

Lichfield Canal restoration reaches next chapter thanks to HS2 funding

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Lichfield and Hatherton Canals Restoration Trust (LHCRT) has completed construction of a 120-metre section of canal restoration thanks to a £75,000 grant received from **HS2's** Community & Environment Fund.

LHCRT started their wider restoration project in 1996, aiming to create a green and blue corridor to help connect the local community with the national canal network.

The funding from HS2 has enabled LHCRT to build a new section of canal and improve habitats around the Darnford Brook wetlands, including restoring the existing woodland and hedgerows. Now filled with water, the area is quickly becoming an established and diverse habitat for local wildlife, with a nature trail alongside the towpath which will be open to the public.

The new section also incorporates ducts for electric boats, which will help reduce the carbon output from diesel boats using the canal in the future.

HS2's Community & Environment Fund (CEF) provides funding over and above the committed mitigation and compensation to communities along the HS2 route.

Carol Mills, Chair of LHCRT, said: "We are so grateful to HS2 for the CEF funding. It kickstarted our work at Darnford Moors Ecology Park with phase one of the project creating water and other new habitats on land running alongside the canal. This initiated a chain reaction to enable us to secure further funding for the other phases. We're close to completing the project and will officially open the ecology park in the coming months, which will be an attractive green and blue space for local people to enjoy."

David Prys-Jones, HS2's Biodiversity Manager, said: "HS2's green corridor programme aims to establish a series of connected habitats stretching along HS2's line of route to benefit nature as well as local communities. LHCRT's canal restoration is a brilliant project because it combines the two."

"Canals are really important habitats that provide homes for fish, invertebrates and other key species of plants and animals while remaining great places for local people and leisure."

Cathy Elliot, Independent Chair of the HS2 Funds, said: "It's great to see LHCRT's vision for a completed waterway take one step closer, and I'm glad that we could play a small part in helping to fund the scheme. Over the next few years, I'm sure we will see the area become a true wildlife haven that will be embraced by members of the public."

"HS2 will cross multiple waterways between London and the West Midlands, and I would encourage similar community-led organisations to get contact with Groundwork UK to explore the tangible benefits that the Fund offers."

The canal restoration is close to where the HS2 railway will pass over the canal. Nearby, the railway also needs to travel under the West Coast Main Line, with HS2 completing an operation in August to drive a giant 6,200 tonne bridge structure into place under the existing railway at Fulfen Wood.

The HS2 Community and Environment Fund (CEF) provides funding to communities along the HS2 route and is available to organisations demonstrably disrupted by the construction of by the construction of HS2.

HS2's funding schemes will provide up to £40m of funding throughout the construction timeline of HS2, supporting community-led projects that improve the environment, such as tree planting and energy efficiency measures.

The Funds also support initiatives that bring benefits to local communities, such as the provision of new community facilities or support for local heritage and culture.

Photo credit: HS2 Ltd