

PRESS RELEASE

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Anderton Boat Lift gate repairs prioritised to get navigation back open

The Canal & River Trust is today announcing that it will be prioritising the programme of works at Anderton Boat Lift during the year ahead that will see the 'Cathedral of the Canals' back open and operational for boaters.

The investment will enable the lift to transfer boats between the Trent & Mersey Canal and the River Weaver once again in 2027. This will remedy the fault with the structure's caisson gates, discovered during routine maintenance earlier this year, and also provide an overdue update to the lift's operating system required to make the lift's passage of boats more resilient.

A much larger project at the Anderton site, that would require additional and unaffordable capital expenditure from the Trust alongside the submission of a successful bid to The National Lottery Heritage Fund, is being paused. This means prioritising the investment needed for navigation but deferring the painting of the lift's three-storey high iron superstructure together with investment in the attraction's Visitor Centre.

Jon Horsfall, regional director for the Canal & River Trust, comments: "The priority for our charity is getting the lift open and operational for navigation. It is a remarkable structure and a defining landmark of Britain's waterways that continues to hold national significance for the canal network.

"The team remains committed to the long-term future of the Anderton Boat Lift. We are focussing on the works required to reopen navigation, whilst pausing the additional spend elsewhere at the lift which is currently unaffordable. In doing so, we are making sure that the limited money our charity has stretches as far as possible so that there is adequate investment in other key areas for navigation including locks, bridges, aqueducts and the network as a whole.

"I'd like to thank our volunteers, donors, partners and the continued interest and vital support we received from The National Lottery Heritage Fund, both here at Anderton but also across the North West and wider canal network."

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The Trust has already commissioned the detailed design of new gate lifting equipment to replace the wire rope system. The installation will happen over the winter of 2026/27 with one caisson being opened in time for the summer season in 2027 and the other caisson also opening as soon as possible after that. Although this seems a long time off, the works are complicated and time consuming. They will see a new lifting mechanism installed on ten separate gates, replacing the current ropes, wires and pulleys. The new system will be robust, future proof, safe to operate and safer to maintain.

Anderton Boat Lift remains a popular visitor attraction, and the team is excited to welcome guests over the winter period. The Anderton Boat Lift Visitor Centre and coffee shop are open every weekend (10am-4pm) throughout the winter season. Don't miss the free drop-in craft activities running this December, and popular Santa Cruises for songs and stories with Santa and his elves as you travel along the River Weaver.

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