



Glandŵr Cymru
Canal & River Trust in Wales

Impact

report 2023/24

The Charity
Keeping Our
Canal Network
Open & Alive

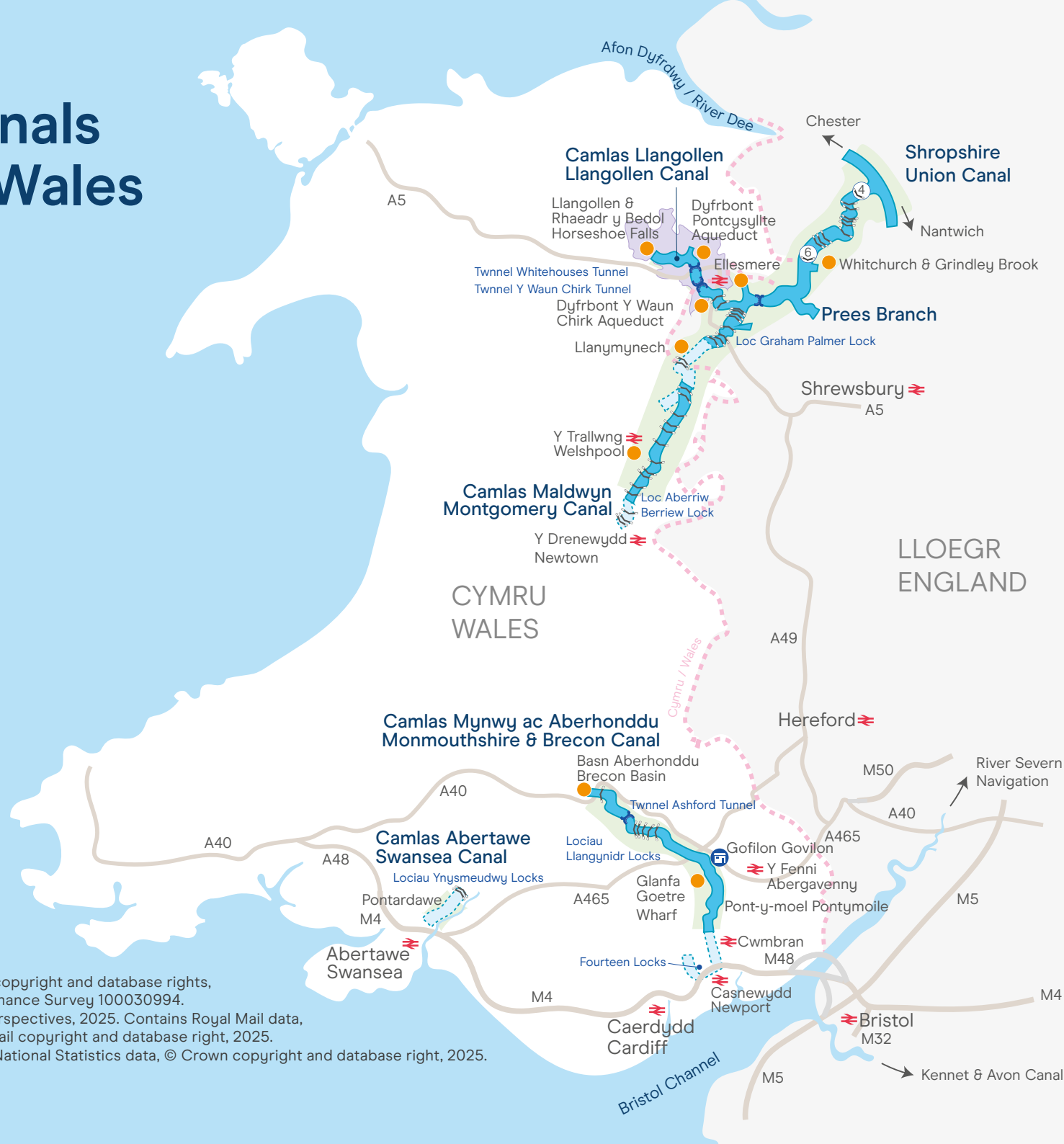


SUPPORT US

Living waterways, transforming
places and enriching lives

Canals in Wales

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Allwedd map / Map key

- dan ofal Glandŵr Cymru cared for by Canal & River Trust
- ⋯ na ellir ei mordwyo / dan adferiad unnavigable / under restoration
- cyrff dŵr eraill other water bodies
- loc lock
- ⦿ rhes o lociau lock flight
- twynnel tunnel
- lleoedd i ymweld places to visit
- Safle Treftadaeth Y Byd / World Heritage Site
- swyddfa Glandŵr Cymru Canal & River Trust office
- gorsaf drenau railway station



