

# **BRIDGEWATER CANAL**

## **User Guide**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The Bridgewater Canal is owned and operated by The Bridgewater Canal Company Ltd (a member of the Peel Land and Property Group).

The Bridgewater Canal was constructed in 1761 and is 39 miles in length (65 kilometres). The canal follows the ground contour of 83 feet above ordnance datum (25.260 metres AOD).

The Bridgewater Canal is part of the Cheshire ring of canals and is a strategic link for cruising between the Southern and Northern canal networks in the Northwest of England.

The following canals link with the Bridgewater Canal.

The Trent and Mersey Canal at Preston Brook near Runcorn.

The Leeds Liverpool Canal at Leigh.

The Rochdale Canal at Castlefield in Manchester.

The Manchester Ship Canal at Pomona Lock Manchester.

The Bridgewater Canal is a shared leisure facility. All user's are requested to show due consideration to other user's activities and the canal's neighbours, environment and wildlife.

All craft using the canal must be licensed and insured to use the Bridgewater Canal at all times.

Fishing on the Bridgewater Canal is leased to a number of Angling Clubs contact details available at [www.bridgewatercanal.co.uk](http://www.bridgewatercanal.co.uk)

The canal towpath is widely used by pedestrians for recreation.

Cycling is not permitted on the towpath except where the towpath has been improved as part of the Bridgewater Way scheme. Sections of towpath available to cyclists are signed. See our website [www.bridgewatercanal.co.uk](http://www.bridgewatercanal.co.uk) for further details.

## **GENERAL SAFETY INFORMATION**

### **1. DEPTH OF WATER**

The water in the Bridgewater Canal water is up to 2 metres deep. Children should be supervised at all times.

### **2. WATER BORNE DISEASES**

Canals, canal banks and canal structures may be contaminated with leptospirosis, tetanus and polio. Recommended precautions against water borne diseases are as follows immunisation against tetanus and polio are recommended. Users of the canal and adjacent land should pay due respect to cleanliness, cuts and abrasions should be covered by a sterile dressing. Always wash your hands before drinking or eating, avoid rubbing your nose or mouth with your hands. Anyone accidentally falling into the canal should seek medical attention as a precautionary measure. Advise your doctor that you may have come into contact with contaminated water. A small number of deaths from leptospirosis occur each year in the UK arising from contact with contaminated water.

### **3. SWIMMING**

Swimming in the Bridgewater Canal is not permitted and is an offence under the Bridgewater Canal Bye Laws 1961. To swim or wade in canals is dangerous and **may result in death.**

The dangers are

- i) poor quality, contaminated water
- ii) depth of water
- iii) coldness of water
- iv) underwater obstructions
- v) presence of silt
- vi) entangled in rubbish or weed
- vii) being struck by a passing boat or caught in its propeller.

### **4. ICE**

It is dangerous to walk on ice that has formed on open water as a result of low temperatures.

It is an offence under the Bridgewater Canal Byelaws to throw anything in to the canal or on to ice.

5. **POLLUTION**

In the event of a pollution incident please contact the Bridgewater Canal Company and the Environment Agency at the earliest opportunity giving full details of the incident, location and your contact details.

Bridgewater Canal Company 0161 629 8266 Office Hours  
Outside Office Hours 0161 877 3628 Emergency Only.

Environment Agency 0800 807060

6. **DOG FOULING**

Fouling of the towpath by dogs is antisocial and is not permitted. Dog owners should show due consideration at all times for other users of the facilities, the canal's neighbours, environment and wildlife by cleaning up after their pet. Where there are no facilities on the canal for the disposal of dog faeces, please ensure that you take it home and dispose of it responsibly.

Dogs should be kept on a short lead at all times.

7. **CYCLING**

Where improvements have been made to the towpath as part of the Bridgewater Way scheme cycling is permitted. In all other areas cycling is not permitted, see the Bridgewater Canal Website [www.bridgewatercanal.co.uk](http://www.bridgewatercanal.co.uk) for details of sections of towpath available for cycling.

