

PRESS RELEASE

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CANAL CHARITY BEGINS £1.1M PROJECT TO UPGRADE LANCASTER CANAL TOWPATH

Work is underway on a £1.1m project to improve a four-mile stretch of towpath on the Northern Reaches of the Lancaster Canal and make it more accessible for residents and visitors.

Waterways charity Canal & River Trust worked with the Lancaster Canal Regeneration Partnership and Westmorland and Furness Council to secure the funding for the project, which will form part of the new Lancaster Canal Towpath Trail between Kendal and Lancaster.

Over four miles of the towpath, from Field End Bridge 169, near Stainton, to just north of Holme Village, will be enhanced by engineering contractors CPC Civils Group, with the works planned and coordinated by Canal & River Trust.

The works, which are due to be completed in January 2025, will include widening and resurfacing the towpath using locally sourced self-binding gravel, which is designed to fit in with the rural environment, provide a hardwearing surface, and reduce mud and puddles.

Jon Horsfall, North West director at Canal & River Trust, explains: “We’re delighted to have secured funding for this important work to transform this section of towpath. This towpath upgrade project is a fantastic example of how we can work together to make our canals more welcoming and attractive. This much needed work will significantly improve the towpath’s usability, offering opportunities for residents and visitors to engage in active travel, walk, cycle, and run, and take part in leisure activities.

“Spending time by the water is a fantastic way to improve your wellbeing. As a charity, we’re committed to keeping our canals and towpaths open and alive so people can feel the benefits, and the Lancaster Canal Towpath Trail is a great example of the difference our canals can make to local communities.”

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The project is being funded by Westmorland and Furness Council, through the UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural England Prosperity Fund, as well as legacy grant funding from Cumbria County Council and South Lakeland District Council, and is being driven by the Lancaster Canal Regeneration Partnership.

Councillor Jonathan Brook, Leader of Westmorland and Furness Council, added: "An important part of our vision for Westmorland and Furness is supporting access to the outdoors and opportunities to live well and enjoy our wonderful surroundings. It was great to see for ourselves the progress being made on the beautiful Lancaster Canal Towpath Trail, keeping its storied heritage alive and making it accessible for all to enjoy.

"We allocated £8.1 million from the government's UK Shared Prosperity and Rural England Prosperity funds to 22 projects, focussing on boosting communities and place. It was fantastic to see at first hand the results of the grant to Canal & River Trust on a project which will deliver far-reaching benefits to our area."

The Lancaster Canal Towpath Trail, which aims to be fully accessible, will celebrate the heritage of the canal and follow the original towpath, in both the watered and un-watered sections, to promote walking and cycling routes.

Helen Watson-Moriarty, from Lancaster Canal Regeneration Partnership, added: "The Lancaster Canal Regeneration Partnership were delighted to work alongside Canal & River Trust and Westmorland and Furness Council to secure this funding and become the delivery partner for the engagement and promotion aspects of the wider project.

"It's the perfect opportunity to launch the Towpath Trail brand and tell more people about the trail and the numerous wellbeing opportunities it provides. Everyone is welcome at the events we are delivering, and we encourage everyone to check out the recommended loop walks on the new Towpath Trail website."

Several events have already been held to promote the new trail, including two Pie and Paddle sessions and the Crooklands 'Canalathon', which saw competitors paddle boarding and either running or walking along the towpath to help raise funds towards the improvement works.

For further information on the new Lancaster Canal Towpath Trail, and the opportunities for walking, cycling and paddling, go to: <https://lancastercanaltowpathtrail.co.uk/>

To find out more about the work of the Canal & River Trust, including how you can support through volunteering or making a donation go to www.canalrivertrust.org.uk.

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Image (left to right): Nick Cotton and Helen Watson-Moriarty, from Lancaster Canal Regeneration Partnership CIC; Sean Moran, CPC's site manager; Rachel Daley, project manager at Canal &

River Trust; Councillor Jonathan Brook and Councillor Doug Rathbone, from Westmorland and Furness Council.

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Notes to Editors

The **Canal & River Trust** cares for and brings to life 2,000 miles of canals and river navigations 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