



PRESS RELEASE

30 June 2017

WORLD'S FIRST CANAL COMIC BOOK CREATED ON LANCASTER CANAL

The Lancaster Canal is to be the focus for the world's first canal comic book, capturing people and places along a 27 mile route from Kendal to Lancaster.

Thanks to a £15,000 grant from Arts Council England National Lottery, the Lancaster Canal Regeneration Partnership (LCRP) has been able to commission talented Manchester artist Oliver East to bring a fresh interpretation of the canal which will culminate in the publication of a new 50 page comic book, *'The Lanky'*.

The book will be launched at the Lakes International Comic Arts Festival in Kendal in October. And Oliver will also be hoping to inspire a new generation of young artists by working with three primary schools – Holme, Strammongate in Kendal and Christchurch in Lancaster – in a number of comic workshops scheduled for September. He will also be leading two guided walks as part of the festival.

Music lovers may already know his work from album covers created for Mancunian band 'Elbow' - *The Seldom Seen Kid* and *Build A Rocket Boys* albums. But Oliver has also carved out another distinctive artistic niche with his unique 'walking comics' – comic books based on long distance walks.

Sketching on the move, Oliver will be walking the canal towpath between Kendal and Lancaster several times over the coming months, collecting stories about local people and places. Anecdotes and historical facts will be reinterpreted in his comic book style to bring to life two centuries of the 'Black and White Canal'.

Oliver explained: "I've been creating walking comics for ten years now, so producing one about the Lancaster Canal feels like a natural fit. It will be a fictional work inspired by facts and stories, not a history book or a guidebook, and with an element of poetry within each panel, echoing the movement of

walking. I prefer to draw directly from real life unlike many other comic book artists - there's more life in a line created in the field.

“The comic’s narrative will interweave different periods of history, looking at life on the canal from the viewpoint of a variety of characters, starting at the grand opening of the canal 200 years ago to the present day. People visiting the Lancaster Canal will recognise scenes in the book from real life, including landmarks such as Hincaster Tunnel and Lune Aqueduct.”

Charities and local authorities making up LCRP include the Canal & River Trust, Cumbria County Council, Inland Waterways Association, Kendal Town Council, Lancashire County Council, Lancaster Canal Trust, Lancaster City Council and South Lakeland District Council.

The major driving force energising the partnership is the potential of the Lancaster Canal to create new opportunities for leisure, tourism and economic development in South Cumbria and Lancashire.

Partnership chair Audrey Smith said: “We are very grateful to Arts Council England for supporting this exciting project to create a fresh, innovative interpretation of the Lancaster Canal. Comic illustration felt like the perfect way to celebrate and share its vibrant history.

“We are hoping to secure extra funding to extend the comic book further and transpose the project from 2D into 3D. We may also want to reproduce some of the artwork on future canal towpath interpretation panels or perhaps display the comic art on bridges along the trail for an even wider audience to enjoy.”

Lancaster Canal is cared for by the Canal & River Trust charity, guardian of 2,000 miles of waterways across England and Wales. Chantelle Seaborn, the Trust’s North West waterway manager is part of the partnership. She added: “This is a wonderful project that will help to put Lancaster on the map and encourage nearby communities and new audiences to discover this historic waterway and wonderful scenery for themselves.”

For more information about the Canal Comic Book project, check out the Lancaster Canal Regeneration Partnership website:

www.lancastercanalregenerationpartnership.wordpress.com.

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NOTE TO EDITORS

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On behalf of the Lancaster Canal Regeneration Partnership

Lancaster Canal Regeneration Partnership is a dedicated partnership of local authorities and charities, committed to celebrating, promoting and delivering the regeneration of the Lancaster canal and its communities. Its members include: Canal & River Trust, Cumbria County Council, Inland Waterways Association, Kendal Town Council, Lancashire County Council, Lancaster Canal Trust, Lancaster City Council and South Lakeland District Council.

The Lakes International Comic Art Festival (13-15 October 2017) is the only event of its kind in the UK taking over the whole town of Kendal, on the edge of the Lake District, Cumbria for a weekend each October. Celebrating the amazing world of comic artists, creators and writers, it brings the biggest names in comic art to Cumbria with over 70 special guests from across the comic world.

www.comicartfestival.com / @comicartfest

Oliver East

@olivereast – twitter & Instagram

Olivereast.com – portfolio

Patreon.com/olivereast – blog about process of book

Brief History of the Lancaster Canal

The Preston – Tewitfield section of the Lancaster Canal was officially opened on 22 November 1797, with the Tewitfield section finally linking to Kendal in 1819. The working life of the canal lasted for about 125 years, bringing prosperity to Kendal, Lancaster and the communities along its route. It was known as the 'Black and White Canal' due to its main cargos – importing coal and exporting limestone and slate from the Westmorland and Lancashire quarries.

The arrival of the railways to Kendal in the 1840s signalled the start of a slow decline in traffic and the last barge load of coal was delivered to Kendal in 1944. The Canal Head in Kendal started to be filled in from 1947 but the major death blow was dealt in the 1960s when the M6 motorway was constructed, severing the canal route in several places.

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