

26TH APRIL | NATIONAL WATERWAYS MUSEUM | ELLESMERE PORT

# RESTORATION CONFERENCE 2025

Working in  
partnership:



## Waterway Restoration Conference 2025 Sustaining Our Future

Saturday 26th April

National Waterways Museum in Ellesmere Port, Cheshire, CH65 4FW

### Welcome

On behalf of Canal & River Trust and the Inland Waterways Association, we would like to welcome you to the 2025 Waterway Restoration Conference.

This year's Conference has been titled 'sustaining our future' and will focus on delivering sustainable restorations and the challenges of doing so, from different viewpoints. Keynote speakers include Canal & River Trust, Inland Waterways Association, Waterway Recovery Group, Lichfield and Hatherton Canals Restoration Trust, and Severn Trent Water.

There will be plenty of time for networking over coffee and lunch breaks, and delegates will have the chance to watch a video during lunch supported by IWA and Chester Heritage Festival about Chester's waterways - their history, current challenges and visions for the future. After lunch, a guided tour organised by The National Waterways Museum, or a self-led visit will offer the chance to explore the Museum itself.

We will also be running a choice of breakout sessions including:

- A:** Water Transfer; continuing the conversation. John Pomfret, Northampton Branch IWA member
- B:** Changing Conversations Around Heritage - Led by Hugh Pearman, Chair of the Heritage Advisory Panel at The Inland Waterways Association; Charlie Norman, Director of Campaigns and Public Affairs at The Inland Waterways Association; Mike Palmer, Waterway Recovery Group Chair
- C:** Q&A Workshop with Canal & River Trust, chaired by George Rogers, Development Manager at Chesterfield Canal Trust

## Guided tour of the Museum

The perfect way to take in our 200 year old site: your Guide will lead you on a captivating journey through two centuries of history, taking in all the main sites along the way, including the docks, locks, workers cottages, and the enormous Island Warehouse, our main museum gallery.

**Please let us know if you wish to join the guided tour. There is also the option for a self-led walk around the museum.**

## Photography / Filming

Please be advised that photographs and footage will be taken throughout the event and are likely to be shared online to promote this and future events and may also be used in other areas such as on our website or in future newsletters. Please let us know if you have any questions about this or would prefer to opt out.

Paul Rogers from the Inland Waterways Association will be our compere for the day. Please see below for further information on the event and if you have any questions at all then please do not hesitate to get in touch.

We hope you enjoy the day!

Jodie and Verena

## Schedule of the day

09:30	<b>Coffee and Registration</b>
10:00	<b>Welcome</b> Compère Paul Rogers
10:05	<b>Introduction</b> Sean McGinley, Director of Yorkshire & North East at Canal & River Trust
10:20	<b>Session 1:</b> Grand Union Canal Water Transfer Project Led by Peter Walker, Head of Strategic Infrastructure Projects at Canal & River Trust; Sarah Jayne O’Kane, Stakeholder Engagement Lead at Severn Trent Water; with John Pomfret, Northampton Branch IWA member
11:05	<b>Session 2:</b> Restoration; Moving Forward Led by Mike Palmer, Waterway Recovery Group Chair; with Hugh Pearman, Chair of the Heritage Advisory Panel at The Inland Waterways Association
11:50	<b>Coffee break</b>
12:10	<b>Breakout Workshop Options</b> <b>A:</b> Water Transfer; Continuing the Conversation John Pomfret, Northampton Branch IWA member <b>B:</b> Changing Conversations Around Heritage Led by Hugh Pearman, Chair of the Heritage Advisory Panel at The Inland Waterways Association; Charlie Norman, Director of Campaigns and Public Affairs at The Inland Waterways Association; Mike Palmer, Waterway Recovery Group Chair <b>C:</b> Q&A Workshop with Canal & River Trust Chaired by George Rogers, Development Manager at Chesterfield Canal Trust
12:50	<b>Lunch</b> – Local branch video in main hall and chance to visit foyer stalls
13.50	<b>Session 3:</b> Working With Young Volunteers; Duke of Edinburgh Award focus Kate Simons, National Volunteer Manager at Canal & River Trust; Christine Howles, Communications and Marketing Trustee at Lichfield and Hatherton Canals Restoration Trust
14.35	<b>Close</b> Mike Wills, National Chair at The Inland Waterways Association
14:50	<b>Final Thoughts</b> Paul Rogers Compère
14:55	<b>Group Photo</b>
15.00	<b>Optional guided/self-guided tour of the museum</b>

