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Waterways heritage specialists to recreate 200-year old lock gates for Cotswold Canals' restoration

Leading waterways restoration experts have been called in to carry out the authentic recreation of 200-year-old lock gates on an historic stretch of the Cotswold Canals.



The two-and-a half-year rolling project is part of a new phase of an ambitious restoration project spearheaded by the Cotswold Canals Partnership and funded with the help of £11.9million Heritage Lottery funding.

Hargreaves Lock Gates, headed by two of the most respected figures in waterways restoration, Nigel Lord and Dick Booth, won the £600,000 contract to craft 22 pairs of lock gates using traditional methods.

The work is part of a new phase of restoration work along a 6.7 mile stretch of the Thames and Severn between Stroud and Brimscombe Port, once the hub of the Cotswold Canals in their cargo-carrying heyday. Restoration work on two other pairs, at Blunder Lock, is being carried out by volunteers.

Each lock chamber is around 23 metres long and 5 metres wide, and book-ended by pairs of 3.3metre wide gates. However, each lock gate pair has to be tackled as an individual project and will require a bespoke programme of careful craftsmanship.

The original chambers, though all built around 200 years ago, were constructed as individual projects by different gangs and so Hargreaves face the challenge of recreating variations in design.

Hargreaves, the first UK lock gate manufacturer to achieve both PEC and FSC chain of custody certification, are tasked with the authentic reproduction of the original broad style lock gate. They will hand craft each of the 2.5tonne tail gates and 1.5tonne head gates using sustainably sourced certified European oak.

Nigel Lord and Dick Booth, who head up Hargreaves Lock Gates, have more than 50 years' combined experience in waterways restoration. Between them they have helped to create more than 800 pairs of lock gates and tidal doors. The company has links with the Cotswold Canals project going back more than 20 years.

Nigel explained: "There are a number of factors that must be taken into account in creating authentic replicas of the original 200 year old lock gates, not least the fact that the chambers taper so they are not the same width top and bottom. Precise measurement techniques are used to calculate the taper on each chamber."

Nigel will create the patterns for the pots, heel pins and anchor plates which will be manufactured at the Hargreaves iron foundry in Halifax. The remaining metalwork for the project will be fabricated at the Hargreaves Lock Gates workshop in Sowerby Bridge.

David Marshall, spokesman for Stroud District Council's canals team, said: "Hargreaves were awarded the contract on the basis of value for money.



"In addition to their technical expertise, they are one of very few lock gate manufacturers with the production capacity to design, manufacture and deliver every element of this bespoke restoration project to meet our project's timescale."

Preparation work has already begun to create the first double set of lock gates, at Ryeford Lock. Gates will be fitted once dredging work is completed, lock chambers are cleaned, damaged masonry restored and in some cases, new services installed.

Once complete, this contract is part of an ambitious restoration project to reconnect the Thames and Severn rivers for the first time in 70 years. The scheme is expected to regenerate tourism in the region and to restore and conserve both the landscape and the wildlife of the canals.

For more information contact Hargreaves Lock Gates on 01422 330 607 or visit www.hargreaveslockgates.co.uk

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Media contact: Julia Smith at Aura Public Relations 01636 611 774 julia@aurapr.co.uk

Notes to Editors:

- Hargreaves Foundry took over the running of the Rochdale Canal workshop, formerly based at Callis Mill in Hebden Bridge, to form Hargreaves Lock Gates. The company has expertise in designing bespoke lock gates and tidal doors for chambers of any shape, size and location.
- Hargreaves Lock Gates manufactures and installs lock gates and tidal doors using oak, ekki or greenheart woods sourced from FSC, PEFC and Keurhout accredited sources.
- Hargreaves was the first UK lock gate manufacturer to achieve both PEFC and FSC chain of custody certification.
- With more than 50 years' combined experience, Nigel Lord and Dick Booth, who head up Hargreaves Lock Gates, are widely recognised for their unrivalled skills and knowledge. They have helped to create more than 800 pairs of lock gates and tidal doors and had a hand in shaping restoration projects the length and breadth of the country, including the famous Rochdale Canal Restoration project, which breathed new life into Hebden Bridge
- Hargreaves have been iron founders since 1896, supplying castings not only to canals but also to the engineering and construction industries. Best known as a manufacturer of cast iron drainage products, Hargreaves has built its reputation on quality castings, prompt deliveries and excellent service. It now operates from bases in the UK, Russia and China.