



Supported by

The National Lottery[®]
through the Heritage Lottery Fund



4th August 2011

Heritage Lottery Fund gives a new lease of life to Leeds & Liverpool Canal Heritage Short Boat *Kennet*

The Leeds & Liverpool Canal Society's ***Kennet Project*** has been successful in applying for a Heritage Lottery Grant of £49.9K. The award will enable the ***Heritage Short Boat Kennet*** to be completely refurbished and create an Interactive Museum which will travel the length of the Leeds & Liverpool Canal. Just as if taking a cargo, she will carry displays and information on the canal's heritage, and bring learning opportunities to local communities.

Kennet was sold by British Waterways to the Leeds & Liverpool Canal Society at the beginning of 2011, the Society having cared for her since 2008. She had been converted to an exhibition boat by British Waterways in 1985, but had been underused following cutbacks prior to 2008. In 2011, over the twelve days ***Kennet*** was open to the public, there were around 4,000 visitors - a good indication of the interest in the canal and its heritage.

The ***Kennet Project*** will see the boat completely refurbished, with improvements to access and the display area in the hold. Education material will be created using the unique history, heritage and traditions of the Leeds & Liverpool Canal - these include the traditional paintwork of the boats, and the design of the canal's architecture. ***Kennet*** will introduce the public to the type of boat once built for the canal. Today, narrow pleasure boats are what they usually see, so a traditional fourteen-foot-wide boat seems very unusual to many. ***Kennet*** is the only traditional boat on the canal which is regularly open to the public. An education strategy is being developed with British Waterways, for which HLF funding is most important. Based around working life on the Leeds & Liverpool Canal, it will bring, in words and drama, the canal's story to schools, organisations and people along the Leeds & Liverpool Canal corridor. Traditional canal craft courses are also planned.

Conservation work has begun with ***Kennet*** in dry dock for three weeks in August, 2011. A full hull survey is being made, and the appropriate repair work carried out, followed by a protective coating being applied to both the inside and outside of the hull. This will be followed over the winter by the addition of ballast, the relaying of the hold floor, the replacement of superstructure and sheets, the repainting of the deck and cabins, and the addition of new services and displays. A "re-launch" is anticipated in mid-2012 – the 65th anniversary of ***Kennet's*** original launch.

Commenting on the award:-

Harold Bond, ***Kennet Project*** Co-ordinator said:- *"We are delighted that the award from the Heritage Lottery Fund will enable the Leeds & Liverpool Canal Society to save ***Kennet*** for future generations, and bring the opportunity for the communities along the Leeds & Liverpool Canal to find out more about its history and heritage, as well as providing suitable educational material for visits by local schools and organisations."*

Sara Hilton, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund North West, said: *"We are delighted that HLF funding will enable this historic vessel to be conserved. Wider than that, the project will offer fantastic educational opportunities for all ages by bringing the story of the canal's heritage to a wider audience."*

For further information about the Project & Volunteer Opportunities please contact -

Harold Bond, ***Kennet Project*** Co-ordinator, Leeds & Liverpool Canal Society on 01535 630597. Email friendsofkennet@btinternet.com. Web www.llcs.org.uk.

Background History

Kennet was built in 1947 at Yarwoods, in Northwich, one of three steel boats built that year for Canal Transport Ltd, the general cargo carriers on the L&LC. Seventeen steel boats had already been built between 1933 and 1937, and a further six would be between 1950 and 1953. Over the same period, similar numbers of wooden boats were also built, keeping boat yards along the canal in business. ***Kennet's*** first captain was Tommy Baybutt, from Burscough, with Richard Gregson as boatman. The main cargoes they would have carried were wool to Keighley and Shipley, grain for Blackburn, sugar from Tate & Lyles in Liverpool, and textile machinery for export. The general cargo trade on the canal ended in 1963, and ***Kennet*** passed to the canal's maintenance fleet before being transferred to British Waterways. During the 1985 conversion into an exhibition boat the traditional boatmans cabin was renewed in the front cabin.

The Leeds & Liverpool Canal Society has already completed one project financed by the Heritage Lottery Fund. Working with Galloways, Lancashire's blind and partially-sighted charity and British Waterways, they produced interpretation boards for the locks at Johnsons Hillock, near Chorley. The project won the prestigious Education and Learning Waterways Renaissance Award in 2008.

Notes to Editors

The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) enables communities to celebrate, look after and learn more about our diverse heritage. From our great museums and historic buildings to local parks and beauty spots or recording and celebrating traditions, customs and history, HLF grants open up our nation's heritage for everyone to enjoy. Since 1994 it has supported more than 26,000 projects, allocating over £4 billion across the UK.

www.hlf.org.uk