Wales impact highlights 2023/24

Glandŵr Cymru, the Canal & River Trust in Wales, cares for approx. **76 miles** of canals in Wales



97,008

volunteer hours
(Wales & South West Region)

Approx. **40** miles
with Green Flag status

5 Sites of Special
Scientific Interest
(SSSIs)

17,674,057

people in Wales made visits to our network



33 Let's events
in 2023/24

700 estimated number
of attendees

208

Community Roots
events

5,295

estimated number
of attendees



3 scheduled
monuments

8 conservation
areas



Available and open to everyone

No turnstiles or closing times. Our canal network is available and open to everyone.

Canals are a lifeline for millions of people, providing much-needed access to nature and blue-green spaces where it's needed most.

Our free-to-access canal network gives everyone the opportunity to be by or on the water – and experience the physical health and wellbeing benefits.

And people can enjoy our network in a number of ways, whether spotting wildlife, walking, running, cycling, paddleboarding, boating or marvelling at some of the world's finest examples of working industrial heritage.



Our vision – Our canals are living waterways that transform places and enrich lives

Living waterways provide vital habitats for wildlife, much-needed open spaces and routes for people and boats and help tackle some of the UK's most pressing challenges

Transform places by connecting communities and businesses, physically and digitally, providing a focus for regeneration and giving us new ways to live and work sustainably

Enrich lives by connecting us with nature, with each other and with our past and our future

Place & Prosperity

Supporting sustainable growth,
boating, development & living



Societal challenge

Too few homes, slow economic growth and insecure water and energy supplies are serious challenges facing our nation. And it's impacting communities, who feel cast aside and forgotten.

However, there are ambitious plans by government to rebuild and kickstart the economy. And just as our canal network helped to spur innovation and growth over 200 years ago, it can be part of the solution today.

The difference we make

Our canals are living, working heritage like no other, connecting us to our past and inspiring our future.

Our canals in Wales have helped fuel economic growth by supporting tourism. From January to September 2023, enthusiastic residents across Britain took 127.47 million leisure trips in Wales, lasting three hours or more, and spending £3.92 billion.

Our network also supports economic growth through its utilities and the marine economy, as well as the resilience of water supply, flood mitigation and renewable energy generation.

Swansea Canal anniversary celebrations

Camlas Abertawe
Swansea Canal

Dathlu | Celebrating

225

o Flynyddoedd | Years
1798-2023



We celebrated 225 years of Swansea Canal (1798-2023) with plenty of fantastic events. The project was funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund – Wales.

Swansea Canal Society



Cymdeithas Camlas Abertawe



In 2023, we opened an interactive exhibition at Swansea's National Waterfront Museum in partnership with Swansea Canal Society and the museum.

To find out more about the exhibition and celebrations, visit: canalrivertrust.org.uk/sc225

Celebrating 225 years of the Swansea Canal at The Waterfront Museum

5,000

estimated visits to museum exhibition

8,601

people actively engaged in Swansea 225 (ROI – £9.50)

146,805

Facebook and X (Twitter) engagements

33

organisations/partners contributed to the success of Swansea 225

The Swansea Canal 225 anniversary project received a highly commended Community Award at our annual awards in October.



Photo courtesy of Eleanor Greenwood

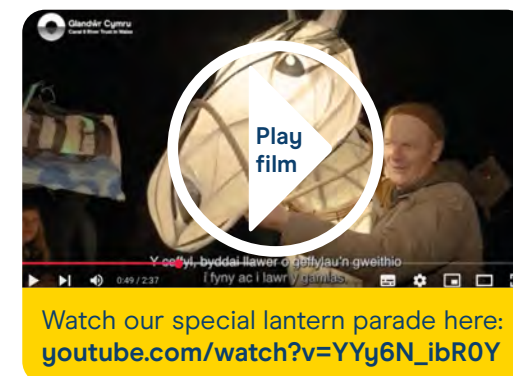


Lantern parade

In November, celebrations were marked with a special 'Lighting up the Canal' lantern parade at Coed Gwilym Park in Clydach.

