-opening of the new Stonehouse Library in August 2022*

The library is very close to Stonehouse Community Centre, Laburnum Park and also the lovely Chapel Garden. Taken as a grouping, these locations are ideal for community focused events and activities away from the canal.



*Stonehouse Community Centre behind Laburnum Park green space  
Jaggery - [geograph.org.uk/p/5626961](https://geograph.org.uk/p/5626961)*



# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

## Community engagement in the interpretation process

### Community submissions

The intention is to provide members of the community the chance of having work included on canalside interpretation.

CCC will invite members of the community to submit their favourite piece of artwork or photograph for the project. These will be categorised both in terms of subject matter, professional/ amateur, age, etc, to make this as fair as possible.

All submissions will be displayed at an exhibition in Stonehouse (library, community centre, canalside venue) for the people of Stonehouse to see. A small number will be selected to be part of permanent interpretative installations along the tow path.

We should be flexible and practical in response to the number of submissions. Stonehouse Library has agreed in principle to receive and collate entries.

We know that the Cotswold Canals have always been a magnet for artists and photographers, in their hey day and in times since. Every community has its creative individuals, its hobbyists and Stonehouse is no exception.

The exhibition could be staged in 2024, giving people plenty of time to visit the canal through the different seasons. We can begin to circulate information about this during the spring of 2023, linking to the Canal Spring Festival on 14 May. Here people can take away details about the exhibition and how to enter.

Working with the Skills and Learning Team, we can involve the local schools, both primary and secondary. In Stonehouse these are:

***Hopelands Preparatory School.***

***Wycliffe College***

***Stonehouse Park Infant School***

***Park Junior School***

***Wycliffe Preparatory School***

***Maidenhill School***

***Great Oldbury Primary Academy***

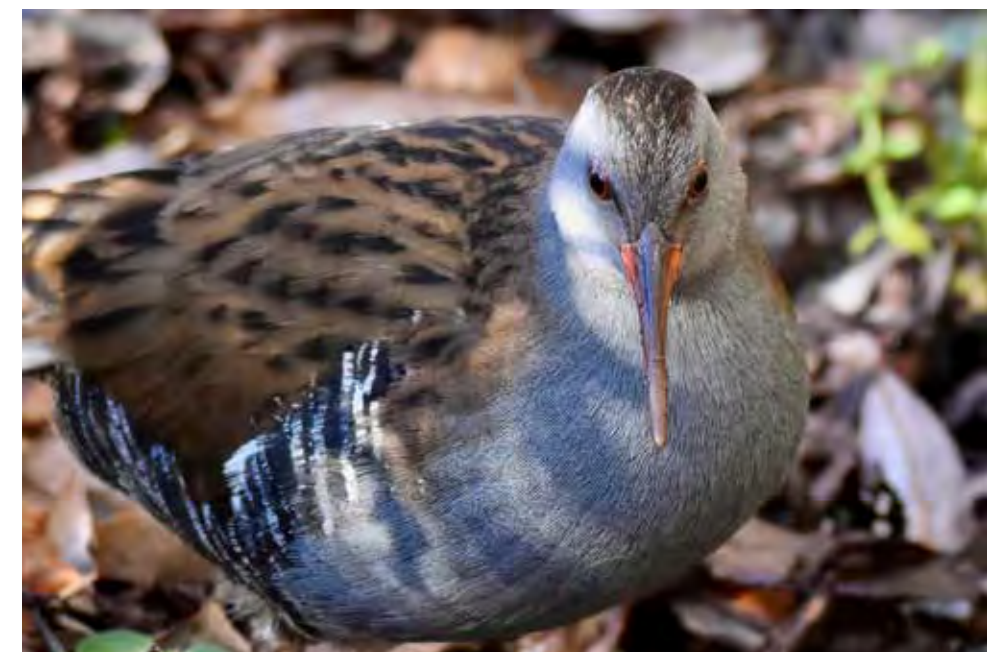
We can also add:

***William Morris School***

***Eastington County Primary School***



*Josh Adamms from Minchinhampton photographed this Otter on the Cotswold Canals.*



*Paul Sutton. Paul walks the canal regularly, recording and photographing the wildlife he sees. Above a water rail.*



# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

## Community engagement/skills and learning: primary schools

### Previous Cotswold Canals based school projects

#### Brimscombe Port Wall (Brimscombe Primary School)

Schools can be a part of the afore-mentioned art competition, but there is always scope to involve local schools in direct engagement to develop ideas for interpretation.

By way of considering this, here are some examples of previous projects where schools have been involved. As it happens, these are on the Cotswold Canals. While they go back some years, they are still relevant.

Below and right: The restoration of the Brimscombe Port Wall, east of Stroud, was the focus of a People's Lottery project. The children of Y6 in Brimscombe Primary School visited the canal to learn about the port and the adjacent canal. There followed a classroom session where they carried out some research about life at the port.

Every child produced a drawing/painting. They were all put on display in the classroom. Every child's drawing was included on two interpretation panels titled: 'What was it like along the canals and around Brimscombe Port in the past?'

A weatherproof booth was created in an archway in the port wall where the panels were displayed, together with other information about the project and a view of the reverse of the wall.



#### Ebley Mill (St Matthews School)

Children in St Matthews School were involved in producing ideas for the mosaic which has stood outside Ebley Mill for a number of years on a stone cairn.

They visited the canal and learnt all about its history and wildlife. A session followed in the classroom where they created their own drawings. They were asked to think about how they might look as a mosaic.

The drawings were sent to a mosaic artist to translate into a design.

The artist had a final session with the children, cutting and applying tile pieces to the overall design.

The final mosaic now stands on a stone cairn at the canal entrance to Ebley Mill.





# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

## Community engagement: business

### Business

The Stroud Valleys and the Vale are well known for their great number of creative individuals and skilled practioners. But we should also look to use local businesses to help bring the interpretation to life if possible.

There may be opportunities to partner creatives, such as students from Stroud College with particular companies to help them realise their designs.

Contact has already been made with a few local businesses to explore the potential for this. The seat below was a bespoke item produced by Ironcraft, based in the Stroudwater Business Park in Stonehouse.



It points to the idea of making creative pieces multi-functional, in this case, seating.