8. **THE FOLLOWING USES ARE NOT PERMITTED ON EITHER THE BRIDGEWATER WAY OR THE BRIDGEWATER CANAL TOWPATH**

Motor vehicles  
Motorcycles / Scooters  
Horse riding

## **PEDESTRIAN USE OF THE TOWPATH**

- 1) Pedestrians should show due consideration at all times for other users of the facilities the canal's neighbours, environment and wildlife. All signs must be obeyed.
- 2) Footwear should be suitable for the terrain and weather conditions.
- 3) Stretches of the towpath may not be suitable for pram, pushchair or wheelchair use.
- 4) The towing path is unlit, due to the close proximity of deep water it is not recommended that the path is used in the hours of darkness and in poor light conditions.
- 5) Bank erosion is caused by water action washing against the walls of the canal. Sometimes holes can appear at the back of the coping stones these holes may be hidden by grass. Care must be taken when alighting from boats and when using the towpath.
- 6) Historic features such as mooring rings posts etc may obstruct the towpath. Mooring ropes and fishing tackle may also present a hazard for pedestrians.
- 7) Barriers have been erected across the towpath at various locations to prevent access by motorcycles, over time these will be removed to encourage additional use by legitimate users. It may be necessary to reinstate barriers to prevent motor cycle use or to reduce the speed of bicycles in some areas.
- 8) Please take your food/litter home and dispose of it properly. Carelessly discarding food will attract vermin.
- 9) If an Angler is baiting his/her line the pole or rod may be across the towpath. Please wait a moment or two for the pole or rod to be removed. Do not step or attempt to ride over the temporary obstruction.
- 10) Cycling is now permitted on certain sections of the Bridgewater Canal towpath. Upgraded sections of towpath are designated as Bridgewater Way and are clearly signed, further details are available on the Bridgewater Canal website [www.bridgewatercanal.co.uk](http://www.bridgewatercanal.co.uk)

- 11) When walking on sections open to cyclists do not wear headphones so that you can hear their approach. Listen for approaching cyclists, who should warn you of their approach with their bicycle bell (be aware they may not) The sounding of a bell is not an order for you to move out of the way, merely an audible sound to make you aware of their presence and that they are looking for a safe opportunity to pass.

Remember that cyclists need room to brake and stop. If a cyclist stops and waits thank them, they will be more likely to stop next time.

- 12) Dog walkers are asked to keep their dog on a short lead to ensure that the dog doesn't cause a hazard to other users
- 13) Pedestrians should move over to the side of the path furthest away from the water for approaching cyclists.

## **CYCLE USE OF THE TOWPATH**

Some sections of the Bridgewater Canal towpath have been upgraded as part of the Bridgewater Way project to permit cycle access. On all other sections of towpath cycling is not permitted. Further information is available on the Bridgewater Canal website [www.bridgewatercanal.co.uk](http://www.bridgewatercanal.co.uk)

### Principles for cycling on the Bridgewater Way

- 1) Considerate cycling is permitted on upgraded sections of the canal towpath providing the principles in this user guide are adhered to.
- 2) Cyclists should show due consideration at all times for other users of the facilities the canal's neighbours, environment and wildlife. All signs must be obeyed.
- 3) Pedestrians have priority over cyclists on the towpath. Give way to pedestrians and other users on the Bridgewater Way. Slow down and warn them of your approach, ideally using your bell. A polite hello and thank you means a lot.
- 4) Use a bell and ring it when approaching pedestrians, but remember that ringing your bell is not an order to pedestrians to get out of your way. Be aware that some pedestrians may have visual or hearing impairments and might not hear your bell. New cycles should now be supplied with a bell by law but if yours doesn't have one then your local cycle shop will be able to supply one very cheaply.
- 5) Pass people slowly and give them space. Slow down when approaching pedestrians and only pass when it's safe to do so.
- 6) Watch out for fishing tackle which may at times partially block your path, signal your approach and give the angler time to remove it before you pass.
- 7) Moored boats may present additional problems be aware of ropes securing the craft to the bank and mooring pins.
- 8) Dismount under low, narrow or blind bridges.
- 9) Cyclists must only proceed at a speed that will not put themselves or other users at risk when taking into consideration weather, poor light conditions and volume of other traffic using Bridgewater Way.

