

PRESS RELEASE

Issued: 17 March 2022

FIRST MASS PADDLE BOARD THROUGH ANDERTON BOAT LIFT TO MARK RESTORATION ANNIVERSARY

The first mass paddle board through Anderton Boat Lift will be one of the highlights of a public celebration event to mark the 20th anniversary of the major restoration of Cheshire's historic Cathedral of Canals in Northwich.

On Saturday 26 March, the Canal & River Trust will be hosting a range of special attractions at the lift visitor centre, including a memories exhibition, the unveiling of a community patchwork quilt of the River Weaver Navigation, Lego building and Walking the Lift tours.

Over the past 20 years, the lift has provided regular passage for the Trust's own Edwin Clark trip boat, as well as more than 25,000 private boaters. On the anniversary, Mid Cheshire Stand Up Paddle Board club will be notching up a first when around 20 paddle boarders enter the top of the lift from the Trent & Mersey Canal about 11am to travel down the scheduled monument in one of the caissons. The paddle boarders will then create a spectacle along the River Weaver when they paddle en masse down to Northwich and back, before returning to the lift for the upward journey about 1pm.

The following day on Mothering Sunday, Shropshire Paddlesport will be bringing more than 30 canoeists, kayakers and paddle boarders to do a one way trip up the lift during the afternoon.

A special Memories Exhibition will be hosted in the marquee throughout the weekend and will feature a new film, as well as photos and artefacts telling the story of the last 20 years. Pictures and first hand reports will recall the opening day on 26 March 2002 and the visit of

Canal & River Trust

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Prince Charles the following April to officially open the site, complete with new visitor centre.



The new patchwork quilt depicting the River Weaver has been created by sewing experts from local quilting group, the Cosmic Chicks. Six panels illustrate the navigation in fact and fantasy from Winsford to Frodsham, It will be unveiled on the Saturday and then go on permanent display to the public.

Carly Graham, visitor centre manager, said: “Many people have been involved in the restoration and the operation of the lift over the last two decades. We want to capture that in a special memories exhibition which will celebrate the incredible £7 million restoration 20 years ago and the role of the boat lift since. We hope it will bring back some lovely memories for visitors.

“We are delighted to be marking this special anniversary with a paddleboard extravaganza – a first for two local paddle clubs, who both work closely with the Canal & River Trust on a regular basis. With the trip boat not due to start up again for the new season until 1 April, this was the perfect opportunity to do something different and give the paddle boarders a chance to have this unique experience. We hope lots of visitors will come out to give them a wave – and admire the splendid new Weaver quilt.”

The anniversary year is due to feature a host of special events including a weekend Steam Festival on 7 and 8 May and 10K charity run on Sunday 15 May. The Running Bee Foundation, who are organising the run, will have a special stand and wellbeing trail at the celebration on 26 March when potential participants can come and sign up. For young

children and less active adults, there will also be an opportunity to get involved in the “My First Mile” event which will be held at the same time as the 10k run. More details at www.runningbeefoundation.co.uk.

For more information about the anniversary event and to book boat trips from 1 April onwards, check out the Canal & River Trust website: <https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/places-to-visit/anderton-boat-lift-visitor-centre>.

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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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History of the Anderton Boat Lift

1875. Anderton Boat Lift was opened in 1875 to connect the Trent & Mersey Canal, and routes to the Potteries, with the River Weaver Navigation, which links into the River Mersey and the Port of Liverpool. It replaced the need for extensive warehousing, three double inclined planes and four salt chutes at Anderton Basin and provided easy passage from one waterway to another without the need to transfer goods between boats.

Hydraulic engineer Edwin Clark was commissioned to design the lift and he created an impressive cast iron frame, encasing two counter balanced caissons, each propelled from below by a giant hydraulic ram or cylinder. However the use of salty river water as a hydraulic fluid caused major corrosion problems and in the 1880s and 90s the lift was out of action on a number of occasions for repairs.

1908. Eventually the Weaver Navigation Trustees decided to replace the hydraulic rams with electric motors and a system of counter weights and overhead pulleys that would allow the caissons to operate independently of one another. Construction work was carried

out around the busy boat lift and the new super structure eventually opened in 1908, with the loss of only 49 operating days.

The Boat Lift then continued to operate successfully for another six decades, with the aid of regular repairs and replacement of the wire ropes. Commercial traffic on the waterways declined during the 1950s and 60s, and in 1983 extensive corrosion was uncovered during repainting. The lift was declared structurally unsound and closed.

2002. After consultation with English Heritage, it was decided to restore Anderton Boat Lift to hydraulic operation again, using specialist hydraulic oil. The counter weights were removed and rearranged in the grounds as a maze for visitors to enjoy. The restoration took two years to complete and Anderton Boat Lift re-opened as a visitor attraction on Tuesday 26 March 2002, complete with a new glass-topped trip boat, the Edwin Clark, to offer sight-seeing trips through the lift and along the river. A new visitor centre was then constructed and the whole visitor destination was officially opened the following spring by HRH The Prince of Wales on 28 April 2003.