



Canal &  
River Trust



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## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Pocklington Canal dredging project set to protect conditions for rare aquatic plants**

A dredging project aimed at improving water quality and encouraging rare aquatic plants to thrive on the Pocklington Canal is set to get underway.

The Canal & River Trust, the charity that cares for 2,000 miles of the nation's historic waterways, is about to begin dredging more than 3,000 tonnes of silt from the canal to protect important habitats and maintain a wide diversity of aquatic plants.

Most of the canal is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) because it offers ideal conditions for a variety of important aquatic plants to thrive. However, reeds are beginning to dominate and out-compete some of the aquatic plants that make the canal so special so the Trust is stepping in to give them a helping hand.

The project will involve removing silt and reeds from the centre of the canal to create open water within which more fragile plants can thrive. With fewer reeds choking the canal more sunlight will also be able reach the water and encourage long dormant seed banks for some of the canal's scarcer species to germinate.

The works will take place between Coates Bridge and Bielby Arm and have been scheduled to ensure that they are completed before birds start settling down to nest. Work will start at the end of January and last for around 3 weeks.

The works form part of the three-year *Gem in the Landscape* project, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), to improve wildlife habitats and protect historic structures on the canal.

Lizzie Dealey, Pocklington Canal project officer for the Canal & River Trust, said; "These works may look dramatic at first but they're really important for the rare aquatic plant species and will help to make the canal an even more special place for wildlife.

"It's important to remember that the canal is a man-made environment and so sometimes it's necessary to step in and give nature a helping hand. By tackling some of the dominant reeds in the middle of the canal then we'll be able to improve conditions for other, rarer plant species but also dragonflies and other wildlife.

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“Once the works are complete the canal will be in much better shape. It will be able to support a much more diverse range of plants and other species and that can only be good news for the many people who head to the canal to get away from it all.”

Simon Christian, Lead Conservation and Land Management Adviser for Natural England, said; “the stretch of Canal between Coates Lock and Bielby was once one of the most species-rich areas for aquatic plants on the canal. The increasing dominance of reed over the past 30 years has resulted in a slow decline in diversity. The sympathetic dredging programme will reverse this trend allowing many plants to recolonise the area without detriment to current wildlife found in the area.

Those using the towpath during this time are advised to read the safety signage carefully. There are also plans to carry out dredging works between Top Lock and Silburn Lock, as well as between Walbut and Thornton Lock at a later date.

The *Gem in the Landscape* project secured £496,600 from National Lottery players in March. The project has been developed by a steering group of the Canal & River Trust, Natural England, the Pocklington Canal Amenity Society and the East & North Yorkshire Waterways Partnership.

For more information on the project, go to [www.canalrivertrust.org.uk/pocklington-canal](http://www.canalrivertrust.org.uk/pocklington-canal)

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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. [www.canalrivertrust.org.uk/](http://www.canalrivertrust.org.uk/)  
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**The East & North Yorkshire Waterways Partnership** was established in 2011 with funding from the Coast, Wolds, Wetlands, Waterways LEADER programme. Using a ‘bottom up’ approach, the partnership encourages public, private, community and voluntary groups to work together and ensure that our inland waterways are integral to local economic, environmental and social regeneration.  
[www.waterwayspartnership.co.uk](http://www.waterwayspartnership.co.uk)

Established in 2006, **Natural England** is the government’s independent adviser on the natural environment. Our work is focused on enhancing England’s wildlife and landscapes and maximising the benefits they bring to the public. For further information see our [website](#).

**The Pocklington Canal Amenity Society** was formed in 1969 to restore and protect the canal which had been derelict since the 1930s. One of its main aims is to reopen the canal for navigation. PCAS works closely with the Canal & River Trust and other organisations to promote the canal for the local community to enjoy its heritage and wildlife. [www.pocklingtoncanalsociety.org](http://www.pocklingtoncanalsociety.org)

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