- 10) Never race or perform speed trials.
- 11) Be extra careful at bends and at access and egress points. Beware of pedestrians exiting from gardens or blind access points, be especially vigilant at schools, children can be unpredictable in their movement. Be prepared to stop, slow down and if necessary dismount.
- 12) Pedestrians should move to the side of the path furthest away from the water to allow cyclists to pass. Be aware they may not!
- 13) Be prepared to push your cycle when large groups of anglers or pedestrians are present.
- 14) Report any damage or other hazard to the Bridgewater Canal Company at the earliest opportunity.
- 15) We recommend you obtain third party liability insurance.
- 16) Avoid cycling where your tyres would damage the path or verges. (eg. when they are wet or soft).

#### Take care

- 17) Access paths can be steep and slippery. Join and leave the Bridgewater Way with care.
- 18) You must get off and push your cycle beneath low or blind bridges, and where the path is very narrow.
- 19) Due to the close proximity of deep water we strongly recommend that cyclists do not use Bridgewater Way after dark and in poor light conditions, since it is unlit. In the event that the above advice is ignored and a cyclist chooses to cycle along the route after dark proper cycle lights front and rear should be used.
- 20) We recommend the use of a cycle helmet.
- 21) Thorny hedge trimmings can cause a puncture, we recommend plastic reinforced tyres.



Only cycle on the BRIDGEWATER WAY route where it is signposted and follow the alternative routes signposted off Bridgewater Way where indicated.

Check for updates on the Bridgewater Canal website [www.bridgewatercanal.co.uk](http://www.bridgewatercanal.co.uk) for extensions to the Bridgewater Way project.

## **ANGLING**

- 1 To fish the Bridgewater Canal anglers must obtain the appropriate licence from the fishing club responsible for that section of canal see [www.bridgewatercanal.co.uk](http://www.bridgewatercanal.co.uk) for further details. In addition anglers 12 years of age and over must obtain a rod licence from the Environment Agency, rod licences are available from Post Offices.
- 2 Anglers should show due consideration at all times for other users of the facilities the canal's neighbours, environment and wildlife.
- 3 The towpath in most places is a public right of way. Take care your fishing equipment is not blocking the towpath.
- 4 Before setting up to fish always check for powerlines and never fish within 100 feet (30 metres) of same.
- 5 Look out for pedestrians and on certain sections cyclists when casting or drawing back. Do not leave your rod or pole across the towpath as it may unintentionally be damaged by other users. Anglers should move their poles or rods from across the canal in good time to allow boats to pass. Remember, boats will usually need to keep to the centre of the canal to avoid the risk of running aground.
- 6 In the interests of safety anglers are advised not to raise the pole or rod over a passing boat. It is much better to place it in line with the canal wall to allow boats to pass safely.
- 7 Do not fish within 30 feet (9 metres) of a bridge.
- 8 Take your litter and unused bait home and dispose of responsibly, discarding bait or food is both anti-social and unsightly, it will spoil other peoples fishing and attract vermin.
- 9 To avoid disturbance by boats turning, do not fish in winding holes (wide areas of water used by boats to turn around).
- 10 Anglers should not shout instructions to passing craft (craft will normally keep to the centre of the canal to avoid shallow areas).
- 11 Do not fish within 15 feet (5 metres) of a moored boat.
- 12 When fishing opposite a moored boat take care not to allow ground bait to come into contact with the boat.