## Speaker Bios



### **Sean McGinley**

Regional Director, Yorkshire & North East, Canal & River Trust

After several years working with engineering consultants and contractors in the UK, Sean volunteered for 4 years in Kenya and then Lesotho, where he developed his passion for volunteering seeing first-hand the benefits for society and the individual. On return to the UK, Sean joined British Waterways and has worked for our Charity and British Waterways before it since 2002. A Chartered Civil Engineer, he started work with British Waterways as a project engineer in the then North East Region based in Leeds, taking some of our major construction projects from concept through to site delivery. His first projects were the reconstruction of Manor Farm Bridge (No. 78) on the Chesterfield Canal and the extension of the lock approach moorings on the upstream side of Beal Lock on the River Aire. He then relocated to the East Midlands and joined the East Midlands Business Unit and after several years working on a range of engineering projects he entered general management in 2009 as the Waterway Manager for the East Midlands Waterway. He played an active part in growing volunteering within British Waterways, launching Volunteer Lock Keeping on the River Trent in 2010 and more recently at the Trust helping to expand volunteering further with the creation of Volunteer Reservoir Inspectors. In 2018 he was appointed Regional Director for Yorkshire & North East. He is married with two grown up children and enjoys cycling, gardening, playing poker and drinking beer.



### **Peter Walker**

Peter is the Canal & River Trust's Head of Strategic Infrastructure Projects, responsible for the Trust's interactions with the Grand Union Canal Water Transfer project and HS2. He is also Chair of the Association of Inland Navigation Authorities and a Trustee of the Waterways Pension Fund. He is a Chartered Civil Engineer, Fellow of the Institution of Civil Engineers and is married with two grown up sons.

Peter has 35 years experience in the engineering and construction sector, having joined British Waterways in 2003, following 14 years working for large civil engineering contractors. With British Waterways and the Trust Peter has undertaken a number of asset management and project management roles before moving into regional and then national management roles in recent years.

Outside work he enjoys walking and gardening and is a keen Parkrunner having completed over 120 to date, as well as being a long suffering Newcastle United supporter.

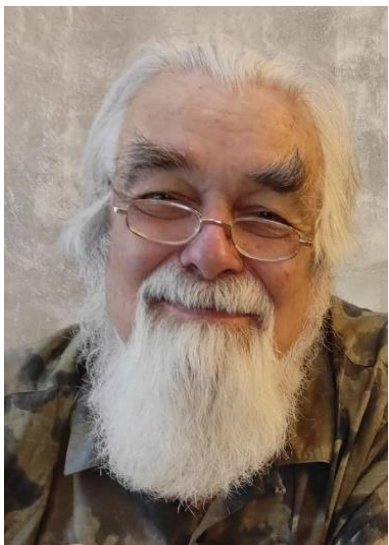


**Sarah-Jayne O'Kane**

Sarah-Jayne is the Stakeholder Engagement Lead for Severn Trent, Hafren Dyfrdwy, and Water Resources West, responsible for engaging with everyone from Government and Regulators to customers and the general public. She covers all topics, from water resources, including all of the Strategic Resource Options, to flooding and social value.

Sarah-Jayne has over 25 years experience in the water industry, starting out as a civil engineer, and has worked in almost all areas of the industry including major construction projects, day to day operations and even building computer systems from scratch. She has spent many years in communications and PR and managed Severn Trent's press office for a number of years.

Outside work Sarah-Jayne is the Chair of Governors at a special need school in Birmingham and loves to fit in a dance class here and there and quality time with her husband and two teenagers.



**John Pomfret**

John has been a member of IWA for over 50 years with involvement in branch affairs starting with the former North East Branch and continuing today as a Committee member of Northampton Branch. A former Trustee, he is also a member of Navigation Committee and the Inland Waterways Freight Group, as well as supporting the Restoration Hub and serving as a board member of Essex Waterways Ltd. As a boat owner over many years, he has cruised most of the connected waterway system in the UK and currently lives aboard a boat at Braunston. In his professional life, John is a water scientist, specialising in water quality and ecology of both fresh and marine waters. Formerly working for a water authority and now employed by a large consultancy, he has undertaken environmental investigations for several large water transfer projects.





