



LOTTERY FUNDED

Press Release: Joy at National Lottery backing to connect Stroud to national canal network

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A £23.4million Stroud District Council-led project to connect Stroud and Stonehouse to the nation's inland waterway network by 2024 has been given a significant vote of confidence by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Stroud District Council and Cotswold Canals Trust have received crucial initial support from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) which paves the way for the restoration of the derelict canal between Stonehouse and Saul junction.

The HLF picked *Stroudwater Navigation Connected* as one of just four projects across the country for development funding and the £842,000 announced today will make sure everything is in place before applying for a further £9million of HLF money to allow the whole project to go ahead.

The stretch between Stroud and Stonehouse is almost restored and bringing the remaining four miles back in to use will link it to the Gloucester & Sharpness Canal and the rest of the country, attract huge tourism benefits, create 30 hectares of biodiverse habitat and canal towpath, conserve and digitise archive material charting the canal's history, and attract more than £100million-worth of new private investment within five years of the end of the project.

If the HLF had not chosen the project, it would have been set back by at least a decade.

"That we have secured development funding is absolutely brilliant news," said Stroud District Council leader Doina Cornell. "We knew that the bid was very strong but this is a huge relief and it means that working with partners, we can drive the project on and look forward to making Stroud and Stonehouse canal towns once again."

The project aims to take the canal under the M5 motorway, reinstate the 'missing mile' of canal near Eastington and forge a new stretch of canal under the Gloucester – Bristol railway line at Stonehouse – and bring many other benefits to the area.

The SDC-led restoration between Stonehouse and Thrupp has transformed the canal corridor, attracting £115million of private investment.

Studies suggest that boaters and visitors to a restored canal would spend more than £5million a year in the Stroud district.

Stroud District Council has committed £3million, and contributions from Gloucestershire County Council, Cotswold Canals Trust and the Canal and River Trust are worth around £2million. The total cost of the project, allowing for inflation and other contingencies is £23.4million. The monetised health benefits of the canal will be worth more than £37million a year.

Cotswold Canals Trust chairman Jim White said: “The Stroud Valleys will become a new, must go to, destination on the national canal network, bringing growth to local businesses through tourism, by increasing the canal and towpath use for recreation. “It will also bring major benefits to wildlife and the biodiversity of the area.”

The canal’s history dates back to 1730 when an Act of Parliament granted proprietors of the Stroudwater Navigation the power to build it. It opened in 1779 and joined with the Thames and Severn Canal 10 years later, which established a largely inland waterway link between Bristol and London.

It was abandoned in 1954 but the founding of the Stroudwater Canal Society in 1972 led to the formation of the Cotswold Canals Trust. The Stroudwater Navigation links with the Thames and Severn Canal at Wallbridge and so far the stretch of that canal between Wallbridge and Bowbridge has been restored.

Under the leadership of Stroud District Council since 2009, the project has seen restoration of 4.5 miles of canal, nine locks, and six miles of towpath so far.

“Clearly the Heritage Lottery Fund was impressed with the bid and we are grateful for its faith and backing in the project which will bring so many benefits to the area,” added Councillor Cornell.

“The whole project fits in well with our priorities as a council to invest in the local economy and the environment, and to promote health and wellbeing. “Ultimately everyone who buys a National Lottery ticket has made this initial stage possible.”

Notes to editors

Stroud District Council is led by a cooperative alliance of the Labour, Green and Liberal Democrat parties.

About the Heritage Lottery Fund

HLF Heritage Grants applications are assessed in two rounds. Stroudwater Navigation Connected has initially been granted round one development funding of £842,000 by the Heritage Lottery Fund, allowing it to progress with its plans. Detailed proposals are then considered by HLF at second round, where a final decision is made on the full funding award of £9million.

Thanks to National Lottery players, we invest money to help people across the UK explore, enjoy and protect the heritage they care about - from the archaeology under our feet to the historic parks and buildings we love, from precious memories and collections to rare wildlife. www.hlf.org.uk. Follow us on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) and use [#NationalLottery](#) and [#HLFsupported](#)

Further information

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