

Press Release

Work Starts at Thornton Lock on the Pocklington Canal

Lord Halifax Cuts the First Sod

A start has been made on the Pocklington Canal Amenity Society's bicentenary project to extend navigation to Bielby. The project, which includes works at Thornton Lock and Walbut Lock, will extend the navigable length by two miles. On Wednesday 21 October, works started at Thornton Lock when Lord Halifax, a patron of PCAS, cut the first sod. Volunteers will carry out repairs to the bywash, which is the first stage of work at this lock.

At a later stage, the lock will be drained, allowing repairs to the brickwork, and new lock gates to be installed. The lock gates will be made by the Canal & River Trust at their workshops in Stanley Ferry, near Wakefield. They will incorporate the wheel-operated paddle gear that is an historic feature of the Pocklington Canal.

Work at Thornton Lock is scheduled for completion in 2016. It will be followed by similar works at Walbut Lock in 2017.

PCAS intends to spend £250,000 on this project, so that the bicentenary of the opening of the canal can be celebrated in 2018. More than a third of this sum has been raised and the society is working hard to reach its target.

The works are being carried out in conjunction with the Canal & River Trust, which is providing valuable advice and assistance. The society's chairman, Paul Waddington, said that that our partnership with the Trust is working very well. He also expressed his thanks to Lord Halifax, who has been a friend of the society for many years.

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NOTES FOR EDITORS

The Pocklington Canal, in the East Riding of Yorkshire is 9.5 miles long and has nine locks. It stretches from the River Derwent at East Cottingwith to Canal Head, which is a mile short of the town of Pocklington. Opened in 1818, its last commercial use was in 1932.

The Pocklington Canal Amenity Society was formed in 1969, and started restoration works in 1970. Boats were again able to reach the present head of navigation at the village of Melbourne in 1987, where moorings were established.

The Pocklington Canal is entirely rural and, of all the canals in Britain, is probably the one that has undergone the fewest changes. Its nine locks are Grade II listed buildings, as are the four road bridges that cross the canal.

The Pocklington Canal is of considerable importance for wildlife. It is included in three Sites of Special Scientific Interest and is noted for uncommon aquatic plants, damselflies and dragonflies. The canal is part of the internationally important Lower Derwent Valley, which includes ings land that floods in winter and is important for wintering wildfowl and many other birds.

The Heritage Lottery Fund has awarded the first stage of funding to the Canal & River Trust for a project focusing on wildlife conservation, heritage work and improvements for the benefit of visitors to the canal.

Pocklington Canal Amenity Society

PCAS was formed in 1969 to protect and restore the canal as a navigable waterway, which had been under threat in the 1950s, at a time when the amenity value of waterways was less appreciated. Its members with the help of other volunteers have carried out extensive restoration work, including rebuilding locks. The work has been funded by donations from members and the public, together with grants, and support from British Waterways and their successor, the Canal & River Trust, the Inland Waterways Association and the local authority.

The Society liaises with the Canal & River Trust, Natural England, the East Riding of Yorkshire Council, the Environment Agency, English Heritage and the East and North Yorkshire Waterway Partnership.

PCAS runs a popular trip boat on the navigable part of the canal and has an information centre at the popular Canal Head picnic site. Regular working parties tackle maintenance and other tasks on the canal.

In February 2015, PCAS launched its Bicentenary Appeal to raise £250,000 to extend the navigable length by two miles.