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| **BREAKING NEWS**  |

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| **WORK TO PROTECT HABITATS AND HERITAGE ON THE POCKLINGTON CANAL WINS NATIONAL LOTTERY SUPPORT** Important wildlife habitats and historic features on one of Britain’s most picturesque canals are set to be improved after a local project secured a £496,600 grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). The funding has been granted for the Pocklington Canal, which runs for 9.5 miles between Canal Head, near Pocklington to the River Derwent in East Cottingwith. Thanks to National Lottery players, the project will help to improve conditions for a variety of important species and restore two historic bridges.  The project will also involve a programme of events and activities aimed at encouraging people to get involved, learn new skills and explore their local canal.  Run by the Canal & River Trust, in partnership with the Pocklington Canal Amenity Society, Natural England, the East & North Yorkshire Waterways Partnership and East Riding of Yorkshire Council, the project will benefit from a total investment of £682,585 with additional funding coming from the Trust and Natural England. Virtually the entire length of the canal falls within one of three Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and it is particularly important for aquatic plants, birds, waterfowl, and invertebrates – including 13 different species of dragonfly and damselfly. Part of the project will involve dredging sections of the canal which is important for aquatic plants and cutting back overgrowing reeds to ensure they don’t overwhelm other species thereby improving the SSSI.  Another element of the works will be repairs and repointing of the historic brickwork on the Grade II Listed Church Bridge, which is deteriorating through age and has been damaged by crossing vehicles. The works will be used as an opportunity to train volunteers in important heritage skills such as using traditional lime mortar. Swing Bridge number 7, in Melbourne, will also be restored back to a design that resembles its original. The structure is one of eight moveable bridges which were built for use by landowners whose land had been cut in two by the construction of the canal. The bridges were replaced in the 1970s but built to very modern specifications in order to accommodate the size and weight of modern vehicles. The works involved in this project will retain the modern standards but change the look of the bridge, and surrounding brickwork, by using more authentic, traditional materials. As well as the physical works the project will also enable local people to get involved in community events, walks and talks, traditional skills workshops, educational opportunities and even a festival to mark the canal’s 200 year anniversary.   New ‘interpretive’ information will also be installed, helping visitors to understand the value of the built and natural heritage of this hidden gem of a waterway. A Project Officer will be appointed to coordinate the exciting programme of activities and events. Jon Horsfall, waterway manager for the Canal & River Trust, said; “The Pocklington Canal is full of unique character and that’s what this project is all about; protecting and improving the wildlife and historical features that make the canal so special and nationally important, but doing it in a way that is sympathetic and in keeping with its valuable heritage.  “We’re delighted that the HLF are supporting our work and we’re looking forward to getting started. The really great aspect of this project is the opportunities it will present for people to get involved. Whether that’s getting your hands dirty and helping to restore a really important historical landmark or getting out and exploring the canalside walks on your doorstep or simply taking the family along to a festival celebrating our local history, there will be something for everyone.”   Natural England Chief Executive, James Cross, said: “I’m so excited by this tremendous opportunity to improve the Pocklington Canal, both for its wildlife and for those who value and visit this special place. We look forward to continuing to work alongside the Canal & River Trust and our partners to restore this magnificent waterway to its former glory, and improve its wonderful habitats. This is the result of years of hard work for all who care about this special place and I couldn’t be more pleased. It just goes to show what can happen when we all pull together.” Alistair Anderson of the Pocklington Canal Amenity Society said “The Lottery funding will greatly improve the canal between Canal Head and Melbourne, which is very overgrown at present.  It will also increase the heritage value of the canal and complement the Society’s own restoration scheme.” The canal was built in the 19th Century to transport coal, lime, fertiliser and industrial goods to Pocklington, and agricultural produce out to Hull and the fast-growing towns of West Yorkshire. During the middle part of the last century the canal fell into disuse and became unnavigable. Despite plans in the 1950s to turn it into a dumping ground for chalk sludge, the canal survived with the section from the River Derwent to the Melbourne Arm being restored with the help of the Pocklington Canal Amenity Society. ENDS For further media requests, and high res images please contact:Stephen Hardy, communications manager, Canal & River TrustTelephone: 01636 675703Email: stephen.hardy@canalrivertrust.org.uk   |

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