

PRESS RELEASE

Issued: 7 March 2019

CANAL CHARITY'S HEDGE-LAYING HELPS MONTGOMERY CANAL WILDLIFE

Dormice, squirrels, birds, and other wildlife along the Montgomery Canal are being given a major habitat boost thanks to a hedgerow-laying project organised by waterway and well-being charity, the Canal & River Trust.

In an initiative funded by players of People's Postcode Lottery, Trust staff, volunteers and a volunteer group from Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust spent a weekend in February on the Guilsfield Arm of the canal, near Arddleen in Powys, learning the ancient art of hedge-laying.

This training will now equip them with the knowledge and skills to re-invigorate hundreds of yards of overgrown vegetation boundaries between canal towpaths and farmers' fields which are in need of some TLC.

The Guilsfield Arm of the canal has not been used for boating for many decades and is now designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC) due to the number of rare species of flora and fauna which have colonised it. For the Canal & River Trust, which cares for 2,000 miles of canals and rivers in Wales and England, protecting wildlife is a key priority.

Trust ecologist Stuart Moodie explained: "The Montgomery Canal is one of Britain's most important canals for wildlife. The creation of verdant, healthy hedges is vital for protecting wildlife habitats as well as providing an effective stock-proof barrier between agricultural land and the canal towpath.

"Hedges are great for linking habitats, providing a sheltered, protective corridor through the landscape. Nesting birds, butterflies, small mammals and amphibians all rely on hedges for food and shelter. Hawthorn, which forms the majority of canal hedges, provides great thorny protective cover, spring flowers for

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

T: 0203 3204 4514 **E:** press.office@canalrivertrust.org.uk **W:** 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

pollinating insects and berries in the autumn for the birds. Hazel was also growing in this particular section. This of course is the source of hazel nuts - the favourite food of dormice and squirrels.

“With many natural wildlife species currently in decline, it has never been more important to take active positive steps to protect our wonderful national wild flora and fauna. For people too, our beautiful waterways provide the perfect opportunity to get outdoors and enjoy the natural environment and beautiful scenery.

“Thanks to support from players of People’s Postcode Lottery, our volunteers are being equipped to do a fantastic job. It is a win-win for everyone – they enjoy being in the fresh air, working on such a positive initiative, and wildlife habitats are enhanced for many decades to come.”

This hedge-laying initiative is part of a wider People’s Postcode Lottery funded national canal nature conservation project and also complements the £4 million Montgomery Canal restoration scheme to restore a section of the canal on the Shropshire/Welsh border.

About the Montgomery Canal Restoration

The major canal restoration project is funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), players of People’s Postcode Lottery and Shropshire Wildlife Trust’s Freshwater First ERDF Programme, supported by the Montgomery Canal Partnership, and delivered by the Canal & River Trust. Only around half of the canal is currently navigable but, with the help of the Shropshire Union Canal Society and other volunteers, this latest major phase should be completed by 2020.

Work is progressing well on upgrading nearly five miles of towpath, restoring 1¼ miles of the canal to navigation from Maesbury to Crickheath and creating a dedicated turning point for narrowboats, known as a ‘winding hole’. This will enable boats to return to the area for the first time since 1936 when the canal was closed.

For more information about the Montgomery Canal, becoming a Friend of the Canal & River Trust or supporting canal restoration, go online at www.canalrivertrust.org.uk or phone 0303 040 4040. If you would like to support the wider restoration effort of the Montgomery Canal, go to <http://restorethemontgomerycanal.uk/>

- ends-

For further media requests please contact:

Lynn Pegler, Canal & River Trust press office

m 07783 686246 e lynn.pegler@canalrivertrust.org.uk

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 real difference to people's lives and that spending time by water can make us all healthier and happier. By bringing communities together to transform their local waterway, we are creating places and spaces that can be used and enjoyed by everyone, every day. www.canalrivertrust.org.uk @CanalRiverTrust @crtcmmms

The Montgomery Canal is the subject of a new film "Life on the Monty", which is a celebration of its wildlife, people and heritage, including rare footage of a young Prince of Wales re-opening Welshpool Lock in the 1970s. To see the film go to the Canal & River Trust website <https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/montgomery>

The Montgomery Canal Partnership members include; Canal & River Trust, Montgomery Waterway Restoration Trust, Powys County Council, Shropshire Council, Natural Resources Wales, Natural England, Historic England, Cadw, Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monuments of Wales, Environment Agency England, Shropshire Union Canal Society, Inland Waterways Association, Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust, Shropshire Wildlife Trust and Severn Rivers Trust. The Partnership is working to restore the canal under the terms of the 2005 Conservation Management Strategy.

The Montgomery Canal has already been restored in England from Lower Frankton to Gronwen Bridge, near Maesbury (7 miles). In Wales, about 12 miles have been restored in the Welshpool area. So 19 of the canal's 35 miles are already fully usable. The areas to be restored are the 7.5 miles from Gronwen to Arddleean (the northern end of the navigable Welshpool section) and the 8.5 miles from Refail (the southern end of the Welshpool section) to Newtown, Powys. Unlike many other canal restoration projects, with the Montgomery canal, it is all in single ownership; water supply is secure; and all the locks have already been restored (in all cases, except for the two miles at the Newtown end). A restoration fund has been established and is currently focused on raising £300k to rebuild Schoolhouse Bridge, the last lowered bridge in England. Donations can be made by visiting www.restorethemontgomerycanal.uk.

Works covered by the £4m scheme include creating extensive new nature reserves and refurbishing existing in-channel reserves in recognition of the SSSI status of part of the canal in England; relining the canal bed to Crickheath. In Wales, the work includes restoring 12 historic structures; four areas of dredging to improve the flow of the water; towpath works and community involvement.