

PRESS RELEASE

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CANAL & RIVER TRUST TO SPEND OVER £45 MILLION ON PROGRAMME OF WORKS THIS WINTER

The Canal & River Trust, the national waterways and wellbeing charity, is planning to carry out a £45.1 million programme of repairs on waterways across England & Wales this winter, replacing lock gates, dredging to ensure the water is deep enough for boats, and carrying out a host of tasks to keep the 200-year old network open and help ensure its resilience to climate change.

Despite the Trust forecasting a reduction of income of around 10% (£20 million) due to the pandemic, the charity has been able to prioritise spending to maintain a full winter works programme of 128 large-scale repairs across 50 canal and river navigations. Carried out by the Trust's in-house team and specialist contractors, the works take in the World Heritage Pontcysyllte Aqueduct, famous lock flights Caen Hill and Bingley Five-Rise, draining a stretch of canal in East London, and city centre locations in Birmingham, Leeds, Liverpool, and Wigan.

Richard Parry, chief executive at the Canal & River Trust, said: "More people have discovered the nation's waterways this year, exercising on the towpaths during lockdown and taking staycation hire boat holidays, in addition to those who already know and love them. Set against the challenges of the pandemic, and with research showing being by the water improves wellbeing, it has never been more important to keep the waterways open and available. The network has a vital role in helping to safeguard the physical and mental health of the nation – particularly in urban areas where access to green and blue space is often at such a premium."

Canals are famous for their locks, which operate and use the same mechanics just as they did during the Industrial Revolution. This winter 99 hand-crafted lock gate leaves are due to be replaced, slightly down on previous years as workshops were forced to close in the spring due to the pandemic. Built by the Trust's skilled carpenters in specialist workshops, each gate is unique, fitted to the exact specifications for each lock, and takes between two weeks to over a month to construct.

As the nation has been hit by extreme wet and dry weather over the past years, the Trust is carrying out repairs that will improve the waterways' resilience to climate change. Lock gate replacement and repairs, grouting, and lining of the canal bed will prevent leakages and help

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preserve water levels. A separate programme of work at some of the Trust's reservoirs including Knipton, Coombs and Carr Mill, which will secure water supply, is underway.

The Trust maintains a dredging programme to ensure the waterways are suitable for navigation, as well as for environmental reasons. This winter, dredging is being carried out on a number of canals including the Upper Peak Forest, Ashby, Bridgwater & Taunton, Caldon, Chesterfield, and Northern Reaches of the Lancaster. Sections of the Rivers Ouse and Severn, Gloucester Docks, and Keadby and West Stockwith on the Trent will also be dredged, as well as Pymmes Brook in East London. Additionally, a series of feeder dredging projects are being carried out to improve water flow at Shell Brook, Radcliffe, Boslet and Seend, with another three locations to be confirmed.

This winter the Trust will be hosting a series of online open days. With the limitations around people meeting face-to-face, these online events will showcase the work that goes on during the winter to keep the canal network open and available for people to use and enjoy. The events will be promoted on the Trust's website and across its social media channels.

Richard Parry continues: "The work the Trust carries out every winter is essential to ensure our canals and rivers can continue to provide a valuable resource to the public. The task of looking after them remains a challenge: one we are committed to as we aim to keep them in good working order for the generations to come."

For more information about the Canal & River Trust, including how to volunteer and donate, visit: www.canalrivertrust.org.uk.

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