A project for Mary Stevens Park in Stourbridge, West Midlands. A metalwork company from the Black Country working with the interpretation designer to provide a structure to carry an interpretation panel. The metalwork (3 installations) designs are related to park stories and history and mirrored the appearance of the very grand and ornate gates at the main entrance to the park.



This stainless steel monolith was produced by a company in Stroud for an HLF Local Heritage Initiative project on the Stroudwater Navigation. The four 'windows' each housed a wood carving by people who attended a sculpture course at Hawkwood College. The carvings related to the history of of 'Snow Mill' close to the canal, owned at the time by Snow Business, who sponsored the whole piece.





# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

## Community engagement/skills and learning: early years

The Skills and Learning Team are largely responsible for enaging those in formal eduaction and this can take many forms.

There are opportunities to explore the potential for physical canal-side interpretation with some of these formal learning communities and conversations have taken place and are continuing to take place with two in particular:

These are the Little Angels Day Nursery and Stroud College:

### Little Angels Day Nursery

Little Angels Day Nursery, providing childcare in Stonehouse and Stroud, is designed to be a celebration of the Early Years – caring, sharing and learning through play, being valued as an individual whilst developing friendships with other members of the nursery ‘family’.

### Gardens

‘We have a huge totally enclosed beautiful garden within a conservation area overlooking the canal’. We encourage outdoor play all year round as we passionately feel that all children should be exposed to playing in a natural environment in the fresh air as much as possible.



From Little Angels web site

### Forest Area

This is behind our Pre-school building and is a natural woodland. No commercial toys are taken into this area as children are encouraged under supervision and age ability to climb trees, hunt for bugs in our ‘Bug Hotel’, build dens and toast marshmallows on a open fire. Forest school is such an adventure for children to enjoy on a daily basis.

The nursery caters for 120 children every single day. A tall iron railing separates their garden play area from the canal towpath.

The manager and staff are keen to create stronger links with the canal and the restoration project and would welcome some form of exterior interpretation that would both inform but also include some interactivity.



From Little Angels web site

The nursery feeds all of the local primary schools in Stonehouse, Great Oldbury, Eastington and further afield. Here is an opportunity to begin to familiarise children at a very early age with the canal and all of the stories associated with it.

Opportunities may exist to bring different generations together. Might this be a project that college students might be involved in, originating and designing items that might engage the children at the nursery.

We should seek to work closely with the nursery and/or other professional educators who have worked with this particular age group.

Things we put in place might might provide learning as well as play opportunities for the children.



# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

## Community engagement/skills and learning: further education

### Stroud College

Talks have been very fruitful in respect of involving students on a number of different creative media courses at the college. These cross a number of skills and disciplines.

Head of the creative art course, Tom Henderson has provisionally agreed to his students being set course work for interpretation for the Phase 1B restoration of the canal.

CCC would provide a professional brief to the students. This brief would:

- Give a background to the Phase 1B restoration
- Explain interpretation and its many facets
- Present the main themes of the interpretation plan
- Emphasise 'sense of place'
- Encourage the students to visit the canal
- Provide a time frame with milestones

And as with the idea for Stonehouse residents, all works would go towards an exhibition (venue tbc). Works would be judged and a number chosen for siting somewhere on the canal as permanent pieces of interpretation.

That said, the idea of temporary works of art was also discussed (eg graffiti panels, photographic displays) and even performance - music and video.

This project would be best served looking ahead to 2024, possibly 2025. Therefore all options to be kept open, pending on site developments along the canal during the next few years.

In June 2022, Stroud School of Art students were able to hold their first End of year exhibition for the first time since 2019, due to Covid:

"We are so pleased to hold our end of year exhibition for the first time since 2019. The opening night saw over 600 visitors come to enjoy art, design, photography, game design and music as we turned the studios into a professional exhibition space"



Tom Henderson, Learning Area Manager, Creative Media at South Gloucestershire and Stroud College, with the piece produced by construction students which features in the Level 1 and 2 Art and Design display



Amory Falconer with his documentary photographs taken at Giffords Circus.



'Communion' by Ben Bishop



Becky Watts produced a book of photography and poetry, entitled *Tetelestai*, which she describes as 'an exploration of my life, a photographic journal of surviving. It's a place I can lay down memories as a way of healing.'

Any year, there will be a variety of work and styles that can be applied to a variety of different interpretive pieces.





# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

## Community engagement/skills and learning: further education

### Stroud College

Since 2015 SGS College students have also contributed works of art to the 'Fresh Air' exhibition held bi-annually in the village of Quenington.

<https://www.freshairsculpture.com/>

<https://www.freshairsculpture.com/artists/artists-2022/>

At this highly prestigious event, students work has been shown alongside that of professional and well known sculptors.

Some of the students works of art on shown here:



CCC have been having discussions with SGS to look to see how these skills might find a place in the public domain of the Cotswold Canals.



We should consider not just Phase 1B. Opportunities may exist for some sculptural work at sites on Phase 1A.



# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

## Equity of access

The guidelines laid down for the accessibility to printed information for those with physical impairment, particularly relating to sight, are well established. Their consideration is a part of any project that seeks to provide equity of access for all.

The task of the interpretation design consultant is to seek to provide this equity of access within a framework of creativity, durability, longevity and sustainability. It needs to be relevant to specific places, locations, maybe events. It may need to follow corporate/branding guidelines.

If every sign across the UK followed the guidelines implicitly, every sign would have the same background tint (a 15-20% tint of yellow, ie cream). Copy would be limited to a small number of fonts and printed black on the cream. There is a minimum font size for headings, for sub-headings, for body copy.

None of the above are to be ignored.

However, the interpretation will need to engage, to stimulate, to inspire, maybe even empower the widest range and number of people that interact with it.

The existing interpretation for Phase 1A took this into account. The colour/tint palette and font style and height followed one of the basic templates established for visual accessibility in its basic form, ie how it pertains to format, colour palette, font choice and size. This takes into account not only those with limited vision, but also colour blindness.

The design ideas for interpretive panels presented in this document can continue this.

We can go further and think about specific communities and visitors. What about small children, toddlers, children in buggies, what of those with other sensory impairments, hearing for example. What about international visitors or those for whom English is not their first language.

This is where an emphasis on imagery (two and three dimensional) can help. Often complicated stories/systems/processes can be explained through an illustration. This can be combined with universally recognised iconography.



