

PRESS RELEASE

21 December 2018

MIDDLEWICH BRANCH CANAL RE-OPENS FOLLOWING £3 MILLION BREACH REPAIRS

The Shropshire Union Canal, Middlewich branch, in Cheshire, re-opened today (Friday 21 December), following repairs to a major breach.

Canal & River Trust, the waterways and wellbeing charity, has carried out repairs to the canal after a section of the 200-year-old embankment washed away into the River Wheelock below in March.

More than 4,000 tonnes of stones have been needed to rebuild the canal embankment so that it can be refilled with water and can once again be enjoyed by boaters, walkers, runners and the local community.

The work cost nearly £3 million and was funded by the Trust as well as players of People's Postcode Lottery. Generous donations from the local community also raised over £30, 000 for the emergency appeal.

Contractors, Kier and CPC Civils, on behalf of the Canal & River Trust, have rebuilt the 12m high embankment prior to constructing new concrete canal walls, a PVC lining membrane and concrete protection slab as well as reinstating the towpath in preparation for the reopening.

Volunteers have worked closely with the Trust, removing debris from the canal bed, carrying out towpath improvements, recovering bricks for re-use, painting lock gates and clearing vegetation. Several volunteers also undertook some hedge laying training recently, to learn how to restore the historic hedgerows that can be found along the towpath.

Andy Johnson, senior project manager at the Canal & River Trust said: "We've been working hard on site to repair the canal as quickly as we could. We faced some complex challenges like removing stranded boats and access along the canal bed to reach the breach but we're pleased that we can re-open the canal before Christmas. We still have some work to do on site in January and we might need to close the towpath at times early in the New Year to complete the work. I would like to appeal to the public not to deviate from the towpath over the next few weeks as the topsoil on the verges either side has just been laid and grass seeding still needs to be done."

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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

Andy continues: “The Middlewich branch of the Shropshire Union Canal is not only loved by boaters but by the local community who use it to walk, cycle and run. The support for our charity’s work has been fantastic. We would like to thank everyone who has donated money and all the amazing volunteers who have given their time and effort to help restore this much-loved canal.”

Sanjay Singh, Senior Programmes Manager for environmental charities at People’s Postcode Lottery said: “I am delighted that players have supported Canal & River Trust to make this stretch of the waterway accessible again to the local communities who most benefit. Waterways provide a hugely positive experience for everybody to enjoy throughout the year and I’m delighted it will be enjoyed once more.”

The Middlewich Branch is 10 miles long and connects the Shropshire Union Canal at Barbridge Junction to the Trent & Mersey Canal at Middlewich. The canal is due to re-open on Friday 21st December. Work will still be ongoing until mid-January with some restrictions in place.

For more on the work of the Canal & River Trust and to find out how you can support our work visit www.canalrivertrust.org.uk

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For further media requests please contact:

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Notes to Editors

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