### **Hugh Pearman**

Chair of the Heritage Advisory Panel at The Inland Waterways Association

Hugh spent over three decades at the forefront of architectural journalism. From 1986 to 2016, he served as the architecture and design critic for *The Sunday Times*, and later as editor of the RIBA Journal from 2006 to 2020. His latest book, *About Architecture*, explores engineering and architectural achievements including those

related to canal heritage. His extensive contributions to media and heritage have included roles on Arts Council England's architecture advisory group, co-founding the RIBA Stirling Prize in 1996, and chairing the 'Art for Architecture' initiative at the Royal Society of Arts from 2000 – 2004. He was made an Honorary Fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects in 2001 and his contributions to architecture and the arts were recognised with an MBE in 2019. He is the current Chairman of a campaigning architectural heritage charity, The Twentieth Century Society. Hugh is a longstanding IWA member and Chair of its [Heritage Advisory Panel](#).



### **Mike Palmer**

Chair of the Waterway Recovery Group.

Mike Palmer MBE has been a WRG volunteer for nearly 50 years and WRG Chairman since 1996 and is one of the leading figures in voluntary restoration work on the UK's inland waterways. Through dedication and commitment, he has championed best practise in volunteer canal restoration regarding health and safety, restoration skills and techniques, and plant operation. He has been an elected Trustee of the

Inland Waterways Association, a speaker at the World Canals Conference several times and was instrumental in the establishment of the IWA's Restoration Hub in 2017 and the publication of the IWA's *Waterways for Today* report in 2022.



### **Kate Simons**

Kate Simons is National Volunteer Manager at Canal & River Trust, where she co-leads the strategic development of volunteering across the organisation. The Trust has come a long way since becoming a charity in 2012, and it takes many hands and hearts to keep our 250-year-old bridges, locks, reservoirs and towpaths in working condition, and many more to help nature, wildlife and people thrive. With the help of our growing community of supporters and volunteers, the Trust is protecting and revitalising our nation's canals now, and for future generations. Kate's work focuses on enabling teams to create a diverse programme of inclusive, impactful volunteering opportunities that supports this mission. A

volunteer herself, Kate is passionate about empowering people through volunteer participation and partnerships that help communities and the natural environment to thrive.



### **Christine Howles**

Christine Howles is one of the longest-serving trustees with Lichfield and Hatherton Canals Restoration Trust (LHCRT), having served as the Communications and Marketing trustee since 2016. In this role, she oversees the trust's communications and marketing strategy and ensures its effective implementation. Christine manages the social media accounts, the website, press relations, event coordination, and the brand. She also compiles and designs the members' magazine. Beyond her volunteer work, she

works in a full-time role as a communications lead in the civil service.



### **Charlie Norman**

Charlie was appointed as IWA's Director of Campaigns and Public Affairs in September 2024, having previously worked in political and environmental communications at Friends of the Earth, CPRE, The European Parliament and on international human rights.

Charlie has a particular interest in chalk streams, has owned boats since 2006 and currently keeps a small boat on The Stort.



### **George Rogers**

George is the Development Manager for the Chesterfield Canal Trust.

George is trained as a civil and structural design engineer. He is employed by the Chesterfield Canal Trust to manage all aspects of restoration – project development, funding and delivery alongside all necessary legal agreements, stakeholder engagement and strategic positioning - and is currently overseeing the delivery of a £6m project funded by the Staveley Town Deal.

George has a long history with canals and particularly canal restoration. He grew up living next to the Cromford Canal and now lives close to the Derby & Sandiacre. He has volunteered extensively with Waterway Recovery Group – leading, cooking or volunteering on over 60 week-long camps and festivals – and is currently a WRG director. He is part of IWA's High Level Panel for Restoration and has previously been a Trustee of the Friends of the Cromford Canal, establishing and chairing their Strategic Restoration Committee alongside spells as the work party organiser and webmaster.

Just occasionally, George gets to go boating, mainly by cherry picking the best opportunities to meet up with his parents as they continuously cruise the network. Even more rarely, he tackles his ever-growing DIY list or escapes to Scotland.



### **Mike Wills**

Mike Wills became National Chair of IWA in February 2024 but has been fascinated by the inland waterways since his teens. Early experiences included digging out a disused lock and helping to raise a sunken wooden narrowboat which was subsequently converted into a houseboat. He has had dozens of narrowboat holidays, is a regular towpath walker and in 2019 purchased part of a worsted mill and wharf on the Leeds & Liverpool Canal which he has restored to create a four-storey house. He is a Chartered Accountant with a wide range of experience including the senior civil service, private practice and non-executive directorship and consultancy. His commercial experience and passion for the waterways has encouraged him to try to raise their public profile, encourage

restoration, and seek to influence those who can support the wonderful national asset which is our inland waterways.