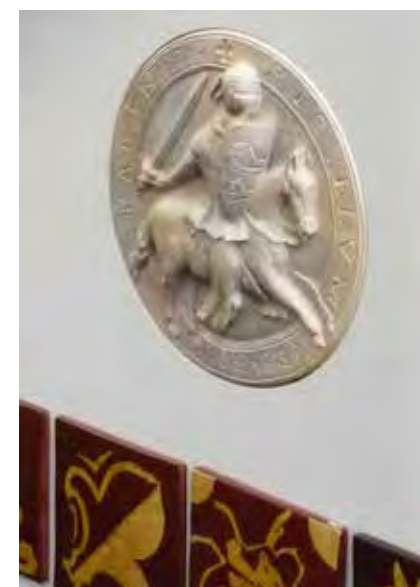
Above: Zinc-etched plates give a good solid relief image and text. This can be simplified and braille can be used if required.

Below: Sculpted Stones were added to the wall which was restored at Brimscombe Part on the Cotswold Canals. There were three of these and the numbers carved were the answers contained in a quiz in an leaflet produced for the project



Graphics and relief sculpture combined, providing a tactile experience for all, but specifically for those with impaired vision.

These might be out of doors (above) or indoors (right)





# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

## Equity of access: various towpath users

Engaging interpretation and important information on towpath facilities and amenities for the family.

Multifunctional installation that combines this information. Visual (right) shows one option using interpretive panel in same style as those currently in situ along Phase 1a.

This carries information on topic relevant to the location. Is this example - wildlife, as this links to the additional panel at the base.

You are never too young to begin learning about and begin identifying the wildlife around us. Here is an opportunity to spark the curiosity of the smallest children that use the canal - toddlers. Simple colourful illustrations are sited on a panel at the correct height for wheelchair users and young children as they are pushed in their buggies or walking with their parents.

The particular illustrations shown here have been produced by a local Stroud mum, who felt there was no information for her children along the canal. She often walk the canal with other mums and toddlers.

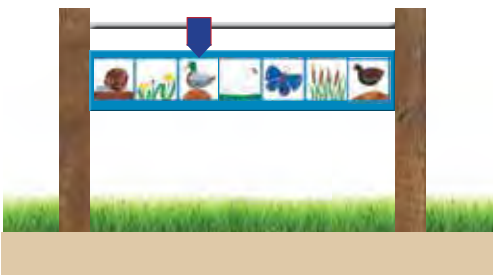
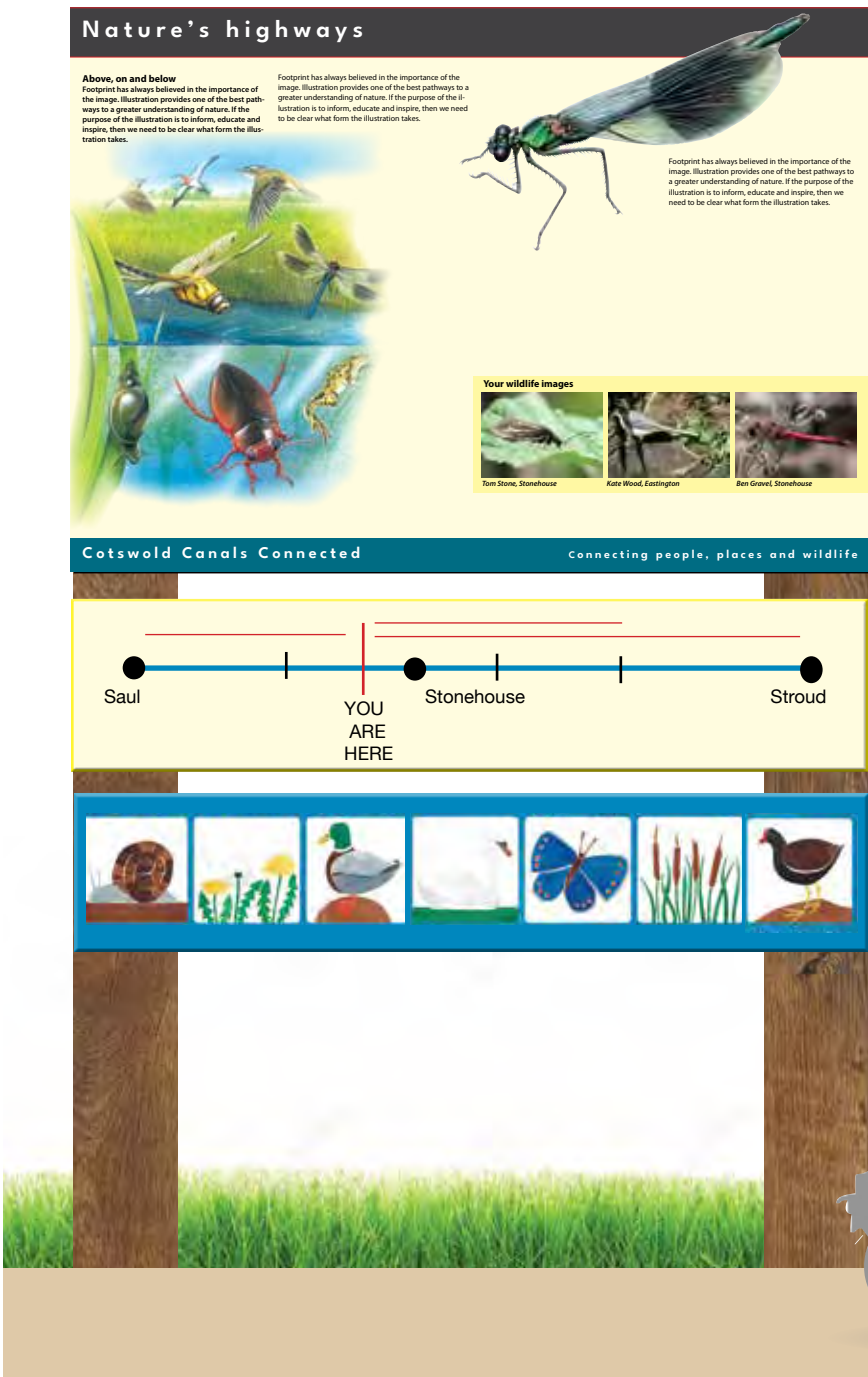


Linking with the skills and learning objectives, we might introduce phonix into the interpretation.

