

PRESS RELEASE

15 August 2022

CANAL & RIVER TRUST PROVIDES UPDATE AS DROUGHT DECLARED

As a drought is declared by the National Drought Group across much of the canal network, the Canal & River Trust is encouraging boaters to check their routes before they cruise and to follow water-saving best practice wherever possible.

As at 15 August, the charity has introduced water saving measures at various locations, with more than 80% of the network open and fully navigable, and towpaths open throughout. A map of the affected areas can be found here: canalrivertrust.org.uk/specialist-teams/managing-our-water/drought/water-savings-restrictions

The Trust is reviewing water levels daily and is introducing water saving restrictions to navigation where necessary, and removing or lessening restrictions as soon as sufficient rainfall allows. Boaters are encouraged to check the Trust's [Stoppage Notices](#) for real-time updates, and to sign up for advice notices which give information on waterways at risk of closure or restrictions via their MyTrust accounts.

A combination of a dry spring that has continued into a hot, dry summer, coupled with essential reservoir repairs, have meant water supplies in the north are at historically low levels. While navigation closures currently mostly affect northern waterways, the nationwide drought means that restricted opening times are now being introduced in some parts of the south, on the Grand Union Leicester Line, the north and south Oxford and Coventry canals.

To enable navigation on the canals for as long as possible, the Trust introduced restricted use of several lock flights at the start of April, and volunteer lock keepers have been helping to manage boat traffic at lock flights to ensure water supplies are used as sparingly as possible. The Trust is continuing ongoing water saving repair works to increase all available water flows into the canal network. The towpaths remain open and boaters will still be able to cruise the stretches between the closed locks, provided there are no localised issues with maintaining enough water supply for safe navigation.

Richard Parry, chief executive at Canal & River Trust, said: “The drought declared across many parts of the country, coupled with essential maintenance works, means that we are experiencing shortages of water supplies on a number of canals. The restrictions on other canals, which limit the times lock flights are open, will help to save water meaning that the water available will last longer in the boating season. We will be carefully watching reservoir levels and will open the locks as soon as there’s been enough rain to do so.

“We’ve been carrying out a significant amount of water saving maintenance work over the past few years. In the longer term, once the considerable investment in our reservoirs is complete, it will help to improve the resilience of the network. This is more important than ever as extreme weather events are becoming more common.

“While navigation closures are currently predominantly affecting our northern waterways, the low rainfall is hitting hardest in the south of the country, and we’re asking all boaters, with the help of volunteer lock keepers, to be even more careful than usual to conserve water. Boaters can help by sharing locks where possible and making sure paddles are fully closed after use.

“We appreciate what an impact this has on boaters and boating businesses and we are sorry that this will affect cruising plans this summer.”

To find out more about stoppages and water levels affecting navigation, please visit canalrivertrust.org.uk/notices.

The Trust’s drought pages provide information on the current situation: canalrivertrust.org.uk/specialist-teams/managing-our-water/drought

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For further media requests please contact:

Fran Read, Canal & River Trust

m 07796 610 427 e fran.read@canalrivertrust.org.uk