



## **PRESS RELEASE**

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3<sup>rd</sup> November 2017

**[Video and images available – links below](#)**

### **BEHIND THE SCENES, BANBURY LOCK BARES ALL**

- **Drained town centre canal lock opens up for the public to visit during special open weekend**
- **Talk to the Canal & River Trust's skilled team of experts and apprentices about the vital work being undertaken**

Banbury Lock, on the Oxford Canal, will be undergoing an extensive refurbishment to install brand new handmade lock gates. For three weeks in November the lock will be out of action while experts from the Canal & River Trust drain it to carry out essential works.

On 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> November the Canal & River Trust, the charity which looks after 2,000 miles of waterways in England and Wales, will allow the public the rare chance of venturing into the bottom of the empty lock chamber to view the original 239-year-old brickwork up close. The public can speak to the charity's experts about how the lock gates are made and fitted and about the works being undertaken.

After 21 years of use the old lock gates need to be replaced. The new gates took two skilled joiners three and half weeks to craft out of sustainable English oak. Weighing three tonnes the gates will be craned into place on a specialised boat.

The Trust's team, from construction supervisors, civil engineers to volunteers and apprentices, will be on hand to explain about their varied work and why it's important to pass this knowledge and experience on to future generations.

Visitors will be able to look around a pop-up museum which will showcase old items from the birth of the canals to some of the weird and wonderful finds from below the waterline, and there will be activities for children at nearby Banbury Museum. There will be a 'virtual hub' where people can plug in and watch virtual reality videos of some of the Canal & River Trust's more unusual and awe-inspiring locations.

Canal & River Trust

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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 Oxford Canal at Banbury has a rich and fascinating history. It is home to Tooley's Boat Yard, the oldest working dry dock on the inland waterways, which has been in continuous use since 1790. The yard, which will be throwing open its doors to the public during the open day, was the starting point for the fateful narrowboat journey by Tom Rolt in 1939 which led to the formation of the waterway restoration movement. Banbury Lock itself was struck during a bombing raid in 1940, destroying the bottom gates.

November marks the start of a five-month-long programme of repairs to England and Wales' waterways, as the Canal & River Trust spends £38million to restore some of the nation's best loved sites. This work requires a wide range of knowledge and expertise. The Trust's apprenticeship programme helps to preserve and pass on the specialist skills and expertise needed to carry out this work.

Tav Kazmi, South East Waterway Manager at the Canal & River Trust, says: "It's not very often that we get the chance to see our historic locks drained of water. The open weekend gives us the opportunity to meet with local people and share some of our hidden history. Banbury Lock marks our first open day of this winter and we will be working on over 200 different sites across the country and staging 10 free open days."

To find out more about the Trust's restoration and repair programme and the open days happening across the country go to [www.canalrivertrust.org.uk](http://www.canalrivertrust.org.uk).

## ENDS

### **For further media requests, interviews or images please contact:**

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### **Images of Banbury Lock past and present available at:**

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/0vatyyx7q8leqi4/AAB3hQe5IIUwg-AeW83GWuT5a?dl=0>

**Canal & River Trust Open Days video available at:** <https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/about-us/our-campaigns/open-days>

### **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) / @canalrivertrust / @crtcomms / #winteropendays

**Banbury Lock open weekend will be held on Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> November 2017 between 10am and 4pm.** Last entry into the lock will be at 3:30pm.

**Location:** The lock is next to The Mill Arts Centre, Spiceball Park, Spiceball Park Rd, Banbury, Oxfordshire OX16 5QE.

**Parking** is available at the centre as well as at other city centre car parks. Please do wear sturdy shoes if you would like to go down into the lock.

The Canal & River Trust carries out a year-round programme of works to maintain and repair the 2,000 miles of canals and rivers in its care so they can be enjoyed by the 33,000 boats and 10 million towpath visitors each year. Many of the biggest projects are carried out during the winter months to minimise the impact on waterway users. This year, essential maintenance will include the replacement of worn-out lock gates and repairs to aqueducts, reservoirs and tunnels.

Lock gate making and fitting is a skilled and traditional trade and one that remains essential to the waterways. Lock gates are constructed with tremendous strength as they have to control huge water pressures, take the hard usage they get from the thousands of boats which use them each year and survive for a long time underwater and at the mercy of the elements. Each lock gate is hand-crafted by a skilled team of carpenters and made from sustainably-sourced British oak. A single lock gate weighs on average 3.6 tonnes, can take up to 20 days to make and has a working life of 20-30 years.

### **Banbury Lock during WWII**

During the Second World War the canals were important because they moved goods around the country. In 1942 the canals used in the war effort were put under the government's control. In September 1940 at around 2am, two bombs fell on Banbury, and the canal lock was hit, along with the office of the lock-keeper, George Bloomfield. A chunk of masonry from the damaged lock also hit one of the dormer windows of the former Town Gaol in the Market Place. The lock was badly damaged and George's career as a lock keeper ended and he joined the army.