

PRESS RELEASE

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FAST ACTING CANAL CHARITY SAVES FISH IN WIGAN CANAL POLLUTION INCIDENT

Fast action from waterways and well-being charity, the Canal & River Trust, has saved many thousands of fish from dying in a pollution incident on the Leeds & Liverpool Canal in Wigan.

The origins of the pollution, which badly affected the oxygen levels of the canal at Wigan Top Lock last month, are still unclear but the irresponsible action has caused the charity to have to spend £12,000 on aerating the lock flight to protect fish and bird life. The Environment Agency is currently investigating the source of the pollution and is awaiting the results of detailed tests, which can take up to six weeks.

The Canal & River Trust, which cares for 2,000 miles of canals and rivers, is working closely with the Environment Agency's fisheries officer to monitor oxygen levels. Immediately after the incident Trust staff organised fisheries experts to install specialist pumps and aerating equipment at the lock to improve the water quality for shoals of gasping, distressed fish.

Fresh water has now been flushed through the Wigan Lock Flight and oxygen levels are returning to normal.

Paul Breslin, fisheries officer with the Canal & River Trust, said: "If anyone has any information that might lead us to identify the cause of this potentially damaging pollution incident, we would like to hear from them. Thanks to the fast action of the person who reported the incident to the Environment Agency and our quick-thinking emergency staff, we managed to avoid a major disaster for local wildlife.

"It is a pity that thoughtless actions have resulted in our charity having to spend much-needed cash in this way but protecting our waterway wildlife is one of our top priorities. Canals which provide the best habitats for wildlife are also great places for humans to relax and enjoy the big outdoors too.

"We know from research that people feel happier and healthier by water, so our aim is to continue to protect these special blue spaces for the benefit of everyone."

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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

Wigan and District Anglers Association is also relieved not to see Wigan's canal fish stocks seriously affected. It has more than 1,000 members who enjoy angling along the Leeds & Liverpool Canal.

Club secretary Kenny Baxter said: "On behalf of the Association and its members, the committee would like to thank the Canal & River Trust for its prompt response in providing first class support and resources, that helped avert a major incident on a very popular length of our canal. The canal hosts a vibrant match scene, probably the most popular in the country and once again, with the continued support of the Trust, our match anglers are back using the affected stretch of water. Well done the Canal & River Trust."

For more information about volunteering or donating to the Canal & River Trust, please visit the website www.canalrivertrust.org.uk.

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For more media information, contact lynn.pegler@canalrivertrust.org.uk. Tel 07783 686246.

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