

PRESS RELEASE

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MAJOR IMPROVEMENT PROJECT BEGINS ON GLOUCESTERSHIRE CANAL TOWPATH

Work begins this week on a £700,000 project to revamp more than two miles of towpath on the Gloucester & Sharpness Canal.

The scheme is being carried out by the Canal & River Trust, the charity that cares for the waterway. Funding was secured by Gloucestershire County Council, with £200,000 from Gloucestershire Environmental Trust and £500,000 of developer contributions from the Kingsway development.

The improvements will cover a stretch from just south of Rea Bridge to Midsummer Walk, with the whole project expected to take 14 weeks to complete. Sections of towpath will be closed between access points as the works progress.

Among the improvements being made are upgrades to the surface so that it is all-weather and will prevent puddles forming; widening the towpath to two metres at key points; and installing information boards telling the unique history of the canal and its contribution to the local area.

The towpath serves as a key route between Gloucester City Centre and the south of the city linking areas such as Hempsted and Podsmead and the newer outer city developments at Quedgeley and Kingsway. It is used for recreation, commuting and access to local services within Gloucester Quays and Gloucester City Centre.

Richard Thomas, Canal & River Trust director for Wales and the South West, says: “We’re delighted to see this investment in the canal towpath, which will see significant improvements for the thousands of people who use it each year. We’ve seen from other areas that when we can make major upgrades it can completely change people’s experience of being by the canal. The Gloucester & Sharpness towpath is increasingly popular. It is a key route for people travelling to and from the city centre, especially those keen to avoid busy roads. And it’s popular with a huge range of people and activities from running, cycling and walking, through to angling, boating and rowing. Research published recently shows that people are happier and more relaxed when they are by water, so our local canals and rivers have a really important role in helping people

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improve their physical and mental health. Keeping the water and towpath in top condition will only aid this, so we're really pleased to be starting this project."

Councillor Vernon Smith, cabinet member for highways and flood at Gloucestershire County Council said: "I'm thrilled that we've been able to secure funding for this fabulous improvement to such a key route into Gloucester. The towpath is already well used and this significant upgrade will make it even more accessible and appealing to those who want to use it for work or leisure. I'm sure our work alongside the Canal & River Trust to improve the quality of the towpath will encourage more people to walk and cycle and enjoy this wonderful facility."

For more information about the Canal & River Trust, including how to volunteer or donate to the charity, visit www.canalrivertrust.org.uk 020 3204 4410

Ends

Notes to editors

For more media information contact joe.coggins@canalrivertrust.org.uk 020 3204 4410

The Canal & River Trust cares for and brings to life 2,000 miles of canals and rivers across England & Wales. We believe waterways have the power to make a difference to people's lives and that spending time by water can make us all healthier and happier. By bringing communities together to make a difference to their local waterway, we are creating places and spaces that can be used and enjoyed by everyone, every day. www.canalrivertrust.org.uk