

PRESS RELEASE

Issued: 19 October 2018

NEW TOWPATH SOLAR LIGHTING MAKES STOKE'S CANALS SAFER AT NIGHT

MEDIA INVITATION

Event: Photocall to celebrate the installation of 5 miles of solar lighting on canal towpaths in Stoke-on-Trent. Photos and interviews with Simon Papprell from the Canal & River Trust and Cllr Dan Jellyman from Stoke City Council.

Time: Thursday 25 October, 5.40pm

Place: Hanley Park, central historic canal bridge. Parking: Hanley Park Southern Car Park, Ridgway Road, Stoke-on-Trent, ST4 2BZ

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Waterside walkers and cyclists in Stoke-on-Trent will be safer at night this autumn, thanks to an innovative project to install solar lighting along popular stretches of the Trent & Mersey and Caldon canals.

Waterways and well-being charity, the Canal & River Trust and Stoke-on-Trent City Council are partners in a major £1.5 million project, launched in February to improve 15 miles of the city's canals with a range of infrastructure and community initiatives.

Completed just as the clocks go back for winter, the towpath lighting project has involved the installation of hundreds of solar lights covering nearly 5 miles of the Caldon Canal, around Hanley Park and Westport Lake, and the Trent & Mersey Canal, from Middleport

down to Trentham. Charged by the sun, the lights will automatically switch on when darkness falls.

Other projects within the main scheme include:

- Opening up the route between Westport Lake and the canal with vegetation clearance, new lit pathways and improving the hedgerows for nesting birds.
- Work at Etruria Industrial Museum to repair canalside buildings.
- Repairs to Bedford Street footbridge in Etruria – starting in January 2019.
- Community volunteer project with Burslem Port Trust and Middleport Matters to deliver improved canal towpath access, with new steps, handrails and pathways.
- Improved visitor facilities at Harecastle Tunnel entrance, with new picnic benches and boat moorings.
- New 'wayfinder' signage along both canals.
- Refurbishment of existing black heritage signs.

The Canal & River Trust cares for 2,000 miles of the nation's canals including the Trent & Mersey and Caldon canals. Trust enterprise manager Simon Papprell said: "The solar lights installed on Stoke's busiest canal towpaths are going to bring major safety improvements for everyone who uses the waterway routes after dark.

"These type of lights are a first for the Midlands waterways and we would very much like to extend the project to other popular sections of towpath, particularly where the canal forms a safe, off-road commuter route through urban areas."

Cllr Dan Jellyman, cabinet member for regeneration, transport and heritage at Stoke-on-Trent City Council, said: "We're fortunate in Stoke-on-Trent to have a fantastic canal network and it's important we protect and preserve it. That is why this council has committed £1 million to boost the area's waterways with a range of exciting improvements and initiatives. We want everyone to enjoy using our fantastic canals, whether they are cycling, jogging or walking. These new lights will make sure the canal remains an attractive option, especially with the nights now drawing in."

For more information about Stoke's waterways, volunteering or donating to the Canal & River Trust, please check out the Trust's website: www.canalrivertrust.org.uk.

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For more media information, contact lynn.pegler@canalrivertrust.org.uk. Tel 07783 686246.

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