## Venue

National Waterways Museum, Ellesmere Port, Cheshire, CH65 4FW

Website: [National Waterways Museum | Ellesmere Port](#)

What3Words Address: [///swept.herbs.ports](https://www.what3words.com/swept.herbs.ports)

## National Waterways Museum – How to find us

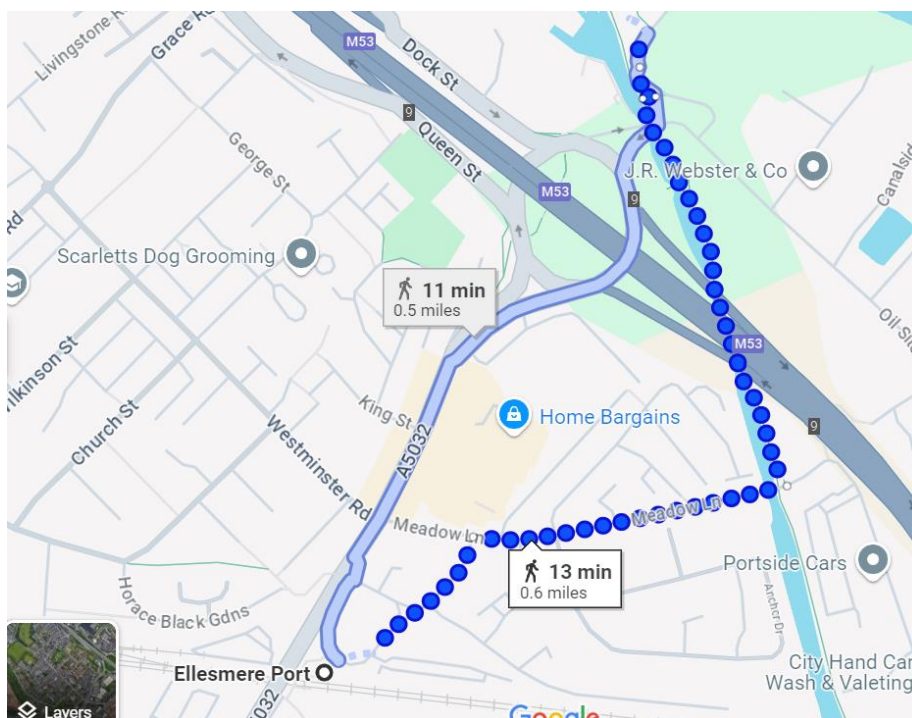
**By train** – The nearest train station is Ellesmere Port. It's on the Liverpool to Ellesmere Port line via Birkenhead and Hooton and connects to Chester. The station is fully accessible, if any assistance is needed please book in advance at: <https://www.nationalrail.co.uk/help-and-assistance/passenger-assist/>.

The station is approx half a mile away – a 15-minute walk. Many walking options are available but the one we recommend is to walk along the canal as detailed on the map below (The line shown as circles)

### Walking bus

As it's easy to get lost and to make things safer one of our volunteers will be waiting at Ellesmere Port Station to walk you to the venue by the canal if you arrive by train. The party will be leaving at 9.20am therefore we would kindly ask you to arrive at Ellesmere Port Station by 9.10am. The volunteer will be wearing Canal and River Trust branded uniform.

**Please let us know if you wish to join the Walking Bus**



**By bus** – Ellesmere Port bus station is 1.1 miles away – a 25 minute walk along pavements and passes through a subway under the M53. Local buses stop at nearer points – for more information, call Traveline: 0871 200 2233.

**By bike** – The towpath alongside the Shropshire Union Canal runs right up to the museum. There is a bike rack facility available outside the museum.

**By boat** – Follow the Shropshire Union Canal all the way to the museum. We have some visitor moorings available in the docks.

