

PRESS RELEASE

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Canal & River Trust marks six months of progress on Whitchurch breach repairs

Waterways charity Canal & River Trust is marking six months since the significant breach on the Llangollen Canal near Whitchurch, reflecting on the extensive programme of works already completed and outlining the next steps that will be taken to repair the damage.

Since the incident in December 2025, engineers from the Trust and its infrastructure partner Kier, have developed a detailed repair plan, which includes rebuilding the collapsed embankment in layers and incorporating geogrid reinforcement to increase structural strength. The canal channel will also be reconstructed in concrete, and wherever possible, material recovered from the site will be reused as part of the rebuild.

In preparation for this next stage, ground investigations and structural surveys to assess the condition of the embankment and canal bed have been carried out. Damaged materials and debris have been removed to create access for ongoing work, and a new site compound and access road have been constructed to allow plant and machinery to reach the breach safely and efficiently.

Temporary dams have been installed to isolate the breach site, supported by a pumping system that keeps water flowing so boats downstream remain afloat. This continued flow of around 40 million litres a day is essential not only for navigation but also because the Llangollen Canal, like several others across the UK, plays a vital role in moving fresh water for public supply.

Over 15 million litres of water that drained into a nearby field when the breach occurred has been carefully pumped into the local sewer system. Working with specialist fish-rescue teams, more than 1,000 fish, including eels, roach, perch, gudgeon, bream and ruffe, were safely recovered from the flooded field and relocated along the canal.

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Campbell Robb, chief executive at Canal & River Trust, said: "Reaching the six-month point is an important moment to reflect not only on the scale of work already completed, but also on the impact this incident has had on everyone affected. The breach at Whitchurch was an unsettling and difficult experience for local people and boaters, and we remain genuinely sorry for the disruption it caused.

"Incidents like this are thankfully very rare, but when they do occur, they demand complex, careful engineering and a huge collective effort to put things right. We know how important the Llangollen Canal is to boaters, local communities and the wider region, and we are working hard towards our aim of reopening the canal by the end of the year.

"The Llangollen Canal is a cherished part of our national heritage, and we are committed to restoring it safely and sensitively. As investigation continues, we are ready to move into the next phase of work, which will allow us to rebuild the canal with greater resilience for the future. Thank you to boaters, the local community, and all those who have donated to our charity, for your support."

For more information on Canal & River Trust including how you can volunteer or donate money to support our work visit www.canalrivertrust.org.uk

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Notes to Editors

The Canal & River Trust cares for and brings to life 2,000 miles of canals and river navigations across England & Wales. We believe waterways have the power to make a difference to people's lives and that spending time by water can make us all healthier and happier. By bringing communities together to make a difference to their local waterway, we are creating places and spaces that can be used and enjoyed by everyone, every day. www.canalrivertrust.org.uk @CanalRiverTrust

The Llangollen Canal is one of the most treasured waterways in the UK, attracting millions of visitors each year. Renowned for its scenic beauty and engineering heritage, it forms part of the UNESCO World Heritage Site that includes the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct. The canal is a vital route for leisure boating, walking, cycling, angling, and tourism, contributing significantly to the local economy and community wellbeing.