- 13 Be aware that cycling is now possible on certain sections of the Bridgewater Canal towpath, for further information refer to local signage and the Bridgewater Canal website [www.bridgewatercanal.co.uk](http://www.bridgewatercanal.co.uk)

## **PLEASURE CRAFT CRUISING**

1. All craft using or trading on the Bridgewater Canal must be properly licensed.
2. Canal and River Trust licensed craft are permitted to use the Bridgewater Canal under a reciprocal arrangement for periods not exceeding seven days free of charge subject to our conditions of licensing. Craft wishing to extend their stay must obtain a Bridgewater Canal licence see our website [www.bridgewatercanal.co.uk](http://www.bridgewatercanal.co.uk) for further details.
3. All boat owners should show due consideration at all times for other users of the facilities the canal's neighbours, environment and wildlife. All signs must be obeyed.
4. **SPEED**  
The speed limit on the canal is a maximum of 4 miles per hour (6.4 kilometres per hour). Every vessel shall at all times proceed at a safe speed so that proper and effective action can be taken to avoid collision and / or stop within a distance appropriated to the prevailing circumstances and conditions. Travel at a steady speed without creating a wash. Slow down when passing moored boats, anglers and small unpowered craft.
5. **WHEN UNDERWAY**  
Where possible keep to the centre of the canal. The person in charge of the craft shall at all times maintain a proper look-out.
6. **OVERTAKING**  
Overtake other boats on the port side (left) at normal speed. The boat being overtaken has right of way. Make sure your way is clear before commencing your manoeuvre. An overtaking manoeuvre must not be made where your visibility is restricted i.e. on a bend or approaching a bridge, or where your wash will disturb anglers or moored craft.
7. **BEING OVERTAKEN**  
Slow down, travel at a speed sufficient to maintain steerage. Where possible move over to starboard (right).
8. **PASSING**  
When passing oncoming craft keep to starboard (right). Both craft should slow down especially where the channel is narrow.
9. **TURNING**  
Try to avoid turning in the vicinity of any anglers.

10. **MEANS OF AUDIBLE WARNING**

When an audible notice of approach is necessary a craft shall give adequate warning by sounding a horn or other suitable device. When approaching narrow bridges the nearer craft has right of way. If you are unsure give way to the approaching craft. A towing craft has right of way.

11. **NAVIGATION LIGHTS**

Navigation at night is not recommended. Every vessel when underway between sunset and sunrise or in conditions of restricted visibility must have full navigation lights or as a minimum carry a suitable white light visible fore and aft. A tunnel light is not a navigation light.

## **PLEASURE CRAFT MOORING**

### **DO NOT MOOR**

- 1) On a bend.
- 2) Within 25 yards (23 metres) of a bridge.
- 3) On an aqueduct.
- 4) Try to avoid mooring within 10 yards (9 metres) of an angler.
- 5) On the offside of the canal except at an approved mooring.  
Whilst in transit do not moor on the offside of the canal except on an appropriately signed official temporary mooring site.
- 6) On a water point/sanitary station except when using the facility.
- 7) Opposite a winding hole (used by boats to turn around).
- 8) Where there is an official company mooring prohibition notice.

### **WHEN MOORING**

- 9) Tie boat up (front and back).
- 10) Use mooring rings/bollards if available.
- 11) Beware of possible erosions which may be hidden by grass
- 12) Before using mooring pins check for markers in the local vicinity indicating possible dangers e.g. electricity cables, gas, and water mains.
- 13) Ropes must not cross the towpath as this creates a hazard for other users.
- 14) Make sure that the mooring pins are marked with something light or bright to indicate to other towpath users a potential hazard e.g. an upturned plastic bottle, cones or white cloth attached to the top of the pin.
- 15) Whilst in transit, unless signed to the contrary, mooring adjacent to the towpath is for 24 hours only.

- 16) Be aware that cycling is permissible on sections of the Canal towpath designated as Bridgewater Way refer to local signage and the Bridgewater Canal website for further information.