The procession lit up the waters with more than 100 lanterns made by the public after working with local artists to create their designs. 'Spacetocreate' also designed life-size animal lanterns, including a horse, swan and otter.

David Morgan, development manager, says, "It was fantastic that so many people took part in the celebrations, and it really shows the impact canals have on bringing communities together. These special places need continued support to make sure they're here for today and tomorrow."



Watch our special lantern parade here: youtube.com/watch?v=YYy6N_ibR0Y

Protecting one of the 'Seven Wonders of the Waterways'

Opened in 1805, the world-famous Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and the 11 miles of the Llangollen Canal is a World Heritage Site, described as 'a masterpiece of creative genius' by UNESCO.

“

It was a huge undertaking with lots of different challenges, but at the same time, it was hugely rewarding. It's not every day you work on a UNESCO World Heritage Site that's got the same status as the Taj Mahal.”

Mark, construction manager who oversaw the inspection

The aqueduct is an important part of North Wales' visitor economy, with more than 500,000 people from 52 different countries visiting this breathtaking attraction.

For the first time in 20 years, we carried out a full inspection during February and March 2024. Closing and draining this much-loved 126ft (38m) historic structure enabled Mark and his team to really scrutinise 'the stream in the sky' and complete the work needed to keep it safe and open for all to enjoy.



Step behind the scenes with Dan Snow:
youtube.com/watch?v=5rZRsyapFw8



Voices of the canal

We're preserving important narratives and fostering a greater appreciation of local history along the Montgomery Canal.

Schoolchildren came together with residents to learn about their memories of the canal and recorded their interviews for an audio trail. Designed to be listened to while walking along the Monty, the children's narrations bring to life the personal stories collected from the community.

Teaching important interviewing skills and encouraging youthful curiosity, the project covered everything from how the Monty was built and the navvies that used them to the snakes, otters and frogs you'll see along the towpath and in the water today.



Visit Voices of the canal at
canalrivertrust.org.uk/voices-of-the-canal

Torfaen Community Roots

Through our Community Roots programme in Torfaen, funded by players of People's Postcode Lottery, we've brought together different communities to create a shared vision and action plan for their local canal. These programmes promote physical and mental wellbeing and environmental improvements while connecting people with water and nature.



“

I'm enjoying being part of the project and helping share the benefits of the canal in our area. It has inspired me to investigate and travel to explore other areas of the canal network in the UK.”

Torfaen Community Roots Participant (male, 69)



Bushcraft

The bushcraft skills programme, run by Community Roots engagement coordinator Hannah Cubie in partnership with Gwent Wildlife Trust at Pontymoile:

“The first session saw 12 women arrive bright and sparkly, looking to learn new skills such as fire-starting, green woodworking and outdoor cooking under the capable tutelage of Rose from Gwent Wildlife Trust. The intention is that they get to slow down, connect with nature and create a community of lovely outdoorsy folks looking to spend more time by the Monmouthshire & Brecon,” says Hannah.

Glandŵr
Cymru
Canal & River
Trust in Wales

Nature & Biodiversity

Vital habitats
& corridors for
nature to thrive





We have seen, on average, a **20% decrease** in Welsh wildlife since 1994, with **18% of species** threatened by extinction.

Societal challenge

The UK is one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world.

Since the 1970s, 41% of UK species studied have declined. We have seen, on average, a 20% decrease in Welsh wildlife since 1994, with 18% of species threatened by extinction.

The difference we make

Iconic species along our canals, like kingfishers and water voles, face urgent threats from habitat loss, pollution and climate change.

Invasive and non-native species are making it hard for native canal life to survive. Pollution, from plastics to sewage, is releasing chemicals and greenhouse gasses, contaminating the water and harming wildlife. We urgently need to clean up, reduce carbon emissions and provide more habitats where nature can thrive.

Our unique interconnected network of hedgerows, waterways and canal banks provides nature with a home like no other. It is critical for the survival of our nation's threatened wildlife.

