



21 July 2004

COTSWOLD CANALS GET LOTTERY STAGE ONE PASS

The restoration of the Cotswold Canals took a huge leap forward today (21 July 2004), with British Waterways' bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for an £11.3 million grant towards the first major phase of their restoration receiving a Stage One pass.

The bid, made by British Waterways on behalf of the Cotswold Canals Partnership, seeks just under half the funding for the conservation-led restoration of a six-mile stretch of canal from The Ocean at Stonehouse on the Stroudwater Navigation in the west to Brimscombe Port on the Thames & Severn Canal east of Stroud.

As part of the project, the Partnership will also acquire the remaining four miles of the Stroudwater Navigation between Stonehouse and Saul Junction. This will ensure the protection of its historic structures, it will open a 10-mile multi-user trail and prepare the way for connecting the restored phase one section with the Gloucester & Sharpness Canal in the future.

The £25 million phase one project is predicted to:

- conserve 30 historic structures;
- create new wildlife habitats, helping to protect rare species including bats, water voles and native crayfish;
- lead to the direct regeneration of 12 hectares of brownfield land;
- attract over 215,000 extra visitor-days a year by 2014;
- create over 1,200 permanent jobs by 2014;
- create a 10-mile multi-user trail for walkers, anglers, cyclists, wheelchair users and pushchairs, and
- facilitate 50 education and interpretation projects.

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Cotswold Canals get Lottery stage one pass/p2

Robin Evans, British Waterways' chief executive, says:

“This is absolutely fantastic news for everyone - volunteers, local communities and the professionals - who have worked incredibly hard to make the restoration of these historic canals a reality.

“We now have a year to complete the planning of the works and to secure formal commitments for the remaining match funding, so that we can unlock the full leisure, wildlife, heritage and economic benefits of these beautiful rural waterways. When we have everything in place, the HLF will take a few months to make sure their criteria are fully satisfied before authorising the start of works.”

Carole Souter, Director of the Heritage Lottery Fund, says:

“People love canals and the restoration of this waterway will enable an important part of the local heritage to become living history. This beautiful stretch of historic water could play a significant role for the local community by attracting visitors, creating employment and encouraging healthy living.”

Roger Hanbury, chief executive of The Waterways Trust, says:

“The stage one pass for our bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund represents another milestone in the ambitious project to restore the Cotswold Canals. The restoration has received significant support from a great number of individuals and organisations, including our Patron, HRH The Prince of Wales. I am delighted that we are another step closer to revitalising these important national assets and putting them back on the map.”

Bruce Hall, Chairman of The Cotswold Canals Trust, says:

“After campaigning for over 30 years the 4,600 members of the Cotswold Canals Trust and 26,000 petitioners will be delighted that the dream of full restoration is a step closer. There really is enormous enthusiasm and support for this project, both locally and across the country.”

David Hagg, chief executive of Stroud District Council, says:

“This is tremendous news for Stroud District. I am delighted that the enormous commitment from the communities along the canal and the Council has paid off.

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Cotswold Canals get Lottery stage one pass/p3

“Stroud District Council fully supports the project and has already committed £2.25 million through direct funding and securing developers’ contributions. Our financial support is backed by our commitment to take full advantage of the catalytic effect of the restoration - and the resulting publicity - to bring regeneration, environmental benefits and jobs to Stroud.”

Councillor Dr John Cordwell, portfolio holder for Strategic Planning and Transport for Gloucestershire County Council, says:

"I am delighted that British Waterways has been successful in its bid for lottery funding. I look forward to seeing the work started and the eventual complete restoration of the canal."

The Thames & Severn Canal and Stroudwater Navigation together form the Cotswold Canals, which the Cotswold Canals Partnership – under the project management of British Waterways - is working to restore. Their full restoration would once again link the rivers Thames and Severn, bringing two of England’s most picturesque inland waterways back to life.

Recent research predicts their restoration would be a catalyst for both urban and rural regeneration, bringing 1.7 million new visitor days to the area each year, generating £6.8 million a year for the local economy and creating 200 permanent new jobs in tourism alone.

