

PRESS RELEASE

5 May 2026

Canal charity removes 37,000 tonnes of silt from Gloucester Docks as part of major dredging programme

The equivalent of ten-and-a-half Olympic sized swimming pools of silt has been removed from Gloucester Docks by the Canal & River Trust over the past six months during the latest phase of work to keep the historic port navigable.

On top of the 37,000 tonnes of silt that has been removed in the latest phase of dredging, a further programme of dredging later this year will aim to remove an additional 18,000 tonnes. The total cost to the Trust will be in the order of £4.5 million.

The dredging will ensure the Docks are available for boats this summer and ahead of the port's 200th anniversary in 2027. It has been required because of the unprecedented level of silt that was carried into the docks last summer from the River Severn. This is because the River Severn, which feeds water into the docks and Gloucester & Sharpness Canal, was at very low levels because of the exceptionally dry summer in 2025. With changing climate conditions the incidents of the river carrying more sediment are increasing.

Ben Cottam, regional director for Wales & South West at Canal & River Trust, said: "The first phase of this dredging campaign is the biggest that the Canal & River Trust has undertaken at Gloucester Docks. We're investing significant time and our charity's money into the recovery programme and recognise the challenges that last year presented and the impact it has had locally.

"Moving forward, the next phase of dredging will continue to improve the depths for boats, with the dredging in Gloucester equating to around a third of the Trust's entire national dredging budget. We're also working with partners to look at how operational changes can help reduce silt entering the Docks in future.

"The docks are one of the jewels in the city's crown and we are going to continue to work hard to make improvements so that they can continue to play such an important role."

The Trust has targeted dredging on the navigable channel through the Docks basin, the entrance to Gloucester Lock, the canal section before Llanthony Bridge, entrance to Victoria Basin and visitor moorings.

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The next phase will include further work on the main navigation channel and moorings.

Water from the River Severn supplies up to half of the daily supply of water for Bristol and is pumped from the river into the Docks and then along the Gloucester & Sharpness Canal where it's then treated by Bristol Water before it's supplied to homes and businesses. The dry weather led to water levels in the Severn being low which meant more silt was pumped into the Docks than normal.

The dredged material removed over the past six months has been taken by barge to Parkend before being put to good use on local farmland, as well as nearby disposal facilities for reuse.

To discover more about the work of the Canal & River Trust, and how you can donate or volunteer to support the charity, visit canalrivertrust.org.uk.

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For further media requests please contact:

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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.