Information on the availability and location/distance of facilities suchas toilets or refreshments are important to families with children and smaller children in particular. They are also important to other groups - special needs, physically impaired, etc.

A second additional panel can carry this kind of information.

The information could be broken down. The toddlers panel might be a stand alone item with some additional interactive element for the toddlers themselves.





# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

## Equity of Access: View from the canal

### Boatmobility

There is another community of people who might enjoy some form of interpretation and their’s would be a different view of the canal. The view would be from the water looking left and right to the banks of the canal, its towpath and the surrounding environment.

The community are those with mobility and learning disabilities, along with their friends and families. They are catered for by Boatmobility, a charity that provides water based activties along the canal. Their boats are accessible to wheelchair users. They also provide a catamaran.

Boats run all year round catering for 60-100 people per week, around 5000 a year.



Boatmobility at the opening of the Jubilee railway Bridge

Boatmobility’s boats are based just west of Ryeford Bridge, moored beside the towpath. A new base of operation is being built for them on the other side from their current one with improved access to their boats, storage facilities, mobiloos and somewhere for teas and coffees.

We should look to welcome their guests to the site with some relevant interpretation/information.

We can then carry this over to the boats themselves , seeking to add value to the passenger experience.



The boat above can carry 8 people including crew and can cater for two wheelchairs. Boatmobility’s new pontoon (below) can carry 10 people and can carry 6 wheelchair users.



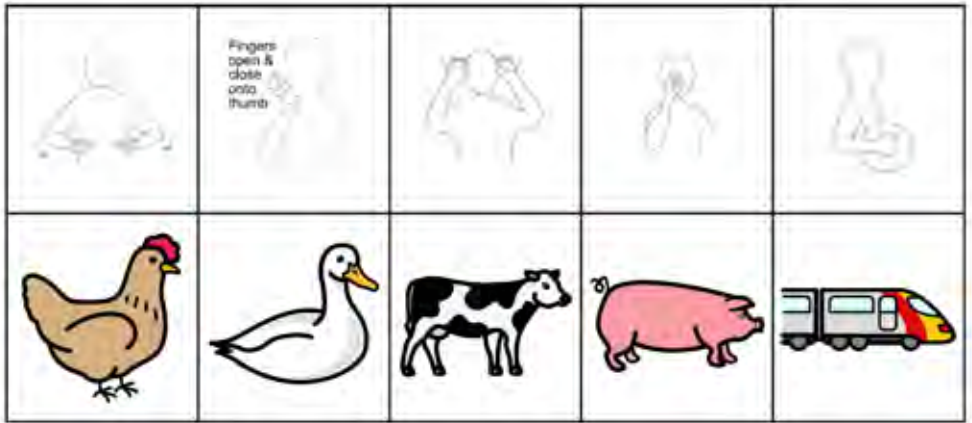
First discussions with Boatmobilty were focused on the provison of some form of fixed interpretation on the inside rails of the two boats above, in particular the pontoon. This is an option.

However, further discussion considered how individual passengers might have some form of hand held information.

This might be fixed in some way to the framework of the boat.

The information would need to be simple and pictorial, allowing for a significant number who cannot read and with visual impairments. Images would have to be clear and unambiguous.

The Makaton system of widgits might be appropriate and should be explored.



<https://www.sensorytrust.org.uk/blog/top-tips-for-using-widgits>

Boatmobility pointed to the need to clearly identify some of the wildlife seen from the boats. ‘Is it a coot or a moorhen?’ ‘How many cygnets do the swans have?’ might lead to some interaction with passengers, questions, having a quiz. Maybe some images along the canalbank for the passengers to spot?



# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

## Equity of access

Earlier in the plan, we looked at the need to provide basic, on the ground information to guide people along the canal and inform them about its facilities, amenities, etc. By its very nature, this kind of information needs to be as inclusive as possible.

There will be practical limitations on what can be included in any given format allocated to this information. There needs to be a clear rationale behind the information given, how it is prioritised and displayed.

The equity of access guidelines that exist for interpretation, need to be considered here and for all information signage required for the canal regeneration.

It may help to look at a project carried out by Footprint for Stroud Town Council. This was Phase One of a three phase project to update and improve signage in the town:

1. Welcome/arrival signage at key locations
2. Wayfinding signage in the town centre
3. Interpretation signage/other in the town centre

Cutting to the matters we are concerned with here, the design look and the colour palette agreed on for Phase 1 would need to be applied in Phases 2 and 3. After a period of consultations with a wide range of stakeholders including the public, where opinions were diverse and often very strong about the town and how it should be represented, we began to close in on something that was reaching a consensus.

We wanted to establish a colour palette that reflected the town in its wider context, its history, its vernacular and its setting. We were looking for something that had impact without being garish. It would be strong enough to stand out while still being sympathetic to its surroundings.

It also needed to be as inclusive and accessible as possible. To this end, designs were shown to Stroud Access Group for comment, including a full size mock up. Based on their comments, tweaks were ahead of presenting final designs.

A shortlist of fonts were agreed upon and then the final ones selected. The maps used had been created by Gloucestershire Community Rail Partnership and had already been through this process.

The final design below has been well received by many people. The banner colour is representative of the red brick of Victorian properties in Stroud. The greenish tint (20% value of a pms colour) exists to represent the landscape setting of the town. The flash of gold mirrors the Stroud Town Council logo and offers a subtle sense of quality.

Fonts have been selected for their legibility. The banner font is strong without looking clunky.

The map, as previously stated was previously produced by the GCRP and matches those being used in other towns and cities in the county. This was edited in order to provide the basic information needed.

## Parliament Street Car Park



### Welcome to Stroud

A town of many faces. A town that means different things to those who live and work here.

On a Saturday morning, among the crowds and stalls of the award winning Farmers' Market, Stroud is a market town.

On a walk along Stroud's historic canal, close to the River Frome, Stroud's mills and mill ponds testify to a rich industrial past, when it was one of the greatest centres for textile production in the world.

On any month throughout the year, this is a festival town. We like to celebrate the things that are important to us. Art, music, literature, theatre, the natural world around us and more.

