SECTION 7

Cotswold Canals Restoration
To restore or not to restore
Part 2
Introduction:
This lesson provides an opportunity for children to explore various points of view about the restoration of the Cotswold Canals through role-play and discussion.

Learning Objectives:
To understand that different people have different opinions.

To understand that arguments can be resolved through discussion and debate.

To understand that the Cotswold Canals can be used for a variety of different purposes.

Resources:
Sheets A and B for debate
Support sheets – Restoration, Volunteers
Key Vocabulary:

Campaign, preservation, navigate, restoration, recreation, habitat, disruption, heritage, volunteers

Teaching activities: Introduction:

Ask the children to think of all the possible activities that people could do in and around the canal. These fall into four main categories of recreation, heritage, wildlife habitat and industry (illustrated). Ask the children if it is possible to enjoy these activities without causing conflict with other people’s choices.

Activities: Split the class into groups and issue each group with a role play card. Give each group time to read the card and to discuss what the main issues are. Each group could appoint a spokesperson to present the group’s point of view. Key points could be written on the board so that the whole class can review these. Open up the debate by encouraging the children to identify conflicting issues and by trying to resolve them.

Plenary: After consideration and discussion, take a vote – to restore or not to restore?
Local Councillor:
The restored canal could attract up to 215,000 new visits a year with people spending £531,000 locally a year. This is a splendid opportunity for the Stroud Valleys and will put the area on the map as a tourist destination. It will extend Cotswold visits to our region. Parts of the canal will be developed to provide additional attractions, such as leisure activities. The towpath will provide a safe walking and cycling route. It will provide a green wildlife corridor. Other towns have benefited from their canal restoration projects.

Local Homeowner:
I’m undecided. On the one hand, the canal will be a better place for walking the dog but then it might attract hundreds of people in boats, running their engines all day long. It’s quite peaceful here at the moment. I don’t want lots of holiday-makers spoiling our peace and quiet. But I suppose it is a good thing for our town.

Birdwatcher:
We get lots of birds and wildlife on the canal at the moment. What will happen to the swan’s nesting and the little grebes in the reeds? I suppose they won’t take all the reeds away and moving some of them, and the silt, will make the water flow better and make it a better habitat for all sorts of creatures. I wonder which plants and animals will come back when the canal is cleaned up. I suppose that boats and wildlife get along OK on other canals.
Member of the Cotswold Canals Trust:
Our campaign has been running since 1972 and at last things are really beginning to happen. There is a real opportunity to save this heritage for the benefit of the Stroud Valleys. The mills and the canals have been around for hundreds of years and we cannot let it all be destroyed by doing nothing. We have rebuilt locks and repaired walls, replaced the towpath and tidied up the area. It isn’t just about boats.

Fisherman:
I used to fish in the canal before it got so silted up that the fish couldn’t survive. The boats were a bit annoying when they came past and I had to move my rod. With cleaner water and a new stock of fish, we could soon be having competitions again. Canoeists are a bit annoying too. I like the peace and quiet and just watching the water.

Narrow boat owner
When it is complete we will be able to cruise, cycle or walk not just the 36 mile length of the canal - it links the River Severn with the River Thames and gives access to most of the canal system in England. In the meantime, it will be great just to explore a few miles to Stroud and Brimscombe. It is such a pretty stretch with the hills all around, and the mills, the locks and the roundhouses. I can’t wait to chug quietly along watching all the wildlife. It will be fun for the whole family.