



## **PRESS RELEASE**

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1 February 2018

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

### **PUBLIC INVITED TO WALK ALONG THE BOTTOM OF THE UK'S LONGEST AND STEEPEST STAIRCASE OF LOCKS DURING ESSENTIAL CANAL REPAIRS**

- **Drained staircase of 10 locks makes for a fun family day out during special open weekend**
- **Talk to the Canal & River Trust's skilled team of experts and apprentices about the vital work being undertaken**

The famous Foxton Locks are undergoing a £195,000 makeover to ensure they're ready for the busy summer season when hundreds of trip boats will travel through the popular tourist destination.

The repairs, which will take several weeks to complete, will see some of the three-tonne gates removed and replaced with new ones. As part of the essential works the charity, Canal & River Trust, will be opening two of the drained lock chambers for visitors to venture down inside during a free open weekend.

At the open weekend, on 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> February, staff from the Canal & River Trust, the charity which looks after 2,000 miles of waterways in England and Wales, will be on hand to explain how the lock gates are made and fitted and about the works being undertaken.

Each new gate took the Trust's skilled carpenters 300 hours over eight weeks to complete by hand. The gates weigh three tonnes, roughly the equivalent of an adult giraffe.

The works on the Grand Union Canal are part 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, which are preserved and passed on through the Trust's apprenticeship programme.

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

Visitors to the open weekend can take part in many family friendly activities including visiting a 'virtual hub' where people can plug in and watch a virtual reality video of some of our more unusual and awe-inspiring locations. A pop-up museum will showcase old items from the birth of the canals to some of the weird and wonderful finds from below the waterline. Families can take part in the open weekend's rock hunt, painting rocks which they can hide around Foxton Locks for others to find and enjoy. There will also be the opportunity to try fishing for the first time with professional coaches.

Foxton Locks has a fascinating history, the locks were opened in 1814 and are virtually unchanged from when they were built. To find out more, and to see what's left of the incline plane, a type of boat lift from the 1900s, visitors can pop into The Canal Museum at the Boilerhouse which will be open for visitors to experience what it was like to live and breathe the canals in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

Tav Kazmi, South East Waterway Manager at the Canal & River Trust, says: "Foxton Locks are one of our most popular visitor attractions with over 325 thousand people passing through and visiting every year. This is why it's so important we carry out these works to ensure the locks are kept in excellent working order and continue to be a place that people love to visit. It's great to be able to expose the historic staircase of locks without water and show visitors the scale of what we do and how we do it."

**Event details:** Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> February, 10am-4pm both days. Last entry into the lock will be at 3:30pm. Limited paid for parking is available at Canal & River Trust car parks on site so please try and walk or car share where possible. A Park & Ride will also be in operation between 10am – 5pm.

**Address:** Foxton Locks, Foxton, Leicestershire, LE16 7RA.

Please wear sensible footwear. Children under the age of 16 must be accompanied by an adult to go into the locks.

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 Foxton Locks past and present available at:**

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/3fe2ktqbotp0voh/AAC4f5q52dx88X1Yi3Oa-lZga?dl=0>

**Time-lapse video of Foxton Locks being drained available at:**

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/5ntuoj0r0x2he7x/Time%20lapse%20of%20Foxton%20Locks%20being%20drained.mp4?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

Foxton Locks consists of ten locks, divided into two staircases, located on the Leicester line of the Grand Union Canal. Staircase locks are used where a canal needs to climb a steep hill, and consists of a group of locks where each lock opens directly into the next. Foxton Locks is the largest flight of such staircase locks in the UK.

These Grade II listed locks were built between 1810 and 1814. In 2008, the locks became part of the European Route of Industrial Heritage, a network which seeks to recognise the most important industrial heritage sites in Europe.

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 boaters and nearly 400 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.