**By road** – The museum's postcode is CH65 4FW. Follow the local brown signs for Boat Museum. Once you have come off the M53 roundabout onto Oil Sites Road, look for the National Waterways Museum sign on the left-hand side and turn left into South Pier Road. The entrance to the car park is on the right-hand side opposite the museum entrance

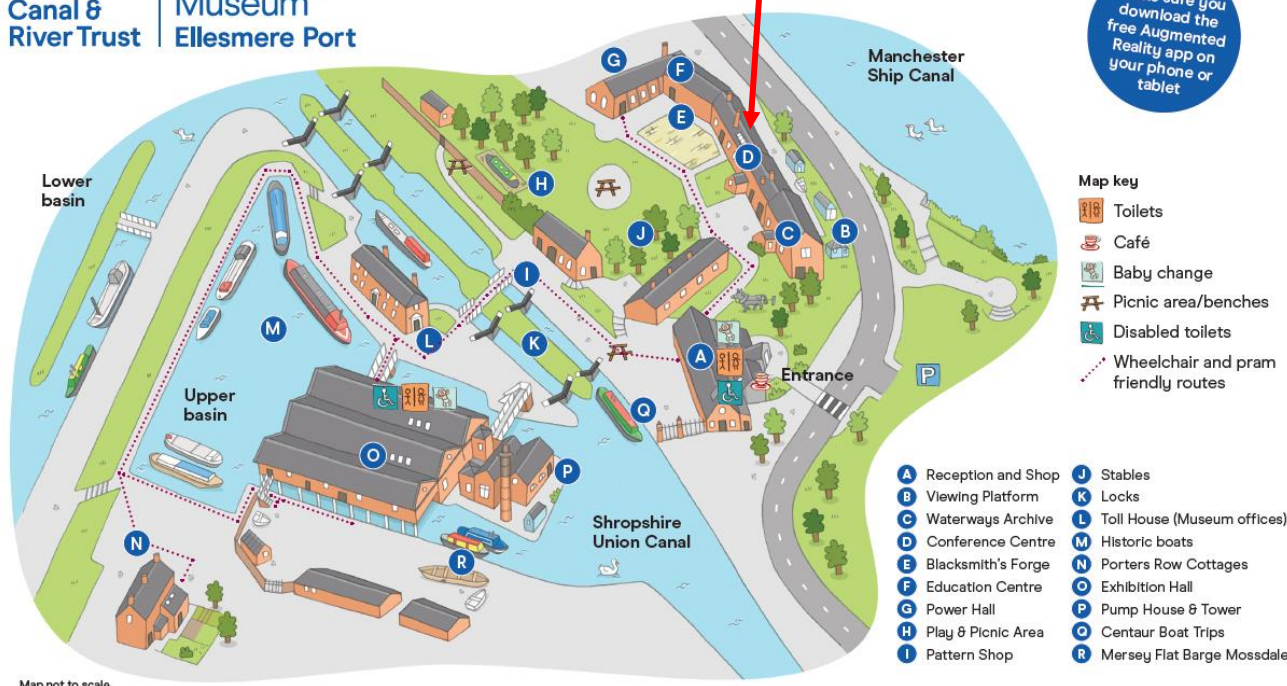
**Parking** - There is no requirement to book parking, which is provided free of charge by the National Waterways Museum. If you have accessibility requirements, please make sure you display a blue badge as needed.

**Accessibility** - Given the nature of the site, there are uneven heritage features such as cobbled floors; please make sure you wear suitable footwear. Unfortunately, the step free access route into the conference centre has broken and is unable to be replaced before the conference. If you require any reasonable adjustments or have any accessibility requirements then please be sure to let us know in advance.



We will be in the conference centre which is marked D on the map

Make sure you download the free Augmented Reality app on your phone or tablet



Map not to scale

## Nearby Facilities

### Hotels

**Holiday Inn, Ellesmere Port** - Lower Mersey St, CH65 2AL (opposite the Museum)

£129 per room per night based on two adults sharing a double room; flexible meaning the room can be cancelled 24hrs before. Includes full English breakfast and VAT.

Twin bedrooms are £149 per night on a flexible rate based on two adults sharing and inclusive of full English breakfast and VAT.

If you would like to book please call during office hours Monday – Friday and ask for Claire or Zoey and quote the Boat Museum.