Stroud is also your door to the wonderful Cotswolds landscape that surrounds it - secret wooded valleys with brook and stream and high grassland commons with beech clad slopes that make up the Cotswold escarpment.

**So please stay a while and explore.**



Proceed down the steps. The High Street is directly ahead across the road and can be accessed using the pedestrian crossing.

For further information on events, places to visit, places to stay and more, scan here:





# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

Added value: destination, events, trails

1. Destination Canal
2. Events
3. Walking/heritage trails





# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

## Destination canal

The figures below are obtained from a report produced by Oxford Economics for the Heritage Lottery Fund in 2016 titled *The Impact of Heritage Tourism for the UK Economy*.

- **192 million heritage-motivated trips in the UK in 2015.**
- **£17.5 bn: spend on heritage-motivated trips in the UK in 2015.**
- **£20.2 bn: heritage tourism's contribution to GDP in 2015.**
- **386,000 jobs: supported by heritage tourism in the UK in 2015.**

Heritage tourism is a vital part of the UK economy. In 2015, domestic and international tourists made 192 million trips to visit the UK's cultural, historic and natural assets. They spent £17.5 billion while doing so.

This was 2016 and we have had the pandemic since. As the tourism industry recovers from this, we are experiencing a cost of living crisis. How and where we spend our holiday and leisure time has been affected. Maybe not for all, but we need to consider how the canal project can provide for visitors and tourists from nearby and further afield.

We expect to be engaging local communities along the canal corridor and people who live in Stroud and the surrounding district. We should think wider to the rest of the county, to its major towns and cities. We have two major road routes that run north south along a good length of the country.

How do we make the canal a destination for a greater number of people:

- **Ensure a quality restoration project with people at its heart.**
- **Provide a range of experiences for all people of ages, gender, ethnicity and physical abilities**
- **Provide clear, easy access**
- **Put the basics in place - 'visitor comfort'**
- **Provide clear, concise information pre-arrival and on arrival.**
- **Local transport links - road and rail**
- **Promote canal corridor in its wider context. You do not need to spend all day here. Visit Frampton, Slimbridge, Gloucester Docks, the Stroud Commons, Cotswold Way.**
- **Put boats on the canal as cafes, galleries.**
- **Provide cruises.**

In the short term, we may need to recognise that the covid pandemic, its aftermath and the cost of living crisis, may have had an affect on people's habits and behaviour. This may include how they holiday or seek recreation and relaxation.

They may be looking for more convenient. local days out or breaks, which do not cost too much.

Although this does not sit neatly into the interpretation plan, we should look at how interpretation can add value to the visitor experience.

Across the UK, promoting our rich historical and natural heritage generates income by encouraging visitors to spend their money when they visit sites and attractions. This can boost the local economy.



Plans from January 2022 show a new stadium north of the A419 with training facilities and eco-park to the south of the A419.

There is also another big future development to factor in. The proposed Ecotricity plans for a new Forest Green football stadium and associated eco park on land both side of the A419. South of the A419, this will transform a large area of the missing mile. The canal will run south and adjacent to the development.

This development will bring home and away fans to the stadium (seating 5000) as well as employees to the eco-park. It will all be visible from the M5 motorway.

The Cotswold Canals are conveniently located for access from major road and rail networks. Obviously the M5 and the A38, beneath which the canal will travel.

But Stroud is also on a mainline rail route to Paddington, London and Cheltenham. Stonehouse is on the same mainline route. It is a long walk from Stroud to the Phase 1B section of the canal, but we should be thinking not just about Phase 1B but also 1A as a single canal, where we seek to entice people along its entire length, in a single visit or multiple visits.

The walk from Stonehouse Rail Station to the canal is a relatively short one and there are two pedestrian routes. This begs the question:

- Would people from Stroud use the train for the very quick journey to Stonehouse and back in order to visit the canal?
- Can we encourage more visitors from Cheltenham?
- What about Gloucester?
- What about Bristol?

Both Gloucester and Bristol can become a reality if the campaign to re-open Stroudwater Station is realised. The plan to have a new station on the site of the old Stonehouse Bristol Road station shut in 1965, has a great deal of support, including Gloucestershire County Council, Stroud District Council, Stonehouse Town Council and Ecotricity.

Situated on the existing Gloucester-Bristol line, a new parkway style station could have the potential to link the 55,000 population of Stonehouse and the Stroud valleys to Bristol and the southwest - with all the inherent economic benefits.

<https://www.gloucestershirelive.co.uk/news/gloucester-news/stroud-water-rail-station-campaign-back-6508862>

How we maximise this potential should be part of the conversation with all of the potential stakeholders. This includes the Gloucestershire Community Rail Partnership.

<https://www.gloucestershirecommunityrail.org/>



# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

## Events

In the original Activity Plan submitted to the HLF in 2020, 49% of people interviewed during the consultation outreach, felt that they would visit the canal more if there were specific festivals or events tailored to them and if they were supported to do so through existing networks and organisations.

Events and activities along the canal corridor are a key part of the whole Community Engagement Plan developing alongside the Interpretation. But we should not lose sight of how these events and activities fulfil an interpretation role. They are one of the best ways of engaging people directly and familiarising them with plans and ideas.

The area already has a wonderful array of regular events and many can link to the canal and the ambitions of Cotswold Canals Connected, particularly if we look at the wider context in which the canal sits, both geographically, culturally and naturally.

While we will need to create specific events, we should seek to link to those that already exist. These need not be just along the canal. If we are to reach a wider demographic of people and promote the canal, we should take the canal to them.

This may allow us to reach some of those hard to reach groups who have little or no regular outdoor experiences or contact with nature. Events might be held in communities that are higher on the deprivation index or where there are different ethnic/faith populations.

Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust have an open day at Robinswood Hill which attracts a diverse mixed race audience. This has been one of the most rewarding events for Stroud Nature, interacting with people of different ages, social backgrounds and ethnic mix.

The Canal Spring Festival taking place on the weekend of 13/14 May will be the first major event since the new entire Community Engagement team have been in place. A great opportunity to introduce all the many facets of the restoration to communities living alongside the canal, many of who despite that, do not feel a strong connection to the canal.



The sheer curiosity and the fascination of the young for nature and natural things. The lads below were at the stall for twenty minutes.



