



## STRATFORD-UPON-AVON CANAL SOCIETY

The primary beneficiaries of the opening up of the Avon between Leamington and Stratford will be the economic benefit to towns, villages and businesses near the river. Greater access whether by boat or foot will bring more visitors to the area and provide opportunities for development and diversification. This includes riparian owners such as Warwick Castle and Charlecote where opportunity for attracting waterborne visitors applies. This has been very successfully done at other National Trust sites and tourist attractions like Clonmel in Ireland where a significant proportion of visitors come by boat, attracting visitors especially from abroad.

The AINA report supported the development of navigation of the Avon generally and has it as one of its highest priorities. The river is a national asset and needs to be managed in the interests of all. This will give improved access to a beautiful but largely hidden part of Warwickshire and provide opportunities for recreational and other development along the corridor.

Such development need not be destructive of environmental and wildlife sites. These can co-exist and in some circumstances can enhance each other. Modern propulsion methods are less polluting and the successful use of electric power for trip boats in Stratford show the sort of technology readily available now, with developments in this area ongoing.

Greater access to sites of special wildlife interest can be provided in an environmentally friendly way as shown by the co-existence between boaters and the Fenland areas.

As to specific benefit being derived from navigation, boating is becoming a more and more expensive pastime and those enjoying it have a higher than average economic activity, which can only increase their spend in the opened up areas. Some 10 years ago the Stratford-Upon-Avon Canal Society survey estimated boating contributed over £1m to the local economy.

Opening the river between Leamington and Stratford will help with traffic problems and give opportunity for development of a water bus service passing and serving the grade 1 and other historic sites on the way. This will reduce congestion, open up economic activity in villages and go some way to meeting the recent criticisms of the train service between Stratford and Warwick.

Greater access and construction work will provide unique educational opportunities for local children and help put the region into its historical context by restoring a navigation that was in use in the Middle Ages.

This is a complex area and there will be many conflicting views the Council has to consider. These need to be considered in a proper and professional manner away from any emotional attachment to a particular viewpoint and we therefore call upon the Council to deal with this issue by commissioning a professional Corridor Study of the potential use of the river and its environs and its consequences.