## **PLEASURE CRAFT GENERAL**

1. Boat owners should show due consideration at all times for other users of the facilities the canal's neighbours, environment and wildlife. All signs must be obeyed.

2. **WASTE DISPOSAL**

Always take your rubbish home or dispose of it into facilities provided by the company. Toilet waste, oil or any mixture containing oil must not be discharged into the canal. Boat owners are requested to use phosphate free detergents. A list of services along the Bridgewater Canal is available on the website [www.bridgewatercanal.co.uk](http://www.bridgewatercanal.co.uk)

3. **CHILDREN AND PETS**

Children and pets should be under supervision at all times. In particular arms and legs should be kept clear of potential crush hazards e.g. canal banks, railings, bridges and other craft.

Children and all non-swimmers should wear life jackets at all times.

4. **VESSELS**

The total number of persons carried on board the pleasure craft must not exceed the craft's designed carrying capacity. To maintain stability and headroom under bridges whilst underway crew / passengers must not occupy the roof area of the craft.

5. **LICENSING**

Private licence holders are not permitted to trade, or offer their craft for hire or to carry fare paying passengers.

6. **OTHER VESSELS**

All craft shall keep well clear of any dredging or working craft and obey any hazard or speed notices. Working and other wide craft need more room to manoeuvre.

Be aware of unpowered craft. Slow down, many unpowered craft are crewed by small children.



7. **PERSON OVERBOARD**

Put the engine immediately into neutral, Do not reverse the boat. **Remember the person in the water may be at greatest risk from the propeller of the craft.** Throw a line or lifebelt to the person in the water, tell them to stand up they may be able to walk to the side of the canal where they can be assisted out.

8. **FENDERS**

Always carry an adequate number of fenders. Fenders should be used whenever there is a risk of striking another vessel, wall, bridge etc.

9. **FLOATING DEBRIS**

Be vigilant, when underway avoid floating debris.

10. **CYCLING**

Cycling is now possible on the Bridgewater Way for details of sections designated for cycling please refer to local signage and the Bridgewater Canal website [www.bridgewatercanal.co.uk](http://www.bridgewatercanal.co.uk) for further information.

11. **INSURANCE**

Owners of craft are advised to check with their insurers that a young person in charge of the craft will not invalidate their insurance.

12. **ICE**

Do not break through heavy ice. The pressure created from breaking ice could puncture the hull of other vessels that you pass.

## **UNPOWERED CRAFT**

1. Show due consideration at all times for other users of the facilities the canal's neighbours, environment and wildlife. All signs must be obeyed.
2. All canoes, dinghies and rowing craft must give way to powered craft.
3. When in groups travel in single file.
4. Wear something bright.
5. No navigation of unpowered craft during the hours of darkness and in poor light conditions.
6. Beware of floating debris.
7. Always wear a buoyancy aid.
8. Except when passing other craft keep to the middle of the canal and maintain a steady speed. Try not to disturb other users of the waterway.
9. When passing on-coming craft keep to starboard (right).
10. Unpowered craft must be licensed and insured to use the Bridgewater Canal at all times. Licences can be obtained through the Bridgewater Canal Company.

Canoes and kayaks that are licensed by the British Canoe Union may use the Bridgewater Canal free of charge subject to the display of a valid licence and our conditions of licensing.

## **CONTACT INFORMATION FOR BRIDGEWATER CANAL**

**Website** [www.bridgewatercanal.co.uk](http://www.bridgewatercanal.co.uk)

**General enquiries** Monday to Friday normal office hours  
0161 6298 8266, our website may have the information you require.

**Canal Emergency** out of hours telephone number 0161 877 3628  
(note emergency calls only will be dealt with on this number). They  
will require your contact details, name of canal, location and details  
of incident.

### **Useful telephone numbers**

**Environment Agency** pollution emergency number 0800 807060

### **The Emergency Services 999**

Police  
Fire and Rescue  
Ambulance

Police Non-emergency number 101 and follow instructions.