



PRESS RELEASE

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CANAL & RIVER TRUST WARNS OF COST OF GRAFFITI TO NATION'S HERITAGE

The charity which looks after Britain's canals and rivers is highlighting the problem of graffiti on its 200-year old waterways, and says that it could cost over £1million removing it.

In its annual Heritage Report published today, the Canal & River Trust said that graffiti accounted for around 25% of recorded damage to its historic locks, bridges and buildings and warns that the true count is likely to be much higher.

The charity is the owner of the third largest estate of listed buildings and structures in the UK.

Nigel Crowe, national heritage manager at Canal & River Trust, said: "Anti-social graffiti is the real scourge of the nation's waterways heritage. The canals and rivers we care for are beautiful places to unwind and soak up the atmosphere, but too often the view includes mindless tags scrawled over locks and bridges. The problem is particularly bad in urban areas and many incidents are likely to have gone unreported.

"It's depressing that we have to spend so much time clearing up after vandals who spray their marks over our heritage. Areas that are covered in anti-social graffiti can feel intimidating as well as being an eyesore so we take action where we can, and always when it's racist or obscene.

"The Canal & River Trust and our volunteers do a fantastic job of clearing up the mess but it's a constant battle. Removing paint from historic masonry can be a costly and painstaking task – we often have to use special techniques to protect our buildings and structures. Sadly, as a charity, we don't have the time or money to rid the waterways of bad graffiti for good. We need people to help us, either by joining one of our volunteer groups and helping make their local canal an even lovelier place, or by donating to help us protect our waterways heritage."

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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

The Report shows that vandalism is the most common cause of damage to the waterways heritage, accounting for 47% of the 860 recorded incidents. Of this, half involved graffiti. The number of unrecorded incidents is likely to be much higher. With volunteers helping staff and contractors, the charity currently spends around £38,000 every year clearing the most offensive graffiti, but this can only scratch the surface of a perennial problem.

Away from graffiti 2016/17 was otherwise a good year for the Trust's heritage with an overall improvement in the condition of its listed building and structures. There was a slight decrease in the number of its assets on 'heritage at risk' registers, with three listed building were removed after repairs and conservation work was completed. The number of assets on national and local registers now stands at 22.

Nigel Crowe continues: "Our waterways are amongst the finest examples of working industrial heritage in the world. I'd like to thank our volunteers who are playing an increasingly valuable role in supporting the Trust's heritage activity. In the past year 1,209 hours were given by volunteers working with the 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."

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>

Volunteering opportunities can be found on the Trust's website here:

<https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/volunteer>

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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

In England and Wales the Trust has the responsibility for looking after 2,000 miles of historic waterways, 49 scheduled monuments, 2,697 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.