Robin Evans, British Waterways’ chief executive, continues:

“Support for the full 36-mile restoration continues to grow and the completion of the Partnership’s Conservation Management Plan for the entire restoration will help ensure the security of the historic structures and important habitats of the canals. The Partnership will continue to promote recreational use of the accessible parts of the whole length of the two canals and we’ll also be putting more funding packages together for individual restoration projects in the remaining lengths, with the first priority being to restore from Stonehouse to the Gloucester & Sharpness at Saul Junction.”

The project is backed by a strong community partnership made up of: British Waterways; The Waterways Trust; The Cotswold Canals Trust; Stroud District Council; Cotswold District Council; North Wiltshire District Council; Gloucestershire County Council; Wiltshire County Council; The Environment Agency; Cotswold Water Park Society; the South West Regional Development Agency; The Inland Waterways Association; Learning & Skills Council; South West Tourism and Company of Proprietors Stroudwater Navigation.

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Cotswold Canals get Lottery stage one pass/p4

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Editor's notes:

A '**Stage One Pass**' means that money has been earmarked by the Heritage Lottery Fund for the project in question. Competition at this stage is tough, and while a Stage One Pass does not guarantee funding, it is an indication of positive support, and money for the scheme is set aside. The applicant can then progress to Stage Two and submit a further, fully developed application to secure the full grant. On occasion, at Stage One, funding will also be awarded towards the development of the scheme.

British Waterways cares for a 2,000-mile network of canals and navigable rivers across the country. British Waterways' vision is for a sustainable and integrated network of waterways throughout Britain to provide maximum benefit and enjoyment to society, both now and long into the future. British Waterways works with a broad range of public, private and voluntary sector partners to unlock the potential of the inland waterways and generate income for reinvestment in the waterways for further waterway restoration and regeneration. www.britishwaterways.co.uk

The Waterways Trust was established in March 1999 to promote greater public enjoyment and awareness of the UK's canals and rivers; to develop partnerships to secure funding for the conservation and restoration of waterways; and help to realise the social, educational, environmental and economic potential of living waterways. www.thewaterwaystrust.co.uk

The Cotswold Canals Trust is a voluntary organisation working to restore the Cotswold Canals. The Cotswold Canals Trust was established in 1972. The Cotswold Canals Trust has over 4,000 members, many of whom volunteer on the canal, running trip boats and undertaking maintenance works. www.cotswoldcanals.com

The Inland Waterways Association is a national charity, founded in 1946, and was largely responsible for saving the main inland waterway network from dereliction. It has over 17,000 members and campaigns for the conservation, restoration and sensitive development of the inland waterways. www.waterways.org.uk

The **Environment Agency** manages water quality, flood defence, conservation and fisheries on 30,000kms of waterways in England and Wales and is working closely with the Cotswold Canals Partnership and British Waterways on the environmental aspects of this project. The Agency is also the navigation authority for the non-tidal Thames and is working with local authorities and businesses to plan for the canals reopening.

The **Cotswold Canals** comprise the 29-mile (46km) Thames & Severn Canal and the 7-mile (13km) Stroudwater Navigation. When restored, the canals will form a continuous waterway from Saul Junction on the Gloucester and Sharpness Canal to Lechlade in Gloucestershire, including the 2¼-mile (4km) Sapperton Tunnel and 56 locks.

Opened in 1789, the **Thames & Severn Canal** was built to connect the Stroudwater Navigation to the Thames at Inglesham – creating a through route from the River Severn to London. The waterway operated a passenger service between Gloucester and London. However, constant leakage problems on the canal and the advent of railway competition damaged its profitability. Around 1900 the canal was bought and improved by Gloucestershire County Council in an effort to stimulate business. Declining trade, however, led to complete abandonment of the canal in 1933. Since then its line has been broken up and is now owned by over 70 different landowners.

The **Stroudwater Navigation** now starts at Saul Junction on the Gloucester and Sharpness Canal, but originally came directly off the River Severn, 1 mile away. One of England's earliest canals, first conceived in the late 17th century, the canal was planned in the 1720s and opened in 1779. The Stroudwater was highly profitable in its heyday. However, competition from the railways which came in the 1840s and 1850s finally closed the canal in 1954, the last boat having delivered coal to Stroud gas works in 1941.

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