



Canal &
River Trust

PRESS RELEASE

24 July 2017

CANAL & RIVER TRUST REPORTS RECORD LEVELS OF INVESTMENT AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN BRITAIN'S WATERWAYS

The Canal & River Trust's 2016/17 Annual Report, published today (Monday 24 July), records the highest levels of public support and investment in its 2,000 miles of historic waterways since they were transferred from state control five years ago.

A strong commercial performance during the year, including a further rise in the number of people donating to the charity's work, was underpinned by a significant growth in volunteering which reached over half a million hours for the first time.

The year saw the Trust increase the money it was able to spend on charitable activities by 6% to £157m. This included the Trust's biggest ever programme of lock repairs and gate replacements, as well as hundreds of thousands of minor repair and maintenance tasks such as vegetation management, servicing of bridges and vital inspections of embankments and hidden culverts.

Amongst other things, the Trust made improvements at its museums, invested in flood remediation work and completed dredging across 22 priority sites. It delivered a series of major towpath upgrades across the country and fixed the damage caused during the 2015 Boxing Day floods including major repairs of a breach and land slip in the Calder Valley and the complete dismantlement and reconstruction of the Grade II listed Elland Bridge.

Overall, the Trust improved the availability of the waterways and saw an increase in both boater and visitor satisfaction.

Allan Leighton, chair of the Canal & River Trust, comments: "Five years ago, the creation of the Canal & River Trust was a huge endorsement for the charitable sector. We were given responsibility for a national network that has the power to make such a positive impact on so many peoples' lives."

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Patron: H.R.H. The Prince of Wales. Canal & River Trust is a charitable company limited by guarantee, registered in England and Wales with company number 7807276 and registered charity number 1146792, registered office address: First Floor North, Station House, 500 Elder Gate, Milton Keynes MK9 1BB

“In that time, we’ve seen a charity that has gone from strength to strength, and this year’s Report highlights many of those successes. The Report also reminds us of the potential of our waterways to make a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of the communities we serve. With 25 million people, from all backgrounds and demographics, right on our doorstep – and around 4.3 million regular visitors each fortnight – we are uniquely positioned to make a powerful impact across the country. I look forward to working with colleagues, friends and partners to make that happen.”

Richard Parry, chief executive, comments: “It has been another successful year for the Trust and I’d like to thank everyone for their support and hard work.

“We have been able to increase the amount of money we can spend on the waterways which has seen a huge output by staff and volunteers alike. Accordingly, we beat our target for unplanned navigation closures with a further reduction year-on-year and I am pleased with the improvement in both boater and visitor satisfaction which grew to 76% and 85% respectively.

“Our education teams continue to introduce the next generation to the waterways with 92,700 children reached by the programme last year. We have also been building a high-quality STEM learning programme which reached 3,000 secondary school children to inspire a new generation of engineers and waterway supporters.

“The Annual Report show how canals and rivers can create a strong sense of place and have a vital role in contributing to community wellbeing. As such, we have commenced a project with leading academic and professional bodies that will, going forward, help to better quantify and measure that important contribution.”

Since launching in 2012, the Canal & River Trust has made a valuable input to the waterways and communities it serves. Successes include:

- Increased annual visitor numbers by 33% to 396m with visitor satisfaction hitting 85%
- Increased volunteering by 264% to 540,000 hours in 2016/17
- Increased volunteer lock keeper numbers by 278% to 750
- 180 communities have adopted a stretch of canal or river
- Over 235,000 children have been reached through the Trust’s education programme
- Numbers of Friends have grown to 22,000 and donations are now £2.9m p.a.
- Around 33,000 licenced boats on our network
- Over £645m spent maintaining and restoring our waterways
- Reduced unplanned navigation closures by 62%

- Set up partnerships with a range of household names including M&S, Google, Rolls Royce, People's Postcode Lottery, The Scout Association, Help for Heroes and National Trust
- 350,000 supporters welcomed (including digital supporters, donors and volunteers)
- Grown awareness of the Trust to 1 in 3 people

To view the Canal & River Trust Annual Report 2016/17 visit www.canalrivertrust.org.uk/annual-report.

The Trust's Annual Public Meeting will be held at the Bond in Birmingham on 21st September 2017, 10am to 1pm. A limited number of places are available to book, please visit <https://www.eventbrite.com/Canal & River Trust AP Meeting 2017>

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