

PRESS RELEASE

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CANAL & RIVER TRUST PROGRESSES PROGRAMME TO PROTECT ANDERTON BOAT LIFT FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

The Canal & River Trust, the nation's canal charity, has commenced preparatory investigatory work that will help inform the ambitious programme to refurbish Anderton Boat Lift, one of the seven wonders of Britain's canal network.

With the charity hoping to undertake the refurbishment of what was the world's first commercial boat lift in autumn 2025, it has appointed specialist engineering firm JN Bentley to assist with the preparatory investigations.

Dating back to 1875, and last fully refurbished and reopened at the turn of the millennium, Anderton Boat Lift now needs a major upgrade to keep it operational. The whole structure requires blast cleaning, repairing and re-painting, the timber control cabin replacing and IT operating system updating.

This first phase of work includes investigations and surveys around the lift grounds, inspections of the lift, confirming design elements and high priority repairs. These will all inform the main improvement and refurbishment phase which the Trust hopes to begin in autumn 2025, after the lift's 150th anniversary celebrations in July 2025.

Also included in the project are plans to upgrade the visitor centre to include a new flexible event space which will replace the large marquee, plus the development of a new learning, skills and outreach programme. This will enable more visitors to enjoy the unique attraction and delve deeper into the site's fascinating history.

The Trust has developed an ambitious, externally funded programme – the Engineering The Future project – to revitalize Anderton Boat Lift and Visitor Centre, supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. In December 2022 the Trust was awarded a £574,000 grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund to support the development phase of this major project. An application for Stage 2 funding will be submitted in the spring of 2025.

Canal & River Trust, National Waterways Museum Ellesmere Port, South Pier Road, Ellesmere Port, Cheshire

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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: National Waterways Museum Ellesmere Port, South Pier Road, Ellesmere Port, Cheshire, CH65 4FW

Jason Leach, head of external programme delivery at Canal & River Trust, emphasized the importance of the project, stating: “Anderton Boat Lift is an iconic symbol of our industrial heritage and it’s amazing that it is still in use today, providing a vital link for boaters between the River Weaver and the Trent & Mersey Canal. With such a rich history, it has an important role to play in telling the story of our canals to visitors.

“We are committed to preserving Anderton Boat Lift for navigation and to inspire future generations. The investigatory work that will be carried out by JN Bentley is the first step in upgrading the boat lift and its surrounding environments. This will not only make it more resilient and keep it available to boaters, but the transformation of the grounds and visitor centre will mean more people of all ages can see, hear, and experience this special place and learn about why it’s so vital to keep the boat lift – and our canal network – alive.”

Andrew Holt, Operations Manager from JN Bentley said “We are pleased to be working with Canal & River Trust to deliver this important engineering project on the historic Anderton Boat Lift.

“We’ll bring our fifty-plus years of experience to the project to deliver the improvements the structure deserves. We recognise the importance of the boat lift to boaters, the local community, and the heritage of our waterways as a whole, and look forward to collaborating with Canal & River Trust to deliver the project over the coming months.”

The refurbishment, targeted to get underway next autumn, is expected to last 12-18 months, with a total estimated cost of £13.5 - £15 million. The Trust is actively seeking further grant funding and support from trusts and foundations, corporates and philanthropists, as well as appropriate statutory and government grants, to further support the project.

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About Canal & River Trust

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.

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About Engineering The Future

Engineering The Future is an ambitious programme to regenerate Anderton Boat Lift and site which is supported by National Heritage Lottery Fund. The project will revitalise the Lift and Visitor Centre by carrying out critical refurbishment to the Lift, improving the reliability for navigation, updating control systems so helping to ensure future reliability and minimise maintenance costs, improving facilities and enhancing the visitor experience. The project aims to deliver transformational change and create a sustainable future for the site. The first milestone was achieved in December 2022, when the Trust was awarded a £574,000 grant from National Lottery Heritage Fund to support the Development phase. A further application for Lottery funding will be made in February 2025 for the Delivery phase.

Learn more at www.canalrivertrust.org.uk/engineering-the-future

About JN Bentley

Part of the Mott MacDonald Group, JN Bentley delivers civil engineering contracting services, together with mechanical and electrical expertise, across a variety of sectors including water and commercial building. Founded in 1972, the company has grown largely from repeat work, maintaining a focus on providing services with an open and honest approach.

The JN Bentley team numbers close to 2,000 colleagues and prides itself on its large, directly employed construction workforce, a team that gives us and our clients added assurances for safety and quality. We look to find innovative solutions to traditional construction challenges, applying the latest technologies to drive efficiency and reach sustainable outcomes.

Across JN Bentley and our design and build companies MMB and JBA Bentley, we delivered over £420 million of work in 2023.

Learn more at www.jnbentley.co.uk.

About National Lottery Heritage Fund

Our vision is for heritage to be valued, cared for and sustained for everyone, now and in the future. That's why as the largest funder for the UK's heritage we are dedicated to supporting projects that connect people and communities to heritage, as set out in our strategic plan, Heritage 2033. Heritage can be anything from the past that people value and want to pass on to future generations. We believe in the power of heritage to ignite the imagination, offer joy and inspiration, and to build pride in place and connection to the past. Over the next 10 years, we aim to invest £3.6billion raised for good causes by National Lottery players to make a decisive difference for people, places and communities

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