



Canal &
River Trust

PRESS RELEASE

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BLACKBURN CANAL FESTIVAL AND CANOE HUB LAUNCH – BICENTENARY WEEKEND CELEBRATIONS (23 & 24 JULY)

Celebrating the 200th anniversary of the Leeds & Liverpool Canal (1816 – 2016)

The launch of a new canoe hub, a flock of origami swans, art workshops, boat trips, and dozens of exciting free waterside activities are on offer at Blackburn Canal Festival this weekend (22-24 July).

Eanam Wharf, on the banks of the Leeds & Liverpool Canal, in Blackburn, will be the setting for a fabulous celebration event to mark the 200th anniversary of England's longest canal.

Organised by a partnership of the Canal & River Trust, Super Slow Way arts project and Eanam Wharf Ltd, the festival promises activities and delights for all ages.

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The festivities start on Friday 22 July (3pm – 6pm) with the launch of a new Desmond Family Canoe Trail hub for young people. This is one of 10 hubs being established along the Coast to Coast Canoe Trail which stretches 160 miles from Liverpool to Goole.

Free taster sessions in canoeing are on offer for families and young people, as well as heritage trails, a canal history exhibition, street performances and live music from Baxter Rhodes and the Wagon Wheels. Children's characters Rosie and Jim and Angelina Ballerina have also promised to put in an appearance.

On Saturday (10am – 10pm) and Sunday (11am – 5pm), visitors can enjoy creative workshops, art installations, pony rides, boat trips, market stalls, a fun fair, street food, drama and music performances. The Kennet education boat will be on hand to tell people about the canal's remarkable 200 year old history.

And Becky Atherton and David Boulton, from BREAD art, are leading an amazing project to create origami swans which are then due to be released on to the canal on Saturday at 12.45pm. Anyone can make a swan to join in the mass flock floating along the water.

You can download a free swan template here: www.breadart.co.uk/swan200

Artist Jeni McConnell continues her project to invite visitors to connect with the canal by writing personal messages which will be forever bound into the water in a special performance later in the year.

A promenade performance by DAPA pupils, art workshops by Gypsy Carrot, 21st century shepherdesses the Bo Sisters, and crotched waterwheels by artists Rachael Elwell and Nic Chapman will provide a distinctly creative feel to the free waterside activities on offer at Eanam Wharf.

Super Slow Way programme manager Katy May said: "2016 is such a special year for the Leeds & Liverpool Canal. In Blackburn we want to mark the bicentenary with an amazing explosion of creativity on the waterside at Eanam Wharf.

"Everybody is welcome. Come down and discover the beautiful waterway that links our East Lancashire towns and played such an important role in the region's development and

prosperity. Most of the activities are free and this weekend is a fantastic opportunity to try something new.”

Kate Sharples, the Canal & River Trust project leader for the Desmond Family Canoe Trail, added: “The canoe hub at Eanam Wharf will be a permanent feature. Regular canoeing activities will be on offer there for young people aged 16-25.

“Canoeing is a fantastic sport. If you have ever fancied trying it out and getting involved, Friday is the day to come down and sign up for one of our free taster sessions.”

For more information check out the website www.blackburncanalfest.btck.co.uk. The weekend’s events will be held at Eanam Wharf, Blackburn, BB1 5BL.

Twitter - [@crtCanoeTrail](https://twitter.com/crtCanoeTrail)

Facebook - CRTCanoe Trail

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<http://superslowway.org.uk/projects/blackburn-canal-festival/>

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Notes to editors:

The Canal & River Trust is the guardian of 2,000 miles of historic waterways across England and Wales, caring for the nation’s third largest collection of listed structures, as well as museums, archives, and hundreds of important wildlife sites.

We believe that *living waterways transform places and enrich lives* and our role is to make sure there is always a place on your doorstep where you can escape the pressures of everyday life, stretch your legs and simply feel closer to nature.

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About Super Slow Way

Super Slow Way is part of Arts Council England's Creative People & Places programme, designed to empower communities in Pennine Lancashire to take the lead in shaping local arts provision. Super Slow Way is working with communities along the Leeds & Liverpool Canal from Blackburn to Pendle, bringing art and artists to a space where time slows down, to look afresh at how people live their fast-paced lives and how they relate to their environment, neighbourhoods and to each other.

Community-led commissions will allow people to invite artists to work with them, to help them extend their current activity, experiment with new ideas and create new opportunities, some of which will happen on the waterway itself. Super Slow Way encourages people to bring their ideas, however small and unformed, and develop a brief for an artist to work with them, be they a mums and toddlers group, a manufacturing company, a cricket team or a choir.