

PRESS RELEASE

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LOCK GATE PRODUCTION ENTERS NEW ERA

The biggest change in lock gate manufacture since moving from
steam to electric machines

The UK's largest canal charity, Canal & River Trust, is investing in new technology at its lock gate workshop in the West Midlands that will allow it to increase production of lock gates to keep up with the demand for replacement gates across its 2,000-mile canal network.

The new custom-built CNC machine will be the largest of its type in the UK – and the third largest in Europe – to allow for the size and scale of the canal network's bespoke oak lock gates.

Built by specialist fabricators in Europe, the 'computer numerically controlled' machine is expected to be delivered to the Trust's Bradley-based workshop early next year. It replaces largely obsolete machinery dating back 60-70 years and will enable the Trust's two workshops to incrementally increase production to around 190 lock gate leaves every year, up from around 150 lock gate leaves at present.

Simon Turner, workshops manager, comments: "The arrival of new computer-based technology to help our craftspeople produce lock gates is the biggest update in our workshops since electric machinery superseded steam-powered machinery which, in turn, superseded the hand tools used by the original canal builders.

"The canal network has a bow wave of new lock gates needed in the years ahead including, for example, replacing the many gates installed as part of the canal restorations around the Millenium that are now nearing the end of their working life. This investment in production will allow us to keep up with that demand, with the new machine able to precision cut the oak components needed to make the gates quickly and efficiently."

The investment by the Trust of c£750,000 was brought forward by the workshop team under the Trust's 'Spend to Save' scheme, where investment is made today to deliver future efficiency.

T 0203 204 4514 **E** press.office@canalrivertrust.org.uk **W** www.canalrivertrust.org.uk **Twitter** [@CanalRiverTrust](https://twitter.com/CanalRiverTrust)

Canal & River Trust is a charitable company limited by guarantee, registered in England and Wales with company number 7807276 and registered charity number 1146792, registered office address: National Waterways Museum Ellesmere Port, South Pier Road, Ellesmere Port, Cheshire CH65 4FW

The Trust has two lock gate workshops, at Bradley in the West Midlands and Stanley Ferry in Yorkshire. The smaller lock gates leaves found across much of the network are mostly built at Bradley, whilst Stanley Ferry has the lifting capacity to also make the network's largest gates, notably those on larger river navigations. The new CNC machine will be based at Bradley but will cut component parts for both sites. The workshop teams will continue their skilled work to hand assemble and finish the lock gate leaves.

For more information about the Canal & River Trust, including how to volunteer and donate, visit: www.canalrivertrust.org.uk.

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For further media requests please contact:

Jonathan Ludford, Canal & River Trust

m 07747 897783 e jonathan.ludford@canalrivertrust.org.uk

Notes to editors:

The Canal & River Trust cares for and brings to life 2,000 miles of canals and rivers 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.