T: 0151 348 5505 or 0151 348 5506

Other rates and options available on the website [Ellesmere Port Hotel & Wedding Venue | Holiday Inn Ellesmere Port](#)

### Travelodge Cheshire Oaks

Cheshire Oaks Outlet Village, 12 Coliseum Way, Ellesmere Port CH65 9HD

7 minute drive away

Prices from £68.99

<https://www.travelodge.co.uk/hotels/548/Cheshire-Oaks-hotel>

### Premier Inn Wirral (Childer Thornton) hotel

New Chester Road CH66 1QW

8 minute drive away

Prices from £71

<https://www.premierinn.com/gb/en/hotels/england/merseyside/wirral/wirral-childer-thornton.html>

### Woodcote Hotel

3 Hooton Road CH66 1QU

Prices from £64

[The Woodcote | Hotel, Restaurant & Events Venue](#)

### Travelodge Wirral Eastham

8 minute drive away

Prices from £84.99

1408 New Chester Rd, Birkenhead, Wirral CH62 9QA

[Travelodge | Wirral Eastham hotel - Wirral Eastham hotels](#)

Airbnb is also an alternative worth considering:

[Airbnb | Holiday rentals, cabins, beach houses & more](#)

### Pubs and Restaurants

Please note lunch will be provided on the day of the conference

Port & Anchor Kitchen and Bar

1 S Pier Rd, Ellesmere Port CH65 4FL

Ego at Stanney Oaks  
Stanney Ln, Little Stanney, Ellesmere Port, Cheshire CH2 4HT

Cheshire Oaks Shopping outlet has many restaurants. For more information please visit:  
<https://www.mcarthurglen.com/en/outlets/uk/designer-outlet-cheshire-oaks/food-drink/>

Corazon De Mexico - Takeaway  
8 Whitby Rd, Ellesmere Port CH65 8AD

### **Taxi**

Tony the Taxi  
01515288810  
33 Sutton Way, Whitby, Ellesmere Port CH65 7DJ

Ellesmere Port Transfers LTD  
0151 355 7878  
10 Croughton Ct, Ellesmere Port CH66 1RP

Uber is also an option.

### **Pharmacies**

Well Pharmacy  
10 Church Parade, Ellesmere Port CH65 2ER

## Useful Resources

- **Youth toolkit:**  
[https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/media/document/CeBPe9HaAsCjEuw3acXjyw/q\\_ylBMkIHUkzkQwRjLYQbLjVnC6vajB36bj5Oh8c0\\_8/aHR0cHM6Ly9jcnRwcm9kY21zdWtzMDEuYm xvYi5jb3JlLndpbmRvd3MubmV0L2RvY3VtZW50Lw/0189d4be-1381-73a8-a342-1b6d5802788d.pdf](https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/media/document/CeBPe9HaAsCjEuw3acXjyw/q_ylBMkIHUkzkQwRjLYQbLjVnC6vajB36bj5Oh8c0_8/aHR0cHM6Ly9jcnRwcm9kY21zdWtzMDEuYm xvYi5jb3JlLndpbmRvd3MubmV0L2RvY3VtZW50Lw/0189d4be-1381-73a8-a342-1b6d5802788d.pdf)
- **Waterways for Today Report**  
[Waterways-for-Today-REVISED-November-2022-FOR-WEB.pdf](#)
- **IWA Restoration Hub**, a free to access area of IWA's website where you will find: Guidance and toolkits relating to canal restoration; How to apply for Training Grants; Latest news about training & events; Access to 'Restoration Hub TV'; Information on WRG's Driver Authorisation Scheme & relating forms.  
[Overview - Restoration Hub - The Inland Waterways Association](#)  
Sign up to the Restoration Hub Newsletter to receive guidance, training, resources and updates by providing full name, email address and restoration group (if any) to: [restoration@waterways.org.uk](mailto:restoration@waterways.org.uk)

- **Future Training and Workshops:**  
<https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/specialist-teams/restoration/restoration-training-and-workshops>
- **IWA Practical Restoration Handbook**  
[Practical Restoration Handbook - Restoration Hub - The Inland Waterways Association](#)
- **Canal & River Trust Restoration Facebook Group:**  
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/184725589073388>
- **IWA Toolbox talks** on 70 different subjects.  
[https://waterways.org.uk/restoration\\_hub/advice-support/practical-toolkit-introduction/toolbox-talks~](https://waterways.org.uk/restoration_hub/advice-support/practical-toolkit-introduction/toolbox-talks~)
- **Chester's Waterways, Wharf and Weir**  
[Chester's Waterways, Wharf and Weir](#)  
John Herson of the Inland Waterways Association and Chester Civic Trust, takes us on a fascinating walk around Chester's historic waterways. John discusses the waterways from their inception - and why Chester became an important Roman port - through the industrial ages until the present day, identifying current challenges to navigation and a possible exciting future