The Montgomery Canal restoration project

We're restoring more than four miles of the Montgomery Canal between Llaymynech and Maerdy, thanks to Levelling Up funding in partnership with Powys County Council and support by the Montgomery Canal Partnership.

We dredged the Tanat Feeder in autumn 2023 before continuing to dredge a 450-metre stretch on the main channel to deepen it, retaining areas of the emergent edge and overhanging vegetation.

“

We've increased the middle of the channel depth from 35cm to 1.5 metres, meaning biodiversity will increase, creating a healthy habitat for the wildlife that Montgomery Canal is known for.”

Kathryn Woodroffe, project manager



More than **2,000m³** of material was removed, weighing a total of **3,200 tonnes**.



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government



WEDI'I YRRU GAN

POWERED BY

FFYNIANT — BRO — **LEVELLING — UP —**



The second phase of the canal's restoration aims to re-establish the channel so boats can use the waterway for the first time since the 1930s. It will also help make the canal more usable for activities like canoeing and paddleboarding.



Rare pondweeds studied on the Monty

Standout plants on the canal are the Potamogeton, commonly known as pondweeds. These plants play a crucial role in the delicate balance of a thriving ecosystem. They improve water quality, provide shelter for aquatic organisms and act as a food source for waterfowl and fish.



Long-stalked pondweed

To aid the recovery and growth of new native species, volunteers helped clear invasive weeds across 18km of the waterway.

“

As part of the Montgomery Canal restoration, we undertook lots of exciting work to help enhance the ecosystem of the canal and learn more about its rare aquatic plants.”

Kathryn Woodroffe, project manager

Health & Wellbeing

Connecting people
with blue spaces,
routes & nature



Societal challenge

Across the UK, stubborn health inequalities persist, impacting quality of life and life expectancy. The likelihood of poor mental health, childhood obesity and long-term health conditions are much higher amongst those experiencing some level of poverty.

Our charity, working with our partners, can play a vital role in helping people take positive steps for their health through our free, open and accessible green and blue outdoor spaces.



60% of adults (16+) report to being overweight, with 26% reporting to be obese.
(The National Survey of Wales 22/23)



49%

Just under half of adults in Wales do physical activity 2-4 days a week.
(Sport Wales 2024)



39%

Two in five respondents say that the cost-of-living crisis has had a negative impact on their ability to be active.
(Sport Wales 2024)



The difference we make

Being more active and connecting with each other and with nature helps people live happier and healthier lives.

Let's events & activities

In the summer, we ran a large range of activities, engaging with more than 500 people. These included family-focused weekend events on land and water, Let's Paddle, Walk and Yoga activities with local providers, as well as activities working with council-referred groups.



“
I didn't realise the waterway was accessible for canoes and paddleboards and it's so lovely!”
Participant (female, 35-44)



We worked with Branching Out Learning to deliver Nature Art Attack sessions at Pontymoile for children to create with nature and explore colour, texture and play to make unique pieces of art.

The organisation, which brings Forest School and outdoor learning to families, nurseries, schools and educators, said: “We loved our last Nature Art Attack session at Pontymoile Canal Basin. We created clay boggarts and made blackberry paint and journey sticks! Thanks so much to the Trust and Hannah Cubie for making these sessions possible!”

Learning Outside the Classroom and Explorers



Fforwyr



2023/24 saw our first School Pocket Adoption. Children at Griffithstown Primary School, Pontypool, learned about the Monmouthshire & Brecon and worked towards making it an even better place to visit.

The idea behind school adoptions is that pupils can get involved in a range of activities, from street art and litter picking to planting and creating habitats for wildlife. By taking ownership of their local canal, children build important connections with their community and develop new skills whilst having lots of fun!



Inspiring Explorers

Ysgol Min Y Ddol lies within walking distance of the Llangollen Canal, River Dee, Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Trevor Basin.

Our Explorers programme is designed to inspire learning by connecting young people to nature through our canals and rivers, sparking curiosity and building their knowledge to stay safe around water.

Mr Davis, a Year 3/4 teacher, said: “The workshops included a great mix of interesting topics and were perfect for the children’s ability levels. The children really enjoyed it.”

He continued: “As well as the visits and activities along the water, we place a big emphasis on water safety. The Trust comes in to talk to pupils, and whenever we go out, we take every opportunity to test and top up their knowledge. It’s especially important for older children who are becoming more independent.”

