

PRESS RELEASE

November 2019

DIGGING DEEP FOR AN HISTORIC WATERWAY'S REGENERATION - DREDGING ON SWANSEA CANAL UNDERWAY

PHOTO/PRESS OPPORTUNITY:

FRIDAY 29 NOVEMBER 12.30pm, Coedgwilym Park, Clydach SA6

Jeremy Miles AM for Neath and Rebecca Mary Evans AM for Gower will visit the canal to see the dredging work being carried out by Glandŵr Cymru – the Canal & River Trust in Wales. They will meet volunteers from the Swansea Canal Society who have been maintaining, improving and restoring the canal, and colleagues from Glandŵr Cymru – the Canal & River Trust in Wales

Work to regenerate the historic Swansea Canal continues this month with a key element - the dredging of almost a mile of the waterway between Coed Gwilym Park in Clydach and Trebanos.

The dredging is scheduled to be completed in mid-January and will be carried out by waterways and wellbeing charity Glandŵr Cymru – the Canal & River Trust in Wales. The charity cares for the canal, together with the Swansea Canal Society.

More than 6,700 cubic metres of silt is being removed from the channel – the equivalent of over 8,300 bath tubs full of water. This will open up the canal, enabling Swansea Canal Society to operate a trip boat and also improve the canoeing sessions that they already offer.

The dredging is the part of programme of conservation repairs by Swansea Canal Society. Volunteers will renovate the historic structures along the waterway, reinforce banks and undertake other tasks including work to protect the biodiversity of the canal corridor.

As part of a ten-year vision to establish the Swansea Canal as a premier heritage, visitor and leisure destination, it is estimated that the project could help to generate up to £500,000 for the visitor economy each year across the region.

Research from Glandŵr Cymru shows that, as well as the health benefits offered by walking, running or cycling on the towpath, simply spending time by the water can help people feel happier and improve their life satisfaction. With 80 percent of Trebanos residents living within 400m of the canal and almost 16,000 people already using the towpath each year the potential for Swansea Canal to play an even greater role in helping people improve their physical and mental wellbeing.

The project is costing around £380k which includes funding totalling over £256,000 secured earlier this year from the Rural Community Development Funding (RCDF) with the support of the Rural Development Programme teams in Neath Port Talbot Council and Swansea Council. Additional funding has come from the Swansea Canal Society, from the Welsh Government Landfills Disposal Tax Community Scheme

RCDF is funded through the Welsh Government Rural Communities - Rural Development Programme 2014-2020, which is funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the Welsh Government.

- **Jon Horsfall, Glandŵr Cymru director:** “The dredging is the first important step in unlocking the massive potential of this special stretch of water. Bringing a canal back into full use can offer huge benefits to local economies, not to mention the opportunities to enjoy the outdoors – by boat, on foot or bike. And there will be other benefits too – from learning opportunities for all ages and interests. We’re delighted to be getting this first phase underway and thank our partners on this exciting project, in particular the Swansea Canal Society whose hard work and enthusiasm have kept the canal open for everyone to use and enjoy.”

Swansea Canal Society volunteers will renovate historic structures and plant native trees. Further phases will develop leisure and learning opportunities including canoeing, trip boat, floating classroom and high quality interpretation.

- **Councillor Gordon Walker, Chair of Swansea Canal Society:**
“Swansea Canal Society is delighted that the regeneration of the Swansea Canal from Coedgwilym Park to Trebanos Locks is now in progress.

“The dredging arranged by our partners Canal & River Trust is transforming this stretch of canal. Society volunteers have been busy renovating historic structures and protecting the biodiversity for many years.

“The Society will soon be operating its canoes and a small trip boat as part of an exciting visitor destination for active recreation and heritage tourism. This should give a welcome boost to the economy of the Swansea Valley.

“The Society is hoping that the innovative scheme funded by the Rural Development Programme will lead to further work to reopen this beautiful waterway.”

- **Rebecca Evans AM for Gower:**

“It is wonderful to see the Swansea canal regeneration project continuing to move forward.

“I wish the Swansea Canal Society and all the dedicated volunteers well for the next phase of this exciting project, and I look forward to visiting again shortly.”

- **Jeremy Miles AM for Neath**

“I am delighted to see that work has begun on regenerating the historic Swansea Canal. The Canal Society volunteers work tirelessly with other groups and agencies to protect and enhance the Swansea Canal which runs through my constituency of Neath. They have worked alongside the Canal & River Trust in successfully applying for funds from the Rural Development Programme and the Welsh Government Landfills Disposal Tax Community Scheme to enable the dredging of the canal. This will help improve the water quality, existing habitats and improve the water for pleasure boating through the hiring of canoes and fully accessible boats. Without their time and effort, this part of our local and national heritage would be lost and forgotten forever. “

The Swansea Canal was opened in 1796, and the whole length of 16 and a half miles was completed by 1798. Today only five miles of the canal is still in water, from Clydach to Pontardawe and from Pontardawe to Ynysmeudwy. For the third year running, the Swansea Canal has been awarded a Green Flag in the Keep Britain Tidy Award Scheme, and it offers a green walking and cycling route, nestled at the bottom of the steep-sided Swansea Valley.

For more information:

- Glandŵr Cymru www.canalrivertrust.org.uk
- Swansea Canal Society www.swanseaconsociety.com
- The Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 in Neath Port Talbot <http://regenerate.npt.gov.uk/>
- The Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 in Swansea www.swansea.gov.uk/rdp

Notes to editors

For more media information contact Gill Harrison Canal & River Trust
gill.harrison@canalrivertrust.org.uk 07711 546404

The Canal & River Trust cares for and brings to life 2,000 miles of canals and rivers across Wales and England. We believe waterways have the power to make a difference to people's lives and that spending time by water can make us all healthier and happier. By bringing communities together to make a difference to their local waterway, we are creating places and spaces that can be used and enjoyed by everyone, every day.

www.canalrivertrust.org.uk