

PRESS RELEASE

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TOWPATHS TO CONTINUE TO PROVIDE ACCESS TO VITAL GREEN SPACE DURING MONTH OF NATIONAL RESTRICTIONS

The Canal & River Trust, which looks after 2,000 miles of waterways, is appealing for people to follow government advice and respect social distancing as it announces that its network of towpaths will remain available for people to sustain their wellbeing, connect with nature and take local exercise during this month's national restrictions across England.

Whilst government guidelines allow only essential boating travel, towpaths will continue to provide much-needed green space in towns and cities. The Trust – the waterways and wellbeing charity – is therefore reminding people to be mindful of other users during the four-week lockdown, especially those who may be living on the water. Those on the towpath must take care around other users and keep away from moored boats where possible. Cyclists are urged to go slow and steady to avoid harm.

The importance of towpaths as free, accessible places to re-charge or for exercise was highlighted during the first lockdown in the spring, when the Trust saw a surge in usage in many urban communities where the canal provides vital green space, available to millions. Towpath counters around the country showed the biggest increases in visits in Burnley (+261%), Sandwell (+199%) and Blackburn (+187%).

Richard Parry, chief executive of the Canal & River Trust, comments: “Spending time by the water brings benefits for our physical and mental health, and at a time like this it is more important than ever to spend time outdoors, to connect with nature and take care of ourselves. Our 2000-mile network of waterways and towpaths provides vital blue/green space, on-the-doorstep of millions.

“We are asking people to act considerately when they visit – standing aside for others to pass, observing social distancing, keeping away from moored boats where possible, and respecting all the other users. Our waterways can be a lifeline for people but only if we use them responsibly.”

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In support of the government advice to stay at home as much as possible, the Canal & River Trust has an [online hub](#) of canal-related films, images, interactive content and stories for everyone to enjoy safely at home to get their enjoyment of the waterways virtually.

In line with government advice, during the lockdown, navigation by boats in England should be limited to essential travel only. As non-essential travel should be avoided, boat owners who are not currently occupying their boat should not take short overnight breaks on their boat during the period. Those who live on their boats and, as continuous cruisers, are normally required to move from place to place on a continuous journey, will not have to do so during the restricted period. Information for boaters, including how to access support and advice, is available on the Trust's website.

Ends

For further media requests please contact:

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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