

PRESS RELEASE

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CHESHIRE'S RIVER WEAVER NAVIGATION FULLY OPEN FOR BOATERS AGAIN

Innovative repair projects on two massive locks along Cheshire's River Weaver have secured the full length of the river navigation from Winsford to Runcorn for boaters.

Over the last year, the Canal & River Trust charity, which cares for the Weaver and 2,000 miles of waterways, has carried out emergency repairs to both Salterford and Marsh locks, both capable of accommodating 1,000 tonne sea-going coastal ships.

Salterford Lock, near Northwich, opened for business again this month after a scheduled repair project in January revealed unexpected problems with the lock structure. The repairs saw divers employed to carry out underwater concreting and other challenging construction tasks.

Ian Draycott, a chartered civil engineer with the Canal & River Trust explained: "The lock is mainly constructed from Runcorn red sandstone and key parts are formed from more durable Anglesey marble.

"The underwater concreting works are highly unusual and were made particularly challenging by the reduced visibility of the River Weaver water. Our site team has been very innovative, patient and professional to achieve a successful outcome – which now thankfully has allowed the lock to re-open."

Marsh Lock, near Runcorn, which connects the River Weaver with the Manchester Ship Canal and the River Mersey, re-opened in April after a two-month repair programme to mend a large timber lock gate, badly damaged by a boat collision in June 2018. The boat failed to stop as it entered the lock and smashed into one of the massive 7.5m long gates, causing it to fracture and the heelpost to split.

Marsh Lock is a vital link from the Weaver into the Ship Canal, so Trust staff managed to work out a safe way of operating the damaged lock before the gate underwent extensive repairs. These involved the innovative use of airbags in a challenging lift

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manoeuvre of the 32-tonne gate – a technique more commonly used in offshore salvage operations - as well as precision surgery to restore the wooden lock gate.

Trust operations manager Steve Maguire said boaters would be delighted they could now cruise along the full length of the Weaver Navigation without having to stop at Saltersford Lock.

He said: “Structures on the Weaver Navigation are more than 100 years old and they are big – constructed to carry sea-going ships involved in the local salt industry.

“When a lock needs work it is a significant challenge for our engineers. Both these locks have required innovative solutions to repair the various problems and keep them operational. The Trust’s engineering teams have done an amazing job.

“Operators of the Trust’s Anderton Boat Lift passenger boat and the 1903 steam ship ‘The Danny’ will both be pleased they now have the run of the river for visitors, not to mention a delighted fleet of narrow boat owners and holiday makers.”

For more information about visiting the River Weaver Navigation or the Anderton Boat Lift visitor attraction, check out the Canal & River Trust website www.canalrivertrust.org.uk.

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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.

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