

PRESS RELEASE

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Second phase of dredging underway on Montgomery Canal restoration

Glandŵr Cymru, the Canal & River Trust in Wales, has started the second phase of dredging on the Montgomery Canal as part of the effort to restore the 200-year-old canal so that boats can once again use it and to protect the manmade waterway for future generations.

The Montgomery Canal restoration has included decades of work by volunteers and partners. Now, over four miles of the canal between Llanymynech and Maerdy is being restored thanks to Glandŵr Cymru's successful Levelling Up Fund bid in partnership with Powys County Council, supported by the Montgomery Canal Partnership.

This phase of the canal's restoration is aiming to restore the channel so that boats will be able to use the waterway for the first time since the 1930s. It will also help make the canal easier to use for unpowered activities such as canoeing and paddleboarding. The restoration is also creating a broad and sustainable habitat to support a range of wildlife and the protected floating water plantain that are found on the canal.

This latest phase of dredging is being split into two parts. The first, which will be completed in the new year, will see nearly a mile dredged from Bridge 99 to Vyrnwy Aqueduct. The work will also open-up the canal by cutting back overgrown vegetation and ensuring that dangerous or diseased trees are pollarded or removed as appropriate. The second part, just over half a mile from Bridge 101 to Bridge 102, will see the bank stabilised using coir roll and timber stakes, which will give the canal a soft bank ideal for wildlife such as water voles, wild fowl and invertebrates. This phase will begin in January and is set to be complete by March 2024.

Kathryn Woodroffe, project manager for the Montgomery Canal restoration, said: "This phase of dredging is another exciting step forward in the work to restore the Montgomery Canal.

"We are aiming to achieve a standard depth for boats to use the canal and ensure vegetation and tree cover that will enhance and protect the diversity of the canal ecosystem.

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“The protected floating water plantain found in the Montgomery Canal, tends to follow the shade line, so we will look at maintaining overhanging branches, where safe to do so, to provide the ideal environment to encourage its growth. The work will also give us the opportunity to create and maintain a broad and diverse habitat to encourage wildlife.”

Councillor David Selby, Powys County Council's Cabinet Member for a More Prosperous Powys, said: “I'm delighted to see more progress being made on this project which aims to provide long-term economic, cultural and wellbeing benefits for local communities, as part of our plans to make Powys a stronger, fairer and greener place to live, and we want that to be achieved as a result of having a wildlife rich and well managed waterway.”

During the dredging a footpath diversion will be in place where the footpath comes off the canal towpath across the farmland at Pont-y-Person.

Discover more about the Montgomery Canal restoration project online at canalrivertrust.org.uk, where you can also find out about donating or volunteering to the work of Glandŵr Cymru, as well as the charity's Keep Canals Alive campaign to demand action from the UK government to protect the future of the much-loved canal network.

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Notes to Editors

Glandŵr Cymru, the Canal & River Trust in Wales, 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 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

The Montgomery Canal

The Montgomery Canal was built over 200 years ago, providing a new 35 miles long transport link into mid Wales. It linked Newtown (Powys), Welshpool and Llanymynech to the rest of the UK waterways network. Falling derelict in the 1930s, restoration began in Welshpool in 1969 and soon attracted the attention of the then Prince of Wales, leading to seven miles around Welshpool being reopened.

Through a mixture of paid and volunteer labour, over 60% of the Canal has now been restored with the latest restoration being to Crickheath, Shropshire, majority funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. In Wales, 4.4 miles of restoration are being undertaken from Maerdy to the border at Llanymynech, largely funded by the UK Government's Levelling Up Fund.

Part of the Canal in Shropshire is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) but most of the Shropshire section was allowed to dry out. Almost all the Canal in Powys is in water and is not only a SSSI but also a Special Area of Conservation, one of only seven in Wales. The whole restoration programme is carried out in a sustainable way, as set out in the Conservation Management Strategy (updated in 2017).

The Montgomery Canal Partnership (which has been making progress for over 20 years) brings together the county councils and other statutory agencies with Canal & River Trust (the owners) and the voluntary groups and provides the umbrella organisation which is driving restoration forward.

The Partnership and the Canal & River Trust have developed a Ten Year's Restoration Strategy which can be found at <https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/media/original/28659-the-montgomery-canal-restoration-strategy.pdf>

Members of the Partnership are launching a Public Appeal for £250,000 towards the costs of further restoration in Shropshire. They are also seeking more volunteers. Details of the fund raising can be found at www.localgiving.org/charity/restorethemontgomerycanal. Potential volunteers should look at www.shropshireunion.org/restoration