

Heritage Policy Statement

August 2023

This policy statement sets out our approach to heritage which is based upon sound conservation principles and adopts “sustaining significance for all” as the starting point and overarching policy objective of keeping our historic waterway network open, safe and resilient.

The Canal & River Trust is the charity that cares for, protects and brings to life a 2,000 miles long network of historic canals, navigable rivers, reservoirs and docks across England & Wales. This living legacy is recognised as one of the finest working networks of industrial heritage in the world and is the third largest designated heritage estate in the United Kingdom. It comprises some 2,700 listed buildings, 50 scheduled monuments and 304 conservation areas. Our 250 years old waterway network passes through 7 historic parks and gardens, 6 historic battlefields and 4 World Heritage Sites, one of which we directly manage. In addition, we care for large numbers of non-designated heritage assets.

The Trust’s charitable objectives include protecting and conserving for “public benefit, sites, objects and buildings of archaeological, architectural, engineering or historic interest on, in the vicinity of, or otherwise associated with inland waterways” as well as promoting their cultural value to education and wellbeing.

Our waterways heritage is a collection of :

- iconic buildings and structures (such as Anderton Boat Lift, Pontcysyllte Aqueduct)
- everyday heritage (such as locks and arched accommodation bridges,)
- waterway furniture, fittings and the marks of time (such as 200-year-old rope marks)
- historic boats and other artefacts
- knowledge, skills and techniques associated with it.

This working heritage is still used by a wide range of boats including unpowered craft. It forms part of a uniquely accessible cultural heritage which is valued and enjoyed by local communities and visitors alike. Our waterways, museums and other attractions provide out-of-classroom learning and skills development opportunities for all, notably children and young people.



Our historic waterways connect urban and rural landscapes, contribute to the character of villages, towns and cities, and create sustainable waterside neighbourhoods.

The impact of changing weather patterns upon a fragile and ageing infrastructure is making the task of keeping our historic waterway network open, safe and resilient an increasing challenge. To maximise the benefits from our historic estate and rich cultural heritage, we must balance competing needs, adopt different ways of working and embrace innovation.

To meet these challenges, we have revised our existing management policies for maintaining the character and significance of our waterways heritage and we are adopting the following approach to sustaining our living legacy and engaging communities.

This revised policy has been developed in conjunction with the Trust's Cultural Heritage Advisory Group.





Sustaining Our Living Legacy

We will:

1. Take an approach to heritage management which acknowledges that the working historic network is a living legacy, delivering a wide range of functions, taking account of the ever-increasing impact of climate change on the resilience of the network and its associated structures.
2. Keep our waterways operational and resilient by using where appropriate, new or innovative methods to deliver effective long-term conservation, and to mitigate the effects of climate change on heritage assets.
3. Identify and assess cultural and heritage values, to establish significance in a proportionate manner, prior to undertaking physical works to any heritage asset. This understanding will be the basis upon which decisions regarding the capacity for change or alteration to an asset will be taken. The nature and scale of any work will have to consider its impact upon the integrity of an asset, its setting and its conservation in the long term.
4. Undertake Heritage Impact Assessments prior to considering the management of, or seeking appropriate alternative uses for our historic properties, including their potential disposal or redevelopment.
5. Comply with legislation and regulation as a minimum requirement, whilst seeking to deploy any future new legal provisions (e.g. listed building consent orders) for managing our heritage. We will follow good practice in our management of assets including using Heritage Impacts Assessments, condition monitoring and other tools that have been established as effective in delivering sustainable management of the historic environment.
6. Invest in our staff, contractors and volunteers to ensure that everyone working on heritage assets has sufficient heritage awareness and skills training for the work they undertake.
7. Maintain our architectural heritage survey records held by the Trust and promote the potential for user-generated content including current and historic photographs to record the changing waterway landscape, developing our oral history records, for storytelling, research and evidence.
8. Encourage new and existing volunteers to participate in heritage activities, including research, archaeology, recording, repair and restoration, education and heritage open days.
9. Provide advice to Local Planning Authorities, developers, and infrastructure providers in our role as statutory consultee for planning applications and as prescribed consultee for NSIPs in order to safeguard the integrity and resilience of our heritage network and provide guidance on how to optimise and integrate waterways within developments.
10. Monitor our performance through appropriate benchmarking and reporting.



Engaging Communities

We will:

11. Seek to understand the heritage and cultural significance of our assets to different communities and to help build stronger community connections with their local waterways through inclusive engagement and outreach.
12. Encourage local communities and individuals to get involved in caring for their local historic waterways to enhance the beauty of local places and help build and foster a sense of community pride and ownership.
13. Grow our partnership working to access funding and other resources for the improvement of and access to waterway heritage through being 'partners in place' as well as partnering with charities and others.
14. Explore and utilise the experience and knowledge of local heritage that exists within the waterway community.

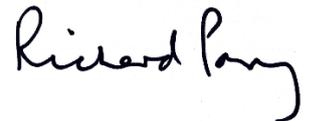
Guided by this heritage policy, we will seek to integrate the various needs of those who visit and use our waterways for navigation and recreation with a sustainable approach to heritage management.

In addition to the conservation of heritage assets we will generally promote heritage awareness and appreciation through site interpretation, dissemination (e.g., via digital channels), community engagement, learning and training.



David Orr CBE

Chair to the Board of
Trustees



Richard Parry

Chief Executive

25th August 2023