“

I’ve never seen them take in so much information. They were so inquisitive and really looked at everything in detail. They still remember so much from the day. ”

Mr Davis, Year 3/4 teacher



“

We use all these wonderful free resources as often as we can. ”

Tom Evison, acting deputy head

Green and social prescribing workshop in Llangollen – ‘The Bridge that Connects’



We secured funding through the Shared Prosperity Fund (North) to deliver a community-led arts placemaking project.

Artists worked extensively with World Heritage Site (WHS) communities, exploring heritage, landscape, identity, social history and togetherness. Four artists were commissioned to work with residents and groups to explore the past, present and future aspirations of individual ‘place’ and the multiple layers of Welsh cultural heritage through the landscape, language and social history that connect and could unite them.

“

The Bridge that Connects project in Chirk has really opened a door – and from the feedback I’ve had, people that missed it want to join in and people who saw it want it to be a regular thing!”

Local stakeholder involved in project



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government



Resilience & Security

Critical &
interconnected
part of the nation's
infrastructure





Societal challenge

Our nation is facing a climate crisis, with more intense and extreme weather – floods, droughts and soaring temperatures.

Each year, thousands of people, homes and businesses, as well as wildlife, are affected.

The challenge we face

Our ageing canal network is increasingly under immense strain.

Battered by 12 storms across the UK during 2023/24 alone, our historic canals, reservoirs and bridges are at risk of subsidence and collapse.

The difference we make

Our canals are also contributing to climate adaptation.

Flood protection offered by our embankments and reservoirs protects many households, properties, businesses, telecommunications and utilities, as well as other national infrastructure, such as electricity substations, transport and schools.

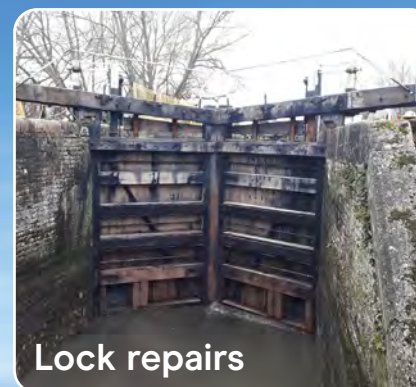
Canals support decarbonisation, which is a critical aspect of global efforts to address climate change and transition towards a more sustainable and environmentally friendly future.

Our teams on the frontline responding to damage from 12 storms across the UK

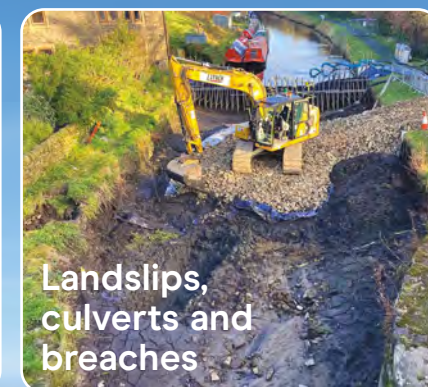


“Going back over my 30 years, we’ve always had emergencies. But incidents are increasing as canals, long past their life expectancy, are now facing more climate challenges.”

