



PRESS RELEASE

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HIGH FLYING FACELIFT FOR WILTSHIRE AQUEDUCT

Abseilers gave an aqueduct on the Kennet & Avon Canal a facelift this week, clearing off vegetation and checking the 200-year old structure for evidence of bats.

Working with the Canal & River Trust – the charity that cares for the waterway – the high flying team removed ivy, moss, weeds and young saplings from Semington Aqueduct, while at the same time exploring any cracks or holes in the masonry for signs of the elusive mammals.

Carrying the canal over Semington Brook, the aqueduct is one of four John Rennie designed aqueducts on the Kennet & Avon Canal, the most famous being at Dundas, where the waterway is carried over the River Avon. All over two centuries old, they can easily be damaged by vegetation growing on their façades, while nooks and crannies can be used by bats as handy roosts. Where this happens, any work done to repair the structures needs to be adapted to protect the animals.

Laura Mullholland, ecologist at the Canal & River Trust, explains: “A lot of work goes into protecting the fantastic bridges, locks, tunnels and aqueducts on the Kennet & Avon Canal, and this kind of thing is especially necessary when we’re looking after things that are centuries old. We love the canal to be green, but when things start growing in the wrong places they can do a lot of damage, so we have to make sure we get up there and clear off anything that might be troublesome.

“It’s also the perfect opportunity to check if any bats are using holes or crevices in the aqueduct as roosts or shelters. We’re lucky to have a thriving bat population on the Kennet & Avon Canal, and while we didn’t find traces of any this time, we do need to keep an eye on where they are in case we need to make any changes to our plans to protect them.”

To find out more about the Kennet & Avon Canal, visit www.canalrivertrust.org.uk/.

ENDS

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Notes to Editors

The Canal & River Trust is the guardian of 2,000 miles of historic waterways across England and Wales, caring for the nation's third largest collection of listed structures, as well as museums, archives, and hundreds of important wildlife sites.

We believe that *living waterways transform places and enrich lives* and our role is to make sure there is always a place on your doorstep where you can escape the pressures of everyday life, stretch your legs and simply feel closer to nature.

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