![Canal & River Trust - Making life better by water]

PRESS RELEASE

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PEAK FOREST AND MACCLESFIELD CANALS IMPROVED BY WINTER MAKEOVER

The Canal & River Trust, the national waterways and wellbeing charity, is carrying out a major winter makeover of the Macclesfield and Peak Forest canals.

Boaters, walkers, cyclists and anglers will notice significant improvements to both canals over the next few months as Trust staff and an army of 70 volunteers work across 43 miles of waterways in East Cheshire and Derbyshire.

In a massive project to upgrade the waterways, both canals are being dredged, boundary fences mended, overhanging vegetation cut back or removed, and dry stone walls repaired. New smart signage is being installed at key locations and towpaths improved.

To accommodate the need for social distancing, staff and volunteers are divided up into dedicated work parties, so different tasks can be tackled simultaneously at locations across the two canals. Maintenance work on the Marple lock flight is also currently underway but this will be finished by Christmas in time for the Peak Forest Canal to re-open to boaters for the festive holiday.

Tracey Jackson, local operations manager with the Canal & River Trust, said: "It is vitally important to keep our 200 year old canals in good working order for the thousands of visitors and local residents who enjoy spending time by them.

"A few years ago the Macclesfield Canal became the first canal in the country to gain a coveted Green Flag Award, confirming that it's a quality green space, offering visitors a first class experience. This has since been joined by the Upper Peak Forest, from Whaley Bridge to Marple Aqueduct, and new this year, beautiful Sutton Reservoir which supplies water to the two canals.

"Although the canals were originally built to carry coal and other goods during the Industrial Revolution, they have now been reinvented as leisure destinations and havens for wildlife. Particularly during the coronavirus lockdowns, people have noticed how waterways offer an amazing, tranquil space, where everything slows down – a great place to escape the pressures of modern life. We know from research that people are happier and more relaxed when they're by water, and activities such as walking, cycling, boating, fishing, canoeing and paddle boarding improve people's mental and physical wellbeing.

"Our volunteers enjoy being in the outdoors and they do a fantastic job keeping the canals in good shape. We are very grateful for all their hard work and amazing contribution to maintaining the high standards needed to be worthy of our much-prized Green Flags."

Today the 26 mile Macclesfield Canal and the 16 mile Peak Forest Canal form part of the popular 100 mile Cheshire canal cruising ring, which provides boaters with a chance to

combine the beautiful rural Cheshire scenery with the urban waterways of Greater Manchester.

To join the volunteers on these two canals, please contact the Trust's local volunteer coordinator Neil Holladay. Email: neil.holladay@canalrivertrust.org.uk. For more information on the Canal & River Trust's vital winter waterway repair programme or to attend a virtual open day, visit www.canalrivertrust.org.uk.

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Photo shows Canal& River Trust staff and volunteers removing overhanging vegetation on the Peak Forest Canal. (LtoR): Hugh Wheeler, Paul Hardman, Alan Jackson, Tracey Jackson, Paul Chapman, Neil Holladay and Grant Aston.

For further media requests please contact:

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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.

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