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Warwickshire County Council,  
Regeneration Projects – Avon Navigation  
Planning Transport and Economic Strategy  
[avonnavigation@warwickshire.gov.uk](mailto:avonnavigation@warwickshire.gov.uk)

Sir,

**RE: NAVIGATION ON THE AVON, STRATFORD TO WARWICK.**

This is in response to the Council's call for views on restoring navigation on the Avon above Stratford. Our Association strongly recommends that the Council approve this project in principle.

Inland navigation is one of the most environmentally benign ways for the public to travel and visit the countryside. As the British waterway network has been restored, boating on it has been increasing substantially, to the benefit of not only the boaters, but also the communities and businesses along the way.

At present, much boating traffic is limited to narrow boats, the small craft that will fit in the locks of the midlands canals (such as that to Stratford). This is because although over 75% of the British waterways were built for larger craft, these waterways are divided into a number of regional networks connected only by narrow canals or tidal water. A major strategic initiative for the network is to provide broad-beam links among these regions.

The Avon is a key such link. It is the only feasible non-tidal broad-beam route between the south-east and south-west regions (roughly, the waterways of the Thames and Severn basins). Broad-beam craft can now reach Stratford (via the Avon from the Severn) and Warwick (via the Grand Union canal).

If this section of the Avon were navigable, the attraction of the waterways as a whole would increase substantially, as the much more commodious broad-beam craft would become feasible for long-distance cruising. The boating traffic generated on the river would contribute significantly to the prosperity of the Avon valley.

Achieving navigability is a simple project. Unobtrusive locks would need to be built at the existing weirs; a small length of canal at Barford with two locks would bypass a length where the original weir has vanished; and a flight of four locks at Warwick would be needed between the river and the Grand Union canal. The rest of the route is already navigable. The environmental impact of these works would be minimal.

The resulting boat traffic would cause little problem. Such traffic can readily be seen on the Avon below Stratford, where it has not damaged the environment since this length of the river was restored to navigation. On other routes, such as the Shropshire Union canal to Llangollen, significantly greater traffic volumes are carried on waterways also used for the transport of drinking water.

There has been noisy opposition to the scheme. However, the objections raised, largely along the line that navigation would seriously damage the river environmentally, have never been properly tested, even though many efforts have been made by proponents to involve the objectors in debate. Experience on other waterways strongly suggests that these objections are heavily exaggerated. We believe that an independent assessment of the expressed concerns will confirm that all are either unfounded or can readily be resolved or mitigated.

Restoration of inland navigations has proved to be a highly successful tool for economic regeneration in many other cases and locations. The Avon scheme also has important national values, as confirmed by the support of British Waterways, Environment Agency, Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Commission, the Association for Inland Navigation Authorities, and many waterway users and waterways-related associations. With such important local and wider benefits available, and minimal environmental negatives, this scheme clearly deserves strong support by the Council.

We urge the Council to grant that support.

We would be pleased to provide further information on request.

Thank you for your attention,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Adrian Stott', with a large loop at the top and a horizontal flourish at the bottom.

Adrian Stott.  
UK Representation