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## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **CANAL CHARITY AWARDED £574,000 FROM THE NATIONAL LOTTERY HERITAGE FUND TO PREPARE MAJOR PROJECT AT ANDERTON BOAT LIFT AND VISITOR CENTRE**

The Canal & River Trust charity has been awarded a £574,000 grant from The National Lottery Heritage Fund to support the development of a major repair and refurbishment project and extensive community engagement plan at Anderton Boat Lift, Cheshire's Cathedral of Canals, near Northwich.

This funding, made possible by National Lottery players, will enable the Trust to carry out essential repairs to the Victorian boat lift to secure its long-term future, prepare a detailed plan to update facilities and interpretation at the popular visitor centre and extend a community outreach programme.

The Scheduled Historic Monument, which each year carries around 3,000 boats between the Trent & Mersey Canal and the River Weaver Navigation, needs a major upgrade to keep it operational. The whole iron structure requires blast cleaning, repairing and re-painting, the timber control cabin replacing and IT operating system updating.

Also included in the proposals are plans to replace the large marquee, which is used to host school groups and events, with an alternative flexible building, including new toilets, plus updates to the visitor centre and grounds to improve the visitor experience, as well as the development of new learning, skills and outreach programmes. This will enable more visitors to enjoy the unique attraction and delve deeper into the site's fascinating history.

Daniel Greenhalgh, Canal & River Trust North West director, said: "We are grateful to The National Lottery Heritage Fund for allowing us to take a first vital step in securing the future

Canal & River Trust

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of this unique boat lift, one of the seven wonders of the waterways. Since the Anderton Boat Lift reopened as a major visitor attraction in 2002, it has become a firm favourite on the tourist trail, as well as bringing a significant boost for the local economy.

“The essential repair and upgrade work is critically important to maintaining the lift as an operational structure. Constructed in 1875, it holds a unique place in waterway history as the world’s first commercially-operated boat lift and our mission is to ensure that it continues to delight and engage future generations.”

Over the next 14 months, the waterways and wellbeing charity will be developing a comprehensive plan for ‘Engineering the Future’, with the intention of applying for a further grant from The National Lottery Heritage Fund towards the entire £13.4 million project. If the bid is successful, the plan will be to start an 18-month programme of works at the end of the 2024 boating season.

As a foretaste of the urgent necessity for major repair work, the lift has been closed since early August due to the failure of a safety mechanism in one of the lift gates. An emergency £450,000 repair work package is now on course to be completed this winter to ensure Anderton Boat Lift reopens to boaters and the Trust’s Edwin Clark public trip boat in time for Easter 2023.

The work features two key projects. Two giant hydraulic ram cylinders, which each propel a caisson transporting boats up and down, are being given a much-needed overhaul. The large metal tank caissons will be detached from the rams and propped up about two metres above ground level to allow the 20-year-old cylinder seals to be replaced, the ceramic rams re-polished and re-set, and 12,000 litres of hydraulic oil to be changed.

Each of the lift’s ten sets of gates will also have two new ‘fall and arrest’ safety systems installed, which act like a giant seat belt in an emergency. Following the identification of the safety issue in the summer, new designs have been engineered, approved by Historic England and manufactured. Once the repairs have been carried out, the lift will have a short recommissioning period of about two to four weeks before it is once again available to carry boats.

The Anderton Boat Lift Visitor Centre will continue to welcome visitors throughout the winter at weekends – Saturdays and Sundays, 9.30am – 4.30pm. For more information, check out the Canal & River Trust website:

<https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/places-to-visit/anderton-boat-lift-visitor-centre> or call 01606 786777.

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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.

[www.canalrivertrust.org.uk](http://www.canalrivertrust.org.uk) @CanalRiverTrust

**The National Lottery Heritage Fund** grant applications over £250,000 are assessed in two rounds. Anderton Boat Lift has initially been granted round one development funding of £574,000 by The National Lottery Heritage Fund, allowing it to progress with its plans. Detailed proposals are then considered by The National Lottery Heritage Fund at a second round, where a final decision is made on the full funding.

Using money raised by the National Lottery, we **Inspire, lead** and **resource** the UK's heritage to create **positive and lasting change** for people and communities, now and in the future. [www.heritagefund.org.uk](http://www.heritagefund.org.uk). Follow @HeritageFundUK on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) and use #NationalLotteryHeritageFund

Since The National Lottery began in 1994, National Lottery players have raised over £43 billion for projects and more than 635,000 grants have been awarded across the UK. More than £30 million raised each week goes to good causes across the UK.