

PRESS RELEASE

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LONG LIFE LOCK GATES TO BE TRIALLED ON KENNET & AVON CANAL

The Canal & River Trust, the charity that looks after 2,000 miles of waterways across England and Wales, is to trial a set of new ‘long life’ lock gates on the Kennet & Avon Canal. Currently being installed at Picketsfield Lock near Hungerford in Berkshire, the innovative new gates are intended to bring efficiencies and long term environmental benefits.

The new ‘long life’ lock gates are an evolution of the composite gates – made out of steel and timber – that are used in some places on the Canal & River Trust’s waterways. In developing the gates the Canal & River Trust has been consulting with the Kennet & Avon Canal Trust about the design and construction.

Made predominantly out of steel, the innovative new gate design is intended to last at least twice as long as a standard lock gate, with an anticipated life span of over 50 years.

The robustness of the metal construction will reduce the need for repairs saving the Canal & River Trust time and money and reducing disruption for boaters. The gates have been designed with sacrificial parts such as the sections where the gates meet to be watertight. But by being sacrificial they can be easily removed and replaced without draining the canal or removing the gates; bringing environmental benefits by reducing the need to mobilise heavy plant and materials at often remote locations.

The gates at Picketsfield Lock retain the same paddle gearing, the same fixings and the same steel balance beam and so the proposed gate will resemble the gate that it is to replace giving boaters and visitors the look and feel of a ‘classic’ lock gate.

Richard Wakelen, head of asset management at the Canal & River Trust, said: “The canals were built over 200 years ago and it’s a testament to the original engineers that their designs have stood the test of time. Now, with modern technology, we can trial some improvements that could make things better for boaters while making the best use of our resources. It’s exciting to

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be trialling something new and innovative on the canals and imagining that, in generations to come, engineers could be looking at our designs and building on them.

“As the charity that looks after 2,000 miles of waterways across England & Wales, we are always searching for innovative ways to look after the locks, bridges, tunnels and other infrastructure in our care and welcome the support of the Kennet & Avon Canal Trust.”

Chris Sims, chair of the Kennet & Avon Canal Trust said: “Timber lock gates are renewed every 20 to 25 years, however we can see that these newly designed trial gates lasting over 50 years.

“The Kennet and Avon Canal Trust has been looking at innovative new designs for some while now and we see this exciting trial as a first step of change that we are undertaking in partnership as two canal charities.”

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