Breathtaking range of projects protect canal



Artist’s impression of the restored Carpenter’s Road Lock in the London Olympic Park. An HLF grant of nearly £700,000 made the project possible Canal and River Trust

The significance of Britain’s canals and waterways cannot be overstated, HLF trustee and chair of the Scotland Committee Dame Seona Reid said today.

HLF's support for canals

Addressing the World Canals Conference in Inverness, Dame Seona said the canal network plays a central role in the UK’s industrial legacy, boosts present-day local economies and tourism, protects wildlife, and offers many opportunities for volunteering and skills training.

All these aspects had been addressed in HLF grant support which, since 1994, had awarded over £192million to more than 380 waterways projects.

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“We have supported a breathtaking range of projects from large-scale capital investment in heavy engineering, to ensuring the preservation of memories, and delivering the skills and training needed to ensure that the young people of

today can become the guardians of our canals in the future," she told her audience.

Canals are also a vital natural resource, providing habitats for an abundance of plant and animal life and forming wildlife corridors passing through our largest cities out to our most far-flung regions.

Examples of our waterways projects

Examples of where HLF–administered National Lottery funding had transformed the fortunes of canals and waterways ranged include:

- £25m that helped saved the Kennet and Avon following nearly a century of decline, to a modest £5,000 that enabled the Leeds and Liverpool Canal Society to partner with a local organisation for visually impaired people to help them appreciate canal heritage by means of specially commissioned interpretation material
- Meanwhile, a £2m regeneration project at the Weavers Triangle in Burnley restored a historic wharf, providing a visitor centre and space for commercial enterprises
- In Scotland the Canal College project, awarded a £212,000 grant, found solutions to local skills shortages and high youth unemployment through a programme of training and skills development focused on the Forth & Clyde and Union Canals. Twelve 14-week work programmes addressed youth unemployment in Falkirk and Edinburgh by teaching heritage and environmental skills to disadvantaged 16-25 year olds

Canals changing lives

Of the 162 young people who took part in the Canal College project, 72% moved into similar work, further education or training once they completed their course. One of these, 20-year-old Angus Harkness, is the subject of this week's Changing lives story.

Previously working as a labourer on the Isle of Skye, Angus secured a place at the HLF-supported Canal College before moving on to work for Scottish Canals as part of a Skills for the Future programme.

This led to a four-year apprenticeship and Angus is now the only stonemason who maintains and repairs the historic locks, bridges and other structures of the Union and Forth & Clyde Canals.



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Assisting disabled people alongside the Leeds and Liverpool Canal

This group aims to conserve and restore the Leeds to Liverpool Canal and to promote an interest in the use of the Canal. The group now wishes to purchase equipment to extend its range of activities. The grant will fund a digital