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CCT Response to Gate 1 Draft Decision for River Severn to River Thames Transfer

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the above draft document.

The Cotswold Canals Trust is the largest canal restoration society in the UK with over 7000 members and the project to restore the historic navigation between the Thames and the Severn enjoys a great deal of public and political support because of the very wide range of benefits it can deliver. It is widely regarded as being the premier canal restoration project at this time.

The Trust welcomes the decision to take the option of using the Cotswold Canals for water transfer through to Gate 2. We also agree with the concerns that the work to date has not adequately assessed the societal, amenity and many other benefits that the canal option would deliver compared with the pipeline option.

We also have concerns that, before a proper comparison can be made, a lot more work is needed to cost the canal option properly and in a way that will pass scrutiny. The figures presented in the Gate 1 report and the technical outline of the canal option seem to be based primarily on the information in Thames Water's WRMP19 submission; information that was hotly disputed and never properly justified at the time.

During the Gate 1 process, CCT was involved in a number of productive meetings with the consultants involved and we thought that there was agreement on a number of optimisations and improvements to the scheme (some of which are essential). These are not reflected in the Gate 1 submission document. For example, it makes no sense to put the water pre-treatment plant at Culham the eastern end of the interconnector (Gate 1 submission section 2.2 on page 3) because of the connectivity between the watercourses many miles upstream of it.

We also query the additional year that has been added to implement the canal option. The Thames & Severn Canal was built from scratch and by hand 235 years ago in about the time the consultants think it will take to refurbish it using modern machinery and techniques.

We have already provided these and other detailed comments to those involved in the Gate 2 work and it is important that any decision between the pipeline and canal options is based on sound information in terms of costs, timing and benefits. We have been given assurances that the Trust will be involved in the process as a key stakeholder and these are welcome.

Yours sincerely

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Trustee/Director