

PRESS RELEASE

30 May 2022

CANAL CHARITY COMPLETES £2 MILLION PROJECT ON LEEDS & LIVERPOOL CANAL IN YORKSHIRE DALES

Leeds & Liverpool Canal Society's heritage boat 'Kennet' was warmly welcomed as the first boat through the newly repaired Grade II listed Eshton Road Lock on Wednesday (25 May), following a £2 million restoration project by Canal & River Trust. The only surviving Leeds & Liverpool Canal short boat accessible to the public (not converted for private use) was assisted through the lock by volunteer lock keepers and staff from the Trust.

Over the last eight months the waterway and wellbeing charity, which looks after 2,000 miles of canals and rivers in England and Wales, has been working with specialist stonemasonry contractors Lyons on a painstaking restoration project at the 200-year-old structure to prevent the lock's wall from collapsing.

The works also revealed 18th century engineering expertise with the discovery of five huge buttresses behind the lock chamber. These 'counterforts' were designed by Georgian engineers during the late 18th century to support the weight of the water in the canal.

The towpath and navigation were closed to the public in November following the sighting of a significant bulge in the historic wall. Repairs to the Grade II Listed Eshton Road Lock on the Leeds & Liverpool Canal near Gargrave were delayed following setbacks and damage caused by last month's Storm Eunice.

Graham Ramsden, senior project manager at Canal & River Trust has been overseeing the repair programme. He explained: "Working with historic structures built over 200 years old under is a challenge and we've certainly had a few obstacles to overcome on this site. We've got a couple more weeks until the scaffolding and final touches are finished, but it's really rewarding to see the lock reopen and in use once again."

He added: "Eshton Road Lock is situated in one of the most picturesque spots along the Leeds & Liverpool Canal, with stunning views of the Yorkshire Dales. We know how popular this spot is

Canal & River Trust

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for canal users who have been eager to enjoy this stretch once more, so we thank everyone for their patience during this time and I know our team are looking forward to welcoming, walkers and cyclists enjoying time by water once again.”

Ruth Garratt, heritage advisor at Canal & River Trust, added: “We rarely get the chance to examine how Georgian engineers built their canals. By having the opportunity to monitor the repair works we’ve been able to take photos, make drawings and compile evidence and insights into how one of the country’s most important waterways was constructed in the late 18th century. I think it’s important for people to know how invested we are in looking after our canals which are a living, working heritage.”

Harold Bond, from the Leeds & Liverpool Canal Society Friends of Kennet said: “Our thanks to the Trust and all the team involved in helping get this lock back open once again and to the rest of the boating community who kindly let us go through first as we make our way along the canal to the join Keighley Transport Festival next week.”

The Kennet is travelling along the canal to join the *In Motion: Keighley Transport Festival* - which takes place all various sites across Keighley on Thursday 2 and Friday 3 June and is supported by Canal & River Trust, who will be located next to the Kennet, offering free canoe taster sessions plus arts and crafts activities.

Canal & River Trust celebrates its 10th anniversary in 2022 and is asking people to #ActNowForCanals and help to support their local waterway, from volunteering projects, citizen science surveys, to raising funds or clearing up litter. Every small action can make a huge difference www.canalrivertrust.org.uk/donate

Ends

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Notes to Editors

The Canal & River Trust cares for and brings to life 2,000 miles of canals and river navigations 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 @CanalRiverTrust @CRTYorkshireNE

Leeds & Liverpool Society

<https://www.leedsandliverpoolcanalsociety.co.uk/kennet>

In Motion: Keighley Transport Festival (2-3 June 2022)

<https://keighley-in-motion.co.uk>