

PRESS RELEASE

2 April 2020

WORK ON SKIPTON CANAL TOWPATH SUSPENDED

Work on the £2 million Craven towpath improvement project between Gargrave and Kildwick has been suspended due to the coronavirus outbreak.

Canal & River Trust, the waterways and wellbeing charity that cares for the canal, secured funding for the project from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development with further support from Craven District Council and the York, North Yorkshire and East Riding Local Enterprise Partnership.

Although much of the work has been completed, the Trust made the decision to halt activity on the remaining stretches to protect its staff and subcontractors.

Residents are also being urged to limit their use of towpaths, avoid any stretches with boats moored against the towpath, and strictly observe social distancing at all times.

Richard Parry, chief executive of Canal & River Trust, said: “The Trust has continuously reviewed its response to the current crisis and took the decision on Wednesday, 25th March, to suspend all on-site project and construction works as soon as can safely be done, other than where the work is dealing with a critical safety issue.

“Towpath improvement and enhancement works are not essential safety related works so we have therefore taken the decision to suspend them.

“We appreciate the challenge this presents for both our contractors and their supply chains and our funders, but our colleagues’, contractors’ and customers’ health and wellbeing are paramount.”

Sean McGinley, Director Yorkshire & North East at Canal & River Trust added: “While many sections of our towpaths remain open, please be aware that use of them should now be limited. 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.

"If our canals and rivers are local to you, and you use the towpath for your daily exercise or journey to undertake essential work, please now avoid any stretches with boats moored against the towpath, and strictly observe social distancing at all times, following the latest advice from Government."

The Trust will be continuing to monitor Government advice and hopes to resume work on the Craven towpath project later in the year.

In total, the project will see more than 11km of the towpath in Craven improved, as identified in the Access Development Plan commissioned by Craven District Council and written by Sustrans, to improve accessibility along the Leeds & Liverpool Canal in the District.

The towpath is being resurfaced with a natural limestone material which creates a durable and compact surface. It will be widened at key hotspots, including Gargrave and Broughton Road, to provide better access to and from Skipton railway station and employment sites in the town.

There will also be new 'welcome' and information boards about key points of interest and visitor facilities in and around the canal, and additional waymarking signage to help people find their way onto the waterway. A new canoe portage point in Gargrave, in association with Desmond Family Canoe Trail, will help paddlers get onto the water and enjoy England's first coast-to-coast canoe trail.

For the latest news and advice about the canal network, please visit www.canalrivertrust.org.uk

Ends

For further information, images or interviews, please contact:

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Notes to Editors:

Project Funding & Background

Canal & River Trust with support from Craven District Council successful secured funds of £1.46m from the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) via the Rural Payments Agency for the project.

In addition, Craven District Council has allocated up to £365,000 towards the scheme, including £225,000 from its New Homes Bonus receipts and £140,000 from the York, North Yorkshire and East Riding Local Enterprise Partnership, whilst the Canal & River Trust charity has allocated

£136,000 from its budget. The announcement of this scheme builds on the 2016 Department for Transport-funded £450,000 scheme to improve the towpath between Skipton and Bradley.

Canal & River Trust

The waterways and wellbeing charity 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



The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development

Europe investing in rural areas

The Rural Development Programme for England is a European funding pot managed by Defra that has allocated funding for projects that will create and improve infrastructure for outdoor activities, create and develop infrastructure to enable visitors to move around the area and improve facilities to encourage visitors to stay longer and make return visits.

Local Growth Fund

Local Enterprise Partnerships are playing a vital role in driving forward economic growth across the country, helping to build a country that works for everyone.

That's why by 2021 Government will have invested over £12bn through the Local Growth Fund, allowing LEPs to use their local knowledge to get all areas of the country firing on all cylinders.

Some additional key facts:

- There are 38 LEPs covering the whole of England
- The government has awarded £9.1bn in three rounds of Growth Deals to local areas to drive economic growth.
- LEPs are investing in a wide range of projects including transport, skills, business support, broadband, innovation and flood defences.

Northern Powerhouse

Some Northern Powerhouse key facts:

- The Northern Powerhouse is a key aspect of this Government's approach to addressing the productivity gap in the North and ensuring a stronger, more sustainable economy for all parts of the UK.
- The government has awarded £3.4bn in three rounds of Growth Deals across the Northern Powerhouse.

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