

STATEMENT

19 March 2020

Canal & River Trust: Our response to Coronavirus

In these unprecedented times, our priority is to support the national effort to keep people safe, following the Government's advice and taking the appropriate action to protect our colleagues and partners, and everyone who visits, or lives on and around, our canals and river navigations.

There is an increasing awareness of the importance of waterways in supporting our mental health and physical wellbeing. That's why - whilst we are closing our museums and visitor attractions from Friday 20 March* - we are doing all we can to keep our 2,000-mile network of canals, towpaths, and river navigations available and safe for everyone to visit and enjoy - free of charge^.

Our green and blue network runs through [towns and cities](#) across the country, bringing the countryside into urban areas, providing the opportunity to experience nature and the great outdoors without having to travel far from home; with over 8 million people living within a short walk of their local canal.

As well as caring for this great legacy from our industrial past, our mission as a charity is to make these historic waterways attractive and available for you to use and enjoy. At this unprecedented time, their value is as great as ever as people seek respite from the current crisis, especially in built-up areas where access to such spaces is so scarce.

Whilst our planned programme of active participation [events](#) has had to be suspended, our towpaths remain open and boats can move freely around the network, with hire boat businesses open across the country.

'Virtual wellbeing'

Conscious of Government advice, there will be many people who are self-isolating and unable to visit. So we'll bring you as much digital content as we can so you can experience the calm and beauty of the waterways from the comfort of your own home - from boating across the Grade 1 Listed Pontcysyllte Aqueduct or along picturesque stretches of canal, to taking a virtual tour of our museums and archives.

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Keeping our canals flowing

A huge thank you goes to our employees, volunteers and partners who continue to make this amazing canal and river network available for people to use and enjoy, and to all the people taking part in our [Plastics Challenge](#) to rid our waterways of litter and waste. Our contingency plans will help ensure we can continue to keep the network open, safe and available for use – for as long as this remains consistent with Government advice.

Please follow us on social media and [sign-up to our email](#) for the latest information; and if you can, whilst observing the latest public health guidance, please visit and enjoy the nature, beauty and wellbeing on your doorstep.

*The sites affected are: Anderton Boat Lift Visitor Centre, National Waterways Museum Ellesmere Port, National Waterways Museum, Gloucester, Pontcysyllte Visitor Centre, Standedge Visitor Centre and Stoke Bruerne Museum and cafe.

^ Our towpaths are free to everyone; use of the water requires the appropriate licence.