



# PRESS RELEASE

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## CANAL & RIVER TRUST PUBLISHES WATERWAYS HERITAGE REPORT

The Canal & River Trust has today published its annual report into the state of the waterways heritage. During the year the Trust made good progress, notwithstanding the devastating effects of the floods in the winter of 2015.

As part of the £43.7 million spent on inspections and works to its waterways in 2015/16, the Trust carried out works on 194 listed or scheduled canal structures.

The Trust has an exemplary record in conservation and legal compliance which has been further recognised in the year with continued progress with Historic England and the Department for Communities and Local Government towards a National Listed Building Consent Order. The Order, the first of its kind, would allow the Trust to make repairs to its masonry and brick structures without having to gain individual consents, allowing repairs to be made more quickly and saving both time and money.

The Report takes a closer look at the number of the Trust's assets that are on the Heritage at Risk registers. In the past year, James Bridge Aqueduct in the West Midlands was removed from the register after a programme of repair work. However the floods saw Stainton Aqueduct on the Lancaster Canal added, meaning the number of assets on the register remains stable at 24. There is positive news for the future as work progressed at Soulbury PumpHouse on the Grand Union, the Birmingham Roundhouse, Saul Junction Lock and Fox's Kiln at Gloucester Docks, and several of these could be removed from registers in 2016/17.

Volunteers play an important part in supporting the Trust's heritage activity and in the past year 1,209 hours were given by volunteers working with the Trust's heritage team. Volunteers have been involved in all areas, including historical research, making heritage assessments and conservation management plans, practical works and recording historic structures.

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Incidents that affected waterways heritage were down 25% on the previous year, with just under 800 recorded. The most common cause of damage was vandalism (38% with just under half involving graffiti), while a similar number of incidents involve damage caused by boats (34%) and 16% were caused by vehicles striking historic structures and, in particular, bridge parapets.

Richard Parry, chief executive at the Trust, said: “It’s heartening to see that the passion, expertise and hard work of our employees and volunteers is having a positive effect on the heritage in our care. Despite the devastation caused by the flooding in the north of England last winter which damaged several heritage structures, we have continued to improve the overall condition of the historic locks, bridges, aqueducts and tunnels that are used and enjoyed by millions of people. It’s a great compliment that Historic England has recognised our impressive compliance record and chosen to work with us on a National Listed Building Consent Order.”

Sir Neil Cossons, chair of the Trust’s Heritage Advisory Group which provides the Trust with valuable advice and support on heritage and conservation issues, said: “The Trust’s heritage portfolio is an engaging and accessible one, there for everyone, to be savoured, enjoyed and understood. At once robust and unpretentious, this astounding asset can also have a delicate fragility that demands the utmost care and sensitivity to ensure its qualities are not degraded. It is a demanding brief but the Trust’s commitment to caring for the waterways’ heritage is impressive, discerning and professional, infusing its thinking and central to the shaping of policy.”

The Waterways Heritage Report is available on the Trust’s website here:

<https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/about-us/our-work/caring-for-our-heritage/heritage-report>

**ENDS**

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**Notes to editors**

In England and Wales the Trust has the responsibility for looking after 2,000 miles of historic waterways, 49 scheduled monuments, 2,701 listed buildings and 317 conservation areas. In addition, thousands of other non-designated buildings, structures and earthworks are almost equally important. Our waterways are also touched by other heritage designations including five World Heritage Sites, 42 historic parks and gardens and nine historic battlefields.