Dean, head of direct services

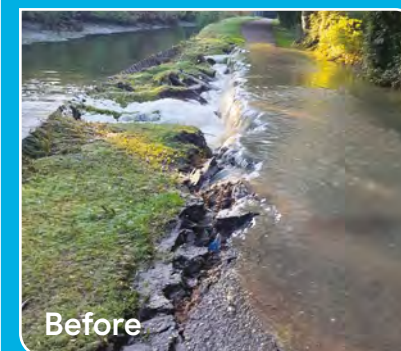


Lock repairs



Landslips, culverts and breaches

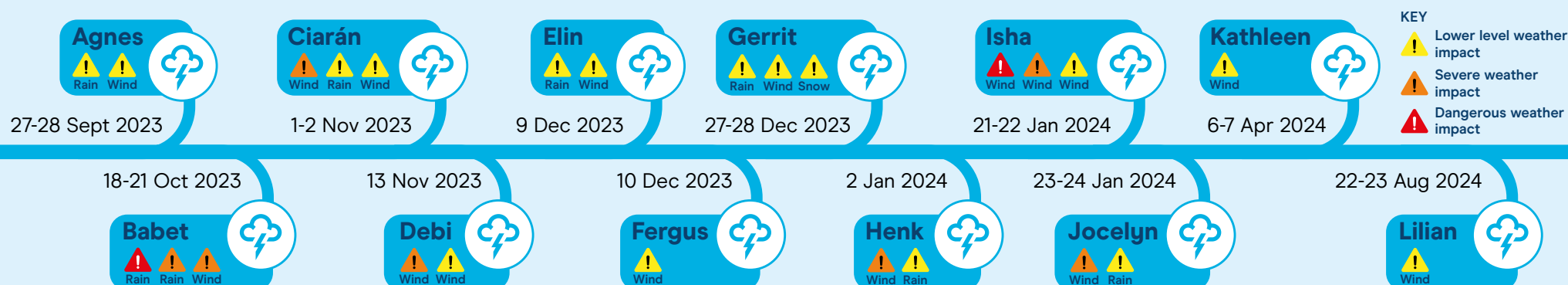
Towpath repairs



Before



After



Repairs of 225-year-old Monmouthshire & Brecon aqueduct



Cyfoeth Naturiol Cymru
Natural Resources Wales

We completed repairs to a 225-year-old stone aqueduct which carries the Monmouthshire & Brecon over the Nant Onneu (a tributary to the River Usk).

In the autumn of 2023, we repaired the masonry and foundations of the aqueduct at Llangattock, as centuries of river water scouring have eroded the man-made stone arched structure. Our work included taking steps to prevent future erosion to support canal wildlife. We worked with Natural Resources Wales to make ecological improvements to the riverbed of the Nant Onneu to benefit fish as they migrate up the river each spring to spawn.



Paul Kelly, senior project manager, said: “The Monmouthshire & Brecon Canal is such a beautiful and peaceful place for people to use and enjoy. It’s a great legacy of industrial heritage and is now an example of living history that supports the local economy through tourism.

In addition to the aqueduct repair, we have drained and repaired four sections of the 35-mile canal, from bridges to banks, with help from our dedicated volunteers.”



Restoring Swansea's hidden lock

Swansea Canal Society announced a £967,000 grant from the UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund to restore 120 metres of buried canal and lock in Clydach beneath a council storage yard.

When complete, boats, canoes and kayaks will travel from the centre of Clydach to Trebanos along a green corridor lined with trees and wildflowers.

The fund is part of the UK Government's Levelling Up agenda, administered by Swansea Council.



The hidden story behind the hidden lock



The Clydach lock has a quietly kept history. In the 1970s, John Evans (pictured), the father of our Wales & South West director Mark Evans, carried out its infilling. As assistant divisional surveyor, John placed a pipe in Lock 7 to allow water through, backfilled it with stone and surfaced with tarmac. He preserved the lock by adding a protective slab and installing an inspection chamber.



Anna Finn, strategic programme delivery manager, says, "The work that the Swansea Canal Society is doing in partnership with Glandŵr Cymru, the Canal & River Trust in Wales, has been absolutely amazing. They've made such a difference to the remaining navigable waterway and our ambition of a fully restored canal."

canalrivertrust.org.uk/revealing-the-buried-secrets-of-swanea-canal

Looking to the future

This report is just a glimpse of the breadth of activities undertaken over the last 12 months and the positive impact they've had on people's lives.

None of this would have been possible without our amazing volunteers, partners, funders and donors, Friends, supporters and ambassadors – a huge thank you to each of you.

We need your support so our canals can be part of the climate solution and continue to be at the heart of our local communities, where there is space for people to lead healthy lives and enjoy life by and on the water.





“

I never feel alone on the canal, even if I walk 10 miles away and I don't see anybody. It's what I call my 'safe place'. It just gives me this total freedom and escape from life. I think it takes you into a different world. You're just there, and suddenly you're focused on what's around you. The mood of the canal is just, I don't know how to explain it, it's just phenomenal. It takes me to a place where I just relax and forget everything.”

Zoe



Glandŵr Cymru
Canal & River Trust in Wales

Inspired by the impact of our
work and the potential of
our canal network?

Get in touch to
discuss opportunities
for support and help us
to keep our canals open
and alive for tomorrow
and beyond.



SUPPORT US

canalrivertrust.org.uk



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