Events are a great way to meet and engage those who might enjoy the experiences offered by Boatmobility





# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023a1

## Walking Trails: historical and natural

The Stroud District has long provided some of the finest opportunities for walkers. There is a wide range of walks taking in all of the landscapes and heritage that the area has to cover.

The attraction for many are the ups and downs, offering wonderful and rewarding views and vistas. There are not many flat walks. But the Cotswold Canals provide just that, making them accessible to a wider range of people with differing physical abilities.

The range of walking opportunities is mirrored in the large number of printed and online maps that exist. Many printed maps have disappeared. The Stroud TIC that once stood in the Subscription Rooms, had an extensive collection of walk leaflets, old and new.

It is truthful to say many walks have been duplicated over and again, presented differently, but the same walks. Towpath walks and/or walks that take in the Cotswolds Canals are no different. There are a significant number in existence.

While differing organisations still produce various walking literature, the way many people access details and follow the routes of walks, has changed. Having a printed map/guide to follow is still the preference for a great number of people, but technology has provided a range of mobile phone apps with GPS facility that can fix your location and guide you elsewhere. QR codes can be scanned to take you direct to online information

Cotswold Canals Connected obviously needs to pay consideration to canal based trails. The question is; do we create something new (how would they be different from those all of those already existing), or do we link to existing printed and online/mobile resources, tweaking where necessary.

If you google 'Cotswold Canals Walks' you will see just how many there are, both as apps, web guides for download or links to printed material

One existing resource is Discover Stroud Trails, created by Stroud District Council. This is a mobile phone app and CCC have added a couple of canal based trails.



<https://apps.apple.com/in/app/stroud-district/id1617635510>



Scan QR code for the App Store preview page



The current trail is a general one. There may be opportunities to develop special interest trails around the canal's history or its wildlife.

For instance, the Arboricultural Association have been working with Stonehouse Town Council to create the Stonehouse Arboretum. This is not a single planting or area of trees, but links together all of the most significant trees in and around the town.

Discussions with both have taken place about the possibilities of a tree trail that links the arboretum with the trees along the canal corridor. Further talks will be needed to agree on what form this might take.

This also meets some of the prime objectives of the restoration and community engagement process - the promotion of the canal corridor as a natural corridor for wildlife.

We do not necessarily need to be creating new dedicated CCC trails, but we can link to initiatives like that above. There may be a gap in existing resources for trails dedicated to specific topics like the tree trail. Maybe a B-line pollinators trail (page 16) for plants and invertebrates, a bird watching trail, a 'what's in a name trail' (page 20).

CCC may need to audit all of the existing trails that are already in existence before deciding what is really needed.

If the new cafes at Hyde's Basin and Eastington become reality, we have two new locations where walking leaflets/resources might be available. This could simply be a place for mobile phone access to a cross-section of walks

Various walk leaflets are already available at the CCT Saul Junction Heritage Centre and the CCT Wallbridge. Fromebridge Mill is very keen to provide information linking to the canal.

Stonehouse Walking Festival takes place in September every year and this is something that CCC should link with. Canal walks and walks linking Stonehouse to the canal, have been included in previous years without the support or participation of Cotswold Canals Connected.





# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

## Supplementary (context and links)

The following pages are intended to provide additional context and emphasis to some of the information and proposals contained in this plan. Maybe they also seek to provide greater justification for some of the ideas and concepts put forward.





# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

## Supplementary: Outdoors in nature

### Outdoors in Nature

***“It seems to me that the natural world is the greatest source of excitement; the greatest source of visual beauty; the greatest source of intellectual interest. It is the greatest source of so much in life that makes life worth living.”***

*David Attenborough*

What is is about canals?

Why have so many in the country been restored?

Why do so many people commit their time, energy and enthusiasm to restoring our historic canals?

When volunteers began working on the Cotswold Canals in the early 1970s, what was driving their determination to bring it back to life and link the River Severn and the River Thames. I suspect that while they recognised the benefits to the wider public and to the environment, these considerations were not at the top of the list of their priorities.

The world has changed dramatically in those 50 years or so. Climate change, the loss of nature and the impact this has on communities and individuals, has risen to the top of the agenda. These things can no longer be ignored by anybody. They are critical to our survival.

All of those involved in restoring the canal cannot be serious about its restoration, unless we recognise our obligation, not only to conserve the nature around us, but improve and enhance it. We have a duty to our children and their children to try and do this.

Yes, the canals have an incredibly interesting history and that is a key element in the Community Engagement Plan. Bringing the history of the canals to life will engage a great number of people.

However, it cannot inspire and enhance our lives in the way that being in nature can. We must recognise this and ensure that we do everything in our power to protect our flora and fauna. We must reconise that the canal and the area through which it passes are a vital corridor for the movement of all kinds of animal species.

The improvement of the canal channel will have a negative impact on the wiildlife that already lives in, under and beside it. Mitigation measures being managed by Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust, will create new habitats beside the canal - wetlands, scrapes, ponds will bring back some of those species and attract new ones. But the capacity of the canal as it stands now, to provide that linear thoroughfare for wildlife will be severely affected.

This plan has been put together by Footprint Design and Stroud Nature CIC. Footprint has worked on a range of projects across the country, interpreting historical and natural heritage, many of these have been local to Stroud and the Cotswolds. The local knowledge that Footprint has acquired is added to by the work of Stroud Nature.

Together we seek to promote the local environment and its wildlife and inspire and empower people to take care of it.

Our aims are crystallised in the following statement:

### Spark Curiosity

### Encourage Exploration

### Celebrate Discovery

### Provide Inspiration

### Empower Action

The canal restoration project and the Community Engagement Activity Plan, which is such a crucial part of it, offers an oppportunity to do just that.

***“I have no special talents. I am only passionately curious.”***

***“The important thing is not to stop questioning. Curiosity has its own reason for existing. One cannot help but be in awe when one contemplates the mysteries of eternity, of life, of the marvelous structure of reality. It is enough if one tries to comprehend only a little of this mystery every day.”***

*Albert Einstein*

It all starts with curiosity. Fire this in people’s minds, particularly those of children and you stand a chance of taking them on a journey of exploration. Only by exploring, can they discover a wider world. You accompany them on the journey, you encourage, you nudge, you guide. You can also inspire them through storytelling and art for instance. Ultimatley they see a richer, exciting world. Places and creatures worth saving, that are intrinsically linked to our own survival.

