

PRESS RELEASE

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THRILLSEEKERS AT WREXHAM WORLD HERITAGE SITE AQUEDUCT TARGETED BY CANAL & RIVER TRUST'S NEW 'PONTYSAFETY' CAMPAIGN

A new safety campaign has been launched by Glandŵr Cymru, the Canal & River Trust charity in Wales, to deter thrill-seeking stand-up paddle boarders and speeding cyclists from crossing Britain's highest aqueduct at the Pontcysyllte Canal World Heritage Site in North Wales inappropriately.

'PontySafety' aims to stop dozens of people who each year put themselves and others at risk by paddling on stand-up boards along the aqueduct trough, which has no railing on one side, or cycling along the narrow towpath and potentially crashing into pedestrians.

As the schools break up for the long summer holidays, the Canal & River Trust, which cares for 2,000 miles of canals in Wales and England, is appealing to everyone to 'share the space' in a responsible way and not take unnecessary risks.

Lynda Slater, Trevor Basin visitor centre manager with the Canal & River Trust, said: "The beautiful Llangollen Canal and the stunning Pontcysyllte Aqueduct are wonderful places to visit and enjoy the great outdoors. Last year nearly half a million people came to admire our spectacular World Heritage Site and the numbers are increasing year on year.

"Unfortunately some people see the 'Stream in the Sky', 126 feet above the Dee Valley, as a dare-devil, sporting challenge. Out of courtesy, we ask all cyclists to dismount and walk their bikes along the aqueduct towpath. Sadly some people ignore this advice and put themselves and others at risk by pedalling at speed along the narrow path."

Canal & River Trust, Toll House, Delamere Terrace, London, W2 6ND

T: 0203 3204 4514 **E:** press.office@canalrivertrust.org.uk **W:** www.canalrivertrust.org.uk **Twitter:** [@CanalRiverTrust](https://twitter.com/CanalRiverTrust)

Patron: H.R.H. The Prince of Wales. Canal & River Trust is a charitable company limited by guarantee, registered in England and Wales with company number 7807276 and registered charity number 1146792, registered office address: First Floor North, Station House, 500 Elder Gate, Milton Keynes MK9 1BB

Ani Sutton, engagement manager with the Trust, commented: "As a stand-up paddle boarder myself, I know how easy it is to get blown over or off course. The aqueduct has its own micro climate, with sudden gusts of wind.

"Anyone who stands up on a paddle board across the aqueduct, with no safety railings, is taking crazy risks. We ask everyone to get off their board and walk along the towpath, towing their paddle board in the water behind them. The canal is a great place for enjoying both cycling and stand up paddle boarding - we just want people to be safe and behave responsibly."

The 11 mile Llangollen Canal World Heritage Site features two aqueducts at Pontcysyllte and Chirk and two tunnels at Chirk and Whitehouse. The Canal & River Trust safety guidance is – it is fine to paddle board over Chirk Aqueduct, which by virtue of its historic design has better protection, but paddle boarders should dismount and tow their boards along the Pontcysyllte and through the two tunnels. Canoeists are allowed to paddle along both aqueducts and, when wearing a head light, through both tunnels. Cyclists are requested to dismount and walk their cycles along all aqueduct and tunnel towpaths.

Lynda added: "The Pontcysyllte Aqueduct is a very special structure - one of the wonders of the waterways. We want everyone to enjoy their visit here. Canals are marvellous places to enjoy the fresh air and get fit and healthy. We just appeal to everyone to 'share the space' and be considerate of other people."

Visitors can enjoy a range of activities from Trevor Basin, next to the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct, including a free visitor centre, café and boat trips over the aqueduct. Day and holiday boat hire is also available here from Anglo Welsh. Good quality towpaths along the canal make the area great for walking, cycling and angling.

For more information about visiting the Pontcysyllte and Llangollen Canal World Heritage or supporting these 200-year-old heritage structures by donating or volunteering with the Canal & River Trust, please go to www.canalrivertrust.org.uk or call 0300 404 04040.

About the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct

Constructed by famous canal engineers Thomas Telford and William Jessop between 1796 and 1805, Pontcysyllte Aqueduct is a masterpiece of civil engineering and forms the centrepiece of the 11 mile World Heritage Site along the beautiful, rural Llangollen Canal.

Measuring a record-breaking 1,000 feet long and 126 feet high, the aqueduct carries the Llangollen Canal over the River Dee valley. A cast iron trough, which holds 330,000 gallons of water, is 11ft wide and 5ft 3ins deep. It is supported by 18 slender sandstone piers and 19 elegant arches, each with a 45 foot span. Mortar used in the original structure was reputedly made of oxen blood, lime and water.

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Notes to editors

For further media requests please contact:

Lynn Pegler, Canal & River Trust, m 07783 686246, e lynn.pegler@canalrivertrust.org.uk

Stephen Hardy, Canal & River Trust, m 07920 077190, e Stephen.hardy@canalrivertrust.org.uk

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 real difference to people's lives and that spending time by water can make us all healthier and happier. By bringing communities together to transform their local waterway, we are creating places and spaces that can be used and enjoyed by everyone, every day.

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