

# PRESS RELEASE

---

26 July 2022

## Leighton Buzzard towpath to reopen temporarily for Canal Festival

On Saturday 30 July, the section of the Grand Union Canal in Leighton Buzzard that is currently closed for widening and resurfacing works, will re-open temporarily for Leighton Linlade Town Council's Linlade Canal Festival at Tiddenfoot Waterside Park.

The £500,000 towpath improvement project, which is being undertaken by national waterways and wellbeing charity the Canal & River Trust, in partnership with national walking and cycling charity Sustrans, began on 6 June and is expected to be completed by 23 August 2022. Sustrans received funding from the Department for Transport (DfT) in response to the 'Paths for Everyone' review of the National Cycle Network in 2019.

The works, which are being undertaken by the Canal & River Trust's engineering contractor Kier, will improve, resurface and widen a 780-metre section of towpath running south from the B4032 Leighton Road Bridge 114 to Bridge 115A (Mentmore Gardens). The towpath has been closed since the project started, and towpath notices display a diversion route via Mentmore Gardens, Mentmore Road and Wing Road.

Spencer Green, project manager for the Canal & River Trust, explains:

"We are temporarily re-opening the section of the Grand Union Canal towpath that is currently being improved between Leighton Road Bridge 114 and Mentmore Gardens Bridge 115A, to allow visitors to the Linlade Canal Festival on Saturday 30 July to access the event via the towpath. As the towpath improvements works have not yet been completed, the towpath surface is at the stage where it has been flattened and compacted, but it hasn't yet been sealed with a tarmac layer, so it won't be ideal for cyclists, mobility scooters and pushchairs. We will need to close the towpath again from Monday 1 August so that we can complete the improvement works."

The Leighton Buzzard towpath improvement project will also improve a 2.1km section running north from Lock 27 (Leighton Lock) to Bridge 110 (Sandhole Bridge) in Old Linlade. Here there

Canal & River Trust, Toll House, Delamere Terrace, London, W2 6ND

**T:** 0203 3204 4514 **E:** [press.office@canalrivertrust.org.uk](mailto:press.office@canalrivertrust.org.uk) **W:** [www.canalrivertrust.org.uk](http://www.canalrivertrust.org.uk) **Twitter:** [@CanalRiverTrust](https://twitter.com/CanalRiverTrust)

Patron: H.R.H. The Prince of Wales. Canal & River Trust is a charitable company limited by guarantee, registered in England and Wales with company number 7807276 and registered charity number 1146792, registered office address: First Floor North, Station House, 500 Elder Gate, Milton Keynes MK9 1BB

will be surfacing improvements, vegetation trimming and biodiversity enhancements. The works in this section do not require the towpath to be closed.

The towpath in Leighton Buzzard forms part of the Sustrans National Cycle Network 'Paths for Everyone', which aims to deliver a traffic-free, more consistent and accessible network for everyone, including walkers, cyclists, families and people with mobility requirements.

The project builds on previous towpath improvements undertaken by the Trust in Leighton Buzzard in 2015, between Leighton Road and Leighton Lock. It will add a further 2.9km of improved towpath, resulting in a 4.1km stretch of continuous high quality towpath through Leighton Buzzard and surrounding areas.

The towpath improvement project planned for Leighton Buzzard is one of a series of DfT Active Travel funded towpath improvement projects being delivered by the Canal & River Trust across England and Wales, helping the nation's waterways to provide high quality off-road routes for walking and cycling, and an important 'natural health service' across the country.

Ros Daniels, the Canal & River Trust's director for London & South East, explains:

"Research shows that being next to water improves your mental and physical health. The Canal & River Trust wants to make its canals more welcoming, safe and clean to encourage more people to use them, and enjoy the health and wellbeing benefits of walking and cycling, and being by the water.

"Canal & River Trust ecologists and heritage advisers are involved in the design of the works to ensure the works are sensitive to local wildlife and heritage structures, making enhancements where possible, including hedge laying, vegetation and tree management.

"We welcome the support of local people to help deliver some of the wildlife or heritage improvements with other volunteers, or to help look after the new towpath environment once it is complete."

To find out more about the proposed improvements and volunteering opportunities, go to <https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/leighton-buzzard>, call the Canal & River Trust on 03030 404040 or email [enquiries.londonsoutheast@canalrivertrust.org.uk](mailto:enquiries.londonsoutheast@canalrivertrust.org.uk)

For more information on Canal & River Trust including how you can donate money or volunteer to support our work visit [www.canalrivertrust.org.uk](http://www.canalrivertrust.org.uk)

The Linslade Canal Festival, organised by Leighton Linslade Town Council, takes place at Tiddenfoot Waterside Park on Saturday 30 July. The free event, which celebrates canal life, conservation and the countryside, includes music, historic and trade boats, crafts, food stalls and family activities. For more information go to [https://www.leightonlinslade-tc.gov.uk/council\\_events/linslade-canal-festival/](https://www.leightonlinslade-tc.gov.uk/council_events/linslade-canal-festival/)

ENDS

For further press information contact:

Debbie Walker, PR Consultant on 077486 40577 or email [walker.debbie@sky.com](mailto:walker.debbie@sky.com)

### 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](http://www.canalrivertrust.org.uk)

During the coronavirus pandemic lockdown, towpath use in many urban residential areas increased dramatically, confirming the vital role of canals in providing access to the outdoors, nature and wellbeing. No other UK organisation has 2,000 miles of freely accessible green and blue space, so close to so many people, in areas of most need.

### Memorandum of Understanding with Sustrans

Sustrans aims to deliver 5,000 more miles of traffic-free paths by 2040, with 80 network improvement projects underway. With soaring levels of obesity and poor mental health, providing a safe and accessible space that fosters physical activity and wellbeing has never been more important.

Towpaths can form attractive and practical parts of walking and cycling networks and help more people have equal access to the natural environment. There are currently around 500 miles of National Cycle Network routes on towpaths and waterways form an important part of Sustrans work to create traffic-free paths for everyone.

The Canal & River Trust has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Sustrans. Canals are special places and the Trust's Memorandum of Understanding with Sustrans recognises the unique historic nature of towpaths and the range of different users who must be respected.

<https://www.sustrans.org.uk/our-blog/news/2020/january/canal-river-trust-and-sustrans-sign-memorandum-of-understanding/>

The Trust's Towpath Code makes it clear that pedestrians and those accessing the water have priority and cyclists in particular should be considerate of others. Cyclists wanting to travel at speed should use alternative routes away from the canal.

<https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/news-and-views/our-campaigns/stay-kind-slow-down/our-towpath-code>