



Canal &
River Trust



PRESS RELEASE

Video and images available – links below

MENDING CANAL BRIDGES AND WAR WOUNDS AT THE SAME TIME

- Canal & River Trust and Help for Heroes team-up to deliver ambitious £1/2 million canal restoration and career recovery programme
- Injured servicemen and women work on memorial garden and carry out bridge restoration works on the Kennet & Avon Canal
- “It’s great to be around military personnel again, I’ve loved the course and I’ve learnt so much,” said Help for Heroes veteran

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Injured servicemen and women are being given the opportunity to re-build their lives, gain qualifications and learn new skills by transforming and restoring historic canals.

The [Canal & River Trust](#) and [Help for Heroes](#) have come together to deliver an ambitious canal restoration and career recovery programme for wounded, injured or sick servicemen, women and veterans.

Veterans from across the country have joined the Heritage Heroes project and are working alongside the Canal & River Trust and its volunteers to restore historic Bridge 99 on the Kennet & Avon Canal in Wiltshire. Each veteran received specialist lime mortar training in order to work on the historic bridge. The programme of activities has also included creating a memorial garden at Caen Hillside, waymarking routes through the new woodland, constructing a new pond dipping platform and painting lock gates - in total there are 105 on the Kennet & Avon canal. All the work undertaken by the veterans will leave a lasting legacy.

The project, made possible by £500,000 funding from players of [People's Postcode Lottery](#), aims to bring pride and purpose back to our heroic veterans while restoring canals, some of which have been left neglected for decades.

Veterans returning from service are highly-skilled and capable individuals, with a great deal to contribute to society. Too often however, they are ill-prepared for the transition back into the civilian world. The Heritage Heroes project will equip the wounded, injured or sick heroes with City & Guilds qualifications in construction,

health and safety, horticulture and land-based management which can be used to help them identify a new, purposeful career.

Former Corporal Tom Dempsey joined the military in 1976 and undertook five tours of Northern Ireland. Whilst on tour, he was in a bomb attack, which left his hearing affected. After leaving the military, Dempsey went onto a career in the police force – but as time went on he started to doubt his abilities, and day-to-day tasks became more difficult. Tom sought help and was diagnosed with PTSD. Tom says: “It’s great to be around military personnel again, I’ve loved the course and I’ve learnt so much. It’s just great to be mixing with people again, both military and civilians – I’ve shied away from that for a long time but this has proved to me how much better it is for me to be social.”

Jason Leach, Enterprise and Restoration Team Manager for the Canal & River Trust, said: “Heritage Heroes is such an exciting project for us. It gives the Canal & River Trust the opportunity to work with Help for Heroes to transform waterways as well as helping to rebuild our wounded heroes’ lives.”

Mike Lee, Project Manager at Help for Heroes, said: “Leaving the military or realising that your career choice may no longer be possible can be daunting, especially for those who are living with life-changing injuries and illnesses. Working towards a new goal in life through career recovery can be extremely beneficial to an individual’s overall wellbeing, often accelerating their personal recovery journey. This project will resonate with many of our military men and women who will already have some of the necessary skills and enjoy working outdoors, as part of a team.”

Clara Govier, Head of Charities at People’s Postcode Lottery said: “We are delighted that the ‘Dream Fund’ has enabled this partnership between the Canal & River Trust and Help for Heroes. Heritage Heroes will make such a difference to the lives of our injured servicemen and women and I’m looking forward to seeing the results of their hard work on our historic canals.”

More information about the project and how to get involved can be found here:
www.canalrivertrust.org.uk/volunteer/heritage-heroes

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Notes to Editors:

For more information, interviews, video footage, or images contact Lucy Scott, Campaigns Manager, on 07789 178506 or lucy.scott@canalrivertrust.org.uk

For interviews with Help for Heroes beneficiaries contact Kirsty Williams, on 01980 844389 or kirsty.williams@helpforheroes.org.uk

Images available at:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/bytwujnvobkpyem/AADivCyAjAlBvHnvxoiEoM-fa?dl=0>

Video content of Help for Heroes veterans available at:

https://www.dropbox.com/sh/7ur1ju1blc6crga/AAA1QFB1ZP7xV_9kNwVRzbFka?dl=0

Heritage Heroes restoration locations:

Stroud (Cotswold Canals)

Pocklington (Melborne, Yorkshire, YO42 4RX)

Pewsham Nr Chippenham (Wilts & Berks)

Kennet & Avon Canal (Bridge 99 near Crofton, Wiltshire and Devizes Jubilee Woodland)

Further information about the project's 'Dream Fund' award win available at:

<https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/news-and-views/news/canals-and-veterans-come-together>

https://youtu.be/_oo-xf7zfbw

About Help for Heroes

Help for Heroes offers comprehensive support to those who have suffered life-changing injuries and illnesses while serving our country. This support is provided through grants direct to our Heroes and their families, grants to other charities and through four Help for Heroes Recovery Centres across the UK. A recent study launched in January 2016 by Help for Heroes and King's College London found of the 750,000 men and women who served as Regulars between 1991 and 2014, at least 66,000 need long term support.

www.helpforheroes.org.uk

@HelpforHeroes

About Canal & River Trust

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

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