

Canoeing on the Cromford Canal Site of Special Scientific Interest

Background

The Cromford Canal, built in the 1790's, was used as a busy commercial waterway until the collapse of the Butterley Tunnel in 1889, which closed the tunnel for four years. A second collapse in the 1900's, together with the development of the rail network, lead to the slow decline of the canal. Most of the canal was abandoned in 1944.

The section between Ambergate and Cromford Wharf has now become extremely important for wildlife; especially Water voles, Grass snakes and Dabchicks. The entire section is a **Site of Special Scientific Interest**. This means that the area has important controls in place to ensure that this special area is conserved for future generations of wildlife and people to enjoy. Natural England, the statutory body for wildlife conservation in England, has established and monitors legally binding control measures to ensure that the site is conserved appropriately.

Over the same time scale, local schools, scouts and guides together with outdoor activity centres and individuals developed a strong tradition of canoeing on this safe and beautiful waterway.

Derbyshire County Council is the land owner of the site and as such is required to ensure that the management and use of the site falls within required parameters.

The Council believes it is important that people continue to be able to use the canal for canoeing and to enjoy its special character.

This guidance is intended to help ensure that people are able to continue to use the canal for canoeing and at the same time do not compromise wildlife and the needs of the Site of Special Scientific Interest.

Terms of use

- All canoeists using Cromford canal must be pre-registered and booked onto the Middleton Top booking system to ensure that the number of canoes on the water does not breach limits in any one day. Tel 01629 533298
- Group leaders and individuals are responsible for their group or their own health and safety while using the canal and must follow British Canoeing (BC) safety protocols.
<http://www.britishcanoeing.org.uk>
- Groups using the canal need to lodge an appropriate risk assessment for the group. Please contact Middleton Top on 01629 533298
- All canoeists should be supervised at all times, or have the appropriate BC qualifications, and have the appropriate safety equipment and buoyancy aids
- Public liability insurance is a requirement for all canoeists, whether as an individual or in a group. Membership of BC provides this facility with insurance up to £5m
- Only rigid canoes such as open Canadian type canoes and kayaks are allowed: – including suitable rigid bodied inflatable craft and Stand up Paddle Boards SUP's. If canoeists wish to use an inflatable craft it must be of rigid construction of the type manufactured by, for example, Sevylor or BIC – rubber dinghies, lilos or any other beach/leisure inflatable will not be accepted. other craft such as dinghies, motorised boats, inflatables, rafts and toy boats are strictly prohibited
- Only BC members will be eligible for free access to the canal. If a group consists of a mixture of BC members and non-members, only the BC members will have their fees paid by BC. If a member and non-member share a boat (e.g. an open canoe or tandem kayak) the fee for the boat will be paid by BC.

- BC members must carry their membership cards at all times whilst using the canal, in case they are asked to prove their status by a member of DCC Countryside Service staff and to prove the existence of BC third party liability insurance cover. This condition applies whether the BC member is on their own in a boat, is in a boat with other BC members, or is in a boat with non BC members
- All canoes and equipment that has been used in other waters must be washed and drained prior to use in the canal in order to prevent introduction of alien species
- No more than 10 boats will be allowed at any one time and no more than two out of three sessions a day (morning / afternoon / evening) will be used in any one day. If you want to come on the canal at short notice, perhaps because of weather conditions on your first choice of water, you must firstly check availability on 01629 533298
- The launch fee is payable to Derbyshire County Council at Middleton Top visitor centre for each session. There are 3 sessions per day; morning, afternoon and evening. Please leave the water 1 hour before sunset to allow wildlife to settle before dark
- Usual times are :
 - Morning: 9.00 to 13.00
 - Afternoon 13.00 to 17.00
 - Evening: 17.00 to Dusk
 Flexibility can be applied but needs to be agreed in advance so that SSSI conditions are not breached
- Launch fee for 2022 season is £4.00 per session per boat, £2.50 for individuals. Once a booking is made the launch fee will be charged unless at least 3 days' notice of cancellation is given
- Canoeing is only permitted between Cromford Wharf and High Peak Junction (Lea Wood Pump). The authority reserves the right to restrict this area at any time for whatever purpose it requires. This can include maintenance or wildlife protection
- Access to the water for launching is from Cromford Wharf only and must be from the section of canal with a stone edge. Landing at any other point is not permitted except in the case of accidents and emergencies. Please note the offside bank of the canal is private until you reach High Peak Junction visitors centre
- When the Leawood Pump is operating all canoeists should avoid its outfall adjacent to the white fence
- Deliberate immersion in the water is not permitted and any confidence building games must be kept under control and undertaken in the turning area at Cromford Wharf. This is to minimise potential disturbance to wildlife
- The canal is ecologically very sensitive and a legally protected Site of Special Scientific Interest. The vegetation in the channel and on the bank side is an important habitat for nesting wildfowl and invertebrates. Particular care should be taken from the beginning of March to the end of the nesting season (Normally late August). The site also has a large water vole population which are protected by law from disturbance. All canal users are asked to take great care not to disturb this habitat and the wildlife using it. The submerged vegetation is also of importance and should be treated with care
- The canal is used by a wide variety of different users who want to enjoy the countryside. Please respect other users at all times

- The Narrow boat “Birdswood” is operated by the Friends of the Cromford Canal to carry passengers from Cromford Wharf to High Peak Junction. The boat is heavy and deep in the water and can only move slowly in the middle of the channel
- Every “Birdswood” cruise is controlled by a person who has qualified as a Boat Master under the scheme operated by the Maritime & Coastguard Agency. One Master must be on the boat, probably steering, at all times the boat is in operation. If the master is concerned that canoeists are not aware of his impending approach he/she will give one short blast on the horn
- Stopping of “Birdswood” would cause it to loose steerage. Canoeists must be prepared to give way and stop alongside the offside bank (opposite to the towpath as sometimes a horse will be towing the boat) whilst taking care not to damage the bank side vegetation or disturb nesting birds
- Failure to abide by these conditions may result in the right to use the canal being withdrawn.