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Thursday, January 15, 2009

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Canal project axed in funding blow

Canal project gets the axe

A MAJOR project that aimed to create a canal through the heart of Cricklade and a green corridor linking the town with Swindon has been axed.

While much of the project is still on the drawing board, ambitious plans to create a waterway bringing an anticipated increase in tourism to Cricklade town centre has been scrapped because of a lack of cash.

Issues behind the Cricklade Country Way scheme said they were forced to go back to the drawing board after the project failed in a bid for a £20million Big Lottery Fund windfall in 2007.

Revised plans have now been submitted to North Wiltshire District Council for approval from planners.

The project's ultimate goal is still to re-open a section of

by
Andy Woodford
Cricklade

the Wilton and Berkshire canal, revive a historic steam railway and link up a national cycle trail as well as creating a 50-hectare country park between the two towns.

But the revised plans now mean the canal will irriginate a quarter of a mile outside of Cricklade at the same point as the railway line.

Project manager Ken Dixon said: "If there was an open cheque for £20million we may have been more inclined to deal with the issues.

"But what's important is that we aren't stopping it miles away from the town."

Along with the money issue, English Heritage also objected to the scheme because of the archaeological threat to the

● continued from front page town's ancient scheduled monument within the town's historic town walls.

Mr Dixon added: "English Heritage wanted us to do some further archaeological investigation. There was an issue about the setting of the canal and they were intending to object to the scheme as it stood."

The new plans were discussed by Cricklade town council's planning committee at a meeting on Monday.

Committee chairman Peter Colman said: "It would have been a big failure because it came into the heart of Cricklade so we are obviously very disappointed."

"However it doesn't mean to say that in the hollows of time it

will not eventually go into Cricklade.

"Our position is that we want further consultation as to the facilities that will be available at the point where the railway and canal meet such as a visitor centre, car parking and toilet facilities.

"We need further clarification on these issues before we fully support the application."

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