

PRESS RELEASE

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Canal & River Trust reassures communities along the Grantham Canal following prolonged dry period

The Canal & River Trust is writing to communities along the Grantham Canal to reassure them about water levels in their local stretch of canal following a period of prolonged dry weather.

With below average rainfall in March and April, and the Met Office recently recording the driest May on record in England, the Trust has received a number of reports of low water on some parts of the Grantham Canal – specifically at Lady Bay and Kinoulton.

Water supply on the Nottingham end of the canal is particularly challenging, with the stretch from Cotgrave to Lady Bay only having one significant source of water supply – the Cotgrave feeder which enters the canal near Skinners Lock Cottage. This means that the water levels in the canal are very much affected by rainfall, and do tend to drop during the summer, particularly in the downstream end at Lady Bay. These water supply issues have been compounded by low flat culverted bridges which have been built across the canal since it was closed to boat traffic in 1929.

With such low rainfall the charity's expert ecologists have been regularly visiting the canal to monitor the potential impact on wildlife and have recorded no immediate threats.

Fish are the species that is probably most acutely affected by low water levels, warm temperatures and resultant lack of oxygen. The Trust is keeping a close eye on the canal for signs of fish distress and carefully monitoring dissolved oxygen levels in the water. When it's clear that fish are in distress the Trust can use pumps to oxygenate the water and, as a last resort, can relocate fish to unaffected sections of canal.

In recent years the Trust has been working with members of the Lady Bay community to improve their local stretch of canal for nature. The local residents have come to understand the particular challenges that increasingly regular dry spells are placing on it and have been keen to play their part in overcoming them. The charity is keen to work with other community groups along the canal in a similar way.

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Work at Lady Bay has included clearing reeds to improve flow and oxygen levels within the water, carrying out dye tests to identify any leaks and, as a last resort, safely relocating fish to sections of the canal which are less susceptible to water supply problems.

Richard Bennett, Heritage & Environment Manager for the Canal & River Trust, said: “We’ve received a number of reports of low water levels on the Nottingham end of the canal and at Kinoulton – and we welcome the concern and affection people clearly have for their local stretch of canal.

“With rainfall being so low over the past three months it’s no real surprise that we’ve seen some issues but, in truth, the water levels in most places are around where we would expect them to be given the low rainfall and challenges of moving water along the canal.

“We’re monitoring the situation closely to look for any potential impacts on wildlife but it’s important to remember that wildlife is very resilient and, if necessary, many species will simply move to the next stretch of canal which has water. Some species of waterfowl can actually benefit from fluctuating water levels as it makes it easier for them to find food in the exposed mud.

“Unfortunately there are no quick wins, no alternative supplies of water that can be easily tapped into so, with hot, dry periods becoming more common we perhaps have to look at the Grantham Canal in a new way. By recognising the value of a freshwater habitat which fluctuates between being wet and dry and adapting the way we care for the canal, with the involvement of local communities as we have at Lady Bay, we want to maintain the canal’s unique character and ensure it remains a special place for people and wildlife.”

The Trust has a long-term aspiration to see the whole canal restored for navigation and is working with the Grantham Canal Society and others to achieve this, however such an undertaking is likely to take several decades.

Any community groups wanting to help improve their local stretch of canal for people and wildlife can find out more by emailing volunteer.eastmidlands@canalrivertrust.org.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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For further media requests please contact:

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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