If we are to interpret the canal corridor and its nature, this should be at the core of our approach.





# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

## Supplementary: Nature partnerships

### Stroud Nature CIC and Stroud Great Green Partnership

The Community Interest Company developed out of the Stroud Festival of Nature, created by Steve Roberts in 2008.

For many years, organising the annual festival was its main role. The festival evolved from a one day event into a three month long event, the number of participating and contributing organisations grew year on year.

All organisations were invited to join the Stroud Nature Forum as a way of involving as many people as possible in the planning of the festival. This brought some together in a discussion of other networking and collaborative ideas.

The forum, now the Stroud Great Green Partnership, continues to provide an umbrella for local nature and environmental organisations and is well established. There are opportunities to utilise this network of organisations to add value to the restoration.

There is a focus on the urban/suburban environment and an emphasis on connectivity. The linking of habitats, creating a mosaic of different habitats, linking to natural corridors.

Why? Because most people's contact with wildlife happens close to home. In the places where they live, work and play or travel between.

The natural world is a key element of the Phase 1B restoration. We should not ignore the original Phase 1A project for the two relevant sections cannot thrive independent of the other. GWT are already very involved in the project. There is also a great deal of experience, knowledge and skill existing through the wide number of wildlife and environmental groups and organisations in the area.



#### A wider view

We talk of the canal corridor. One person's interpretation of this might be much narrower than another's. Stroud Nature believes we should be thinking a good few miles in either direction, particularly in respect of wildlife.

While we have a number of partner organisations in the restoration whose main reason for being is the conservation of nature, there are many more that CCC might be talking to.

The article (right) written for the National Trust's Stroud Living Landscape newsletter seeks to show the natural interconnectivity within the Stroud Valleys that exists between the canal and Rodborough Common, taking the rare Downland Bee Fly as an example. It also links Rodborough Common with a CCC event held last summer (Stories from a Field) several miles away beside the canal close to Fromebridge Mill, through the exploration of cow pats!



**Steve Roberts, Stroud Nature**  
Stroud Nature is a delivery partner for the Cotswold Canals Connected restoration project.  
At the beginning of August 2022, the project hosted an event beside the canal near Fromebridge Mill called 'Stories from a Field'. Stroud Nature focused on insects and in particular the hedgerow, oak trees, drainage ditch and field habitats.  
We introduced visitors to the concept of natural connectivity in relation to the canal and river as linear corridors into the Stroud valleys. Both are vital natural green corridors along which mammals, birds, fish, amphibians, reptiles and invertebrates can move.

These green corridors bring species into the heart of urban populations in the Stroud valleys.  
Smaller brooks and streams run down from the hills and empty into them. Species move along all of these and some spread across other urban habitats. Other species inhabit the wooded slopes of the valleys and the grassland commons, while others follow hedgerows and trees into more built-up areas.

**Gardens as nature reserves**  
Relating all of this to our own gardens highlights what we can all do to provide places for wildlife. Gardens are a crucial network of habitats, through which wildlife can move - acting as one large nature reserve. This is key to Stroud Nature's Garden Guardian's project.

Cont.

We should not see the canal in isolation from any of the habitats that are close by, including the wooded valley sides and the high commons.

The story of the geology of the Stroud Valleys, its limestone hills, springs and stream feeding the River Frome, is embedded in the development of the textile industry, the proliferation of the mills, the building and history of the canal.

Water can become a fragile and fickle resource these days. We need to look after it. The UK's rivers are not currently in a good state. We should all be concerned and seek to look after the waterways in the Stroud Valleys and the Vale. They are crucial to so many things. A number of streams empty into the canal and they can carry silt and pollutants. In places excess water from the canal overflows into the River Frome.

This is another reason why the Cotswold Canals needs to be seen as one Canal.



# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

## Natural connectivity

### One canal

Wildlife knows no boundaries as it moves through the landscape. However species are more likely to be restricted in their movement when that landscape is an urban one and those restrictions are more than likely in place due to man made interventions.

The canal and the wider corridor it occupies, including the River Frome, is a vitally important wildlife corridor. It is very important that we consider this and seek to help species move along it. If we make this a priority, we also help to make people's lives better, by giving them better access to the nature on their own doorstep.

As well as conserving existing wildlife sites, we can look at other sites that can be developed and enhanced to provide stepping stones for wildlife. We can then look at how we bring people to these places to meet and connect with nature. This needs to be considered along the entire length of the canal through the Stroud District.

Cyrus Field.  
Possible site for biodiversity  
net gain

The Ocean.  
Largest area of single open  
water along the canal

### Stonehouse



Ship Inn site.  
Opportunity for wildlife habitats  
with community hub

Woodland.

The next few pages show sections of the canal as it interacts with the more urban spaces between Stonehouse and Stroud. Sites and locations that are now good wildlife sites and those that might be in the future are indicated in yellow.



# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

## Natural connectivity/creating places for wildlife



### Cainscross



QE2 Field.  
Pond and habitat for wildlife.



# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

## Natural connectivity

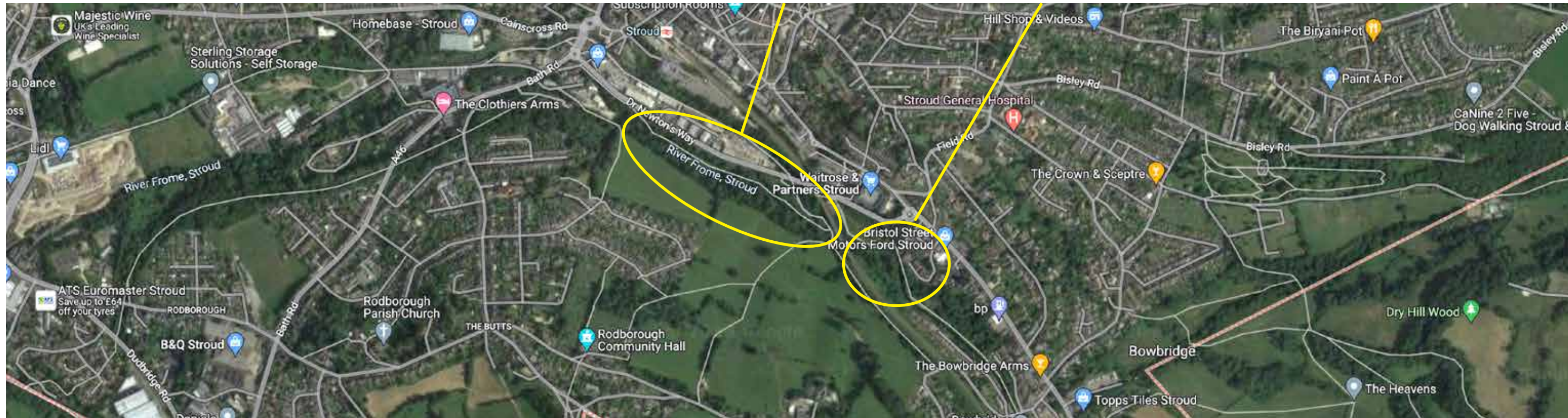
### Stroud



lake at the Lawn.  
Lake and habitat for wildlife.  
Brook emptying into canal

Frome Banks/Capels Mill  
Stream and woodland  
Wildflower habitat

Arundel Mill Pond





## Inform, identify and inspire



Wildlife. It's all around us. Yet, for many it's invisible. If not invisible, then not worth a second glance. We may enjoy the location, the serenity of a riverbank, the wooded glade, we know the wildlife is there somewhere, yet we do not make the effort to look for it.

Still, we can rely on others (experts) to tell us or maybe show us. If they are not around, we can read about it on one of those 'information panels'.

How that information is relayed is crucial to engaging people and encouraging them to explore further.



Footprint has always believed in the importance of the image.

Illustration provides one of the best pathways to a greater understanding of nature. If the purpose of the illustration is to inform, educate and inspire, then we need to be clear what form the illustration takes.

Realistic renditions of wildlife and habitat will enable people to identify the species if they see them. There are too many interpretation panels where the wildlife illustrations merely fill a space.

Too many are reduced to small thumbnails. All too often, 'naive' or 'stylised' renditions of flora and fauna fill those spaces.

They may look good on paper, but what role are they serving?

The very highest quality, accurate illustration has always been a feature of the work of Footprint. It will also be a feature of the interpretation along Phase 1b.

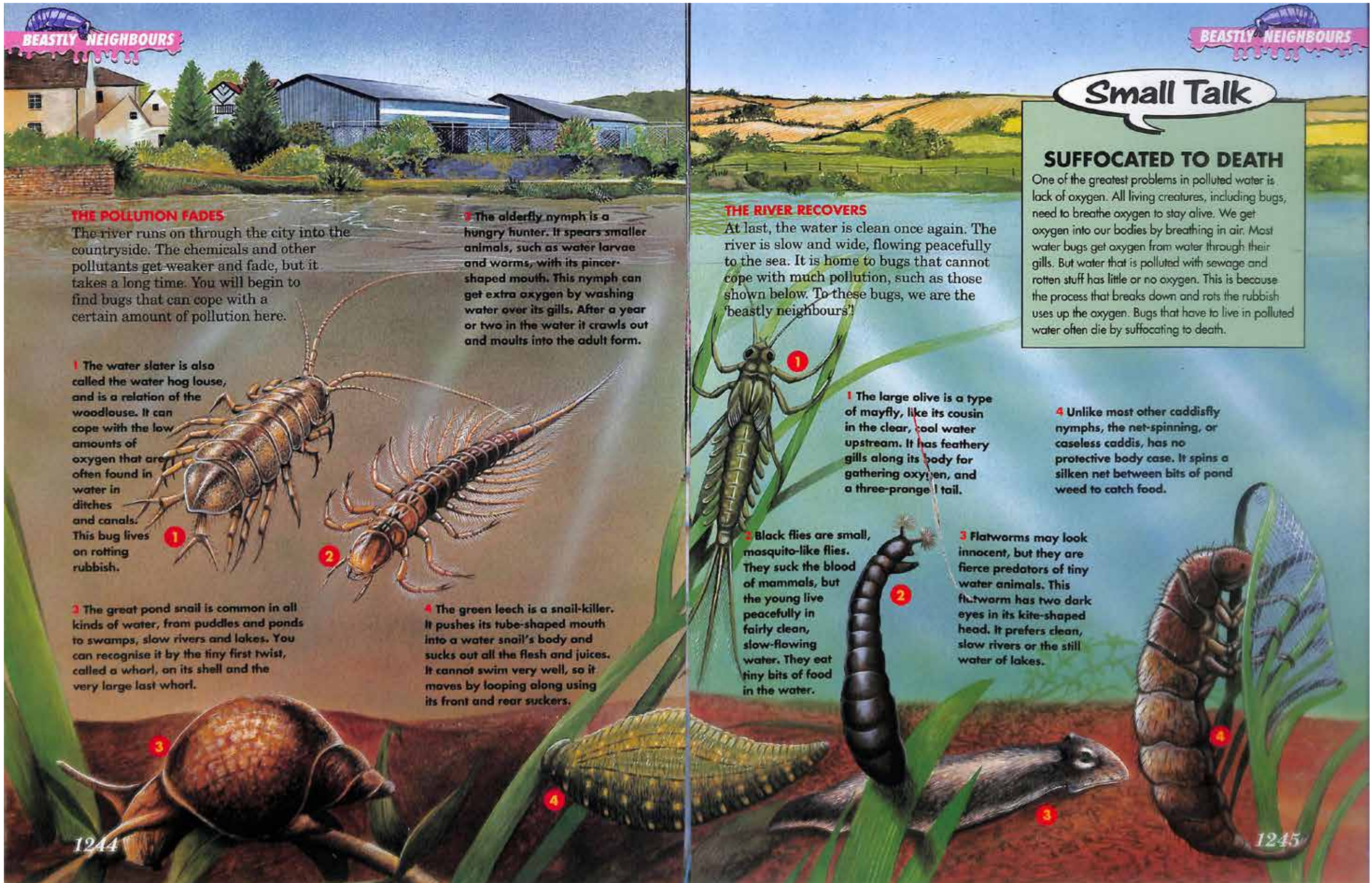






# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

## Supplementary:





# Cotswold Canals Phase 1B Interpretation Plan 2023

Produced by Footprint Interpretation Design in association with Stroud Nature CIC for Cotswold Canals Connected.

