

The Rt Hon Ranil Jayawardena MP
Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Letter sent via email to: secretary.state@defra.gov.uk

Dear Rt Hon Ranil Jayawardena MP,

Reference: Work towards improving and safeguarding the Bury MBC stretch of the Manchester, Bolton and Bury Canal

Bury Council at its Full Council meeting on 21 September 2022 debated a notice of motion in relation to improving the stretch of the canal.

The Council recognised and noted that:

1. The canal suffers from being overgrown by several species including:
 - Duckweed, which as well as being unsightly and in hot weather is smelly, if left to thrive, the weed can cause problems for other aquatic plants and wildlife by starving it of oxygen and sunlight.
 - Himalayan Balsam, growing along the banks and in reed beds is outgrowing native species and reducing biodiversity by restricting native plant growth.
 - Giant hogweed growing on the upper reaches near the Elton Reservoir end, is a very dangerous plant for which the sap can cause serious skin burns. It contains furocoumarin, which makes skin extremely sensitive to sunlight (phytophotodermatitis).
 - Trees growing into the structure of the canal and can cause damage to the sides and will eventually impact on the structural integrity.
2. The ongoing challenges of litter and fly-tipping and maintenance of trees and other growth along the canal and the responsibilities of all partners involved to keep the canal well maintained and prevent further deterioration.
3. The ambitious and exciting Restoration Feasibility Study commissioned in 2020 jointly by Manchester, Bolton and Bury Canal Society, the Canal & Rivers Trust, Bury Council and Bolton Council for the full restoration of the 5-mile stretch of canal through Bury to Bolton.

The Council resolved to:

1. Look at ways of preventing fly-tipping and littering from Council owned land such as car parks and bridges crossing the canal
2. Work to ensure visibility in currently obscured areas of access to the canal to prevent risk of crime, anti-social behaviour, and damage to property such as graffiti
3. Working with the police to address the safety concerns of residents accessing and using the tow path
4. Call on the Canal and Rivers Trust to adopt a strategy to stop the water in the canal dropping to a level hazardous to wildlife
5. Maintain our commitment to the full restoration of the canal through Bury and Radcliffe as expressed in the 2020 Restoration Feasibility Study.
6. Write to the relevant Minister making the case for funding for the restoration, which our study estimates would bring £1 million per annum in socio-economic benefits to Bury and Radcliffe.
7. Continue as an active partner in the maintenance and restoration of the canal through the participation of our officer and member representatives on the MBBC steering group.

Accordingly, I am writing to you in relation to this matter. I look forward to your response so that an update can be provided to Members of Bury Council.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "G Little". The signature is written in a cursive style with a period at the end.

Geoff Little OBE
Chief Executive