Canal project to take communities on a voyage through history

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A range of activities running throughout this year, the canal's 250th anniversary, will help to promote the waterway's unique historical aspects while giving volunteers plenty of opportunities to get involved. Open days and special activities will be held, access to the canal improved at key points, and better information produced for visitors.

Salford has also been designated a priority area by the Heritage Lottery Fund North West in recognition of the fact that it has received less funding than other areas in the region. The HLF-funded project, devised by Salford City Council under the title Networks to Heritage, forms part of the larger Bridgewater Canal Corridor project that seeks to develop the education, leisure and tourism aspects of the area.

The Bridgewater was the world's first commercial canal built specifically to transport coal from the mines at Worsley. The result was that the price of coal halved, setting Britain on its path as the world's first industrial nation.

Along the canal's 4.9 mile course through the city of Salford, it passes over the Barton Swing aqueduct, a Grade II listed structure which carries the waterway over the Manchester Ship Canal. Built in 1894, it is the oldest swing aqueduct in the world and was heralded in its day as an engineering marvel.

Also close to the canal is Worsley village with 17 Grade II listed buildings, and the Monton Roe-Green loopline – once a branch of the Eccles to Wigan railway – but now a green corridor providing a link to the national cycle network and Salford's footpath network.

A part-time community project officer, funded through the HLF grant, will develop a range of volunteering opportunities and promote partnership between the communities, landowners and businesses linked by the waterway. Research will unlock more stories associated with the canal and two 'gateway sites' at Westwood Park and Cawdor Street, will be enhanced with improved access and interpretation materials.

For the Heritage Lottery Fund Sara Hilton, Head of HLF North West, said: "The industrial heritage that flows through this area is unique and we particularly welcome projects such as this one because Salford is a priority area for us. Networks to Heritage will encompass conservation, education and community involvement helping to ensure that local people benefit from having so many historical treasures on their doorstep."

Councillor David Lancaster, Deputy Leader of Salford City Council, said: "Work to improve the Bridgewater Canal corridor is part of a wider vision to regenerate the west of the city.

"The Bridgewater Canal was at the heart of the industrial revolution and this heritage project is an exciting opportunity for local people to get involved in reliving its historical and famous past."

Notes to editors

Other heritage aspects associated with this stretch of the Bridgewater Canal include:

- Worsley Delph – a scheduled ancient monument of international significance which is the entrance point to 46 miles of coal mining tunnels.
- The Patricroft area including the site of the foundry built by James Nasmyth, inventor of the steam hammer.
- Remains of James Brindley's original stone aqueduct which was superseded by the Barton Swing Aqueduct when the River Irwell was incorporated in the Manchester Ship Canal.

Using money raised through the National Lottery, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) sustains and transforms a wide range of heritage for present and future generations to take part in, learn from and enjoy. From museums, parks and historic places to archaeology, natural environment and cultural traditions, we invest in every part of our diverse heritage. HLF has supported 33,900 projects, allocating £4.4billion across the UK.

Further information

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