



PRESS RELEASE

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MARKET DRAYTON PRISON ADOPTS SHROPSHIRE UNION CANAL LENGTH

The Shropshire Union Canal near Market Drayton is to benefit from a ground-breaking partnership between HM Prison Service and the Canal & River Trust charity, which cares for 2,000 miles of canals.

The Trust will be working closely with HMP Stoke Heath, an adult male training prison near Market Drayton, to provide vocational training opportunities on the canal towpath at Tyrley Locks to help prisoners close to release gain valuable work experience.



The prison has formally 'adopted' a one mile length of the canal, in response to the Trust's national appeal to

encourage community groups to get more involved in caring for their local canal. There are currently more than 170 adoption groups nationwide involving a wide range of organisations, from schools and businesses to running clubs and Scout groups.

Jason Watts, a volunteer coordinator with the Canal & River Trust, said: "This is a win-win arrangement for everyone. The canal and towpath will be kept in tip top condition around Tyrley Locks which is a very picturesque, popular spot on the Shropshire Union Canal. Society and the prisoners themselves also benefit as the canal provides a real life public environment where prisoners, who are nearing the end of their terms, can gain valuable vocational skills, improving their job prospects when they leave.

“The prisoners will be fully supervised at all times. Tasks will include vegetation management, grass cutting, litter picking, painting fences, huts and lock gates, and towpath repairs.”

Gary McManus, a prison officer at HMP Stoke Heath, explained: “We want to reassure the public that any prisoners taking part in the scheme will have undergone a rigorous risk assessment beforehand. They will all be near the end of their sentence and eligible for release and will have volunteered for work.

“Stoke Heath runs a wide range of vocational courses which prepare prisoners for making a success of their lives once they leave prison. We are delighted to be working with the Canal & River Trust to make a real contribution to upgrading the canal environment around Tyrley Locks. Our prisoners will gain immensely from the experience and visitors will have the pleasure of walking along a clean and tidy canal towpath.”

Stoke Heath prisoners will be working on the canal an average of three days a week, depending on demand.

The Canal & River Trust is hoping to get a quarter of its canal network (500 miles) adopted by community groups by 2025. A map of available locations, usually about one mile in length, is available on the Trust’s website www.canalrivertrust.org.uk. Check it out for more information about adopting, donating or volunteering or call the customer services team on 0303 040 4040.

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Notes to editors:

The Canal & River Trust is the guardian of 2,000 miles of historic waterways across England and Wales, caring for the nation’s third largest collection of listed structures, as well as museums, archives, and hundreds of important wildlife sites.

We believe that *living waterways transform places and enrich lives* and our role is to make sure there is always a place on your doorstep where you can escape the pressures of everyday life, stretch your legs and simply feel closer to nature.

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