

Electrical Work Is Plain Sailing

Western Power Distribution



WPD's Ian Evans overseeing the work along the Birmingham and Fazeley Canal towpath.

A £4m electrical project in Birmingham is using local barges to remove waste and spoil instead of dumper trucks in an effort to minimise its environmental impact on the city.

The project, which is being carried out by local electricity distributor Western Power Distribution (WPD), will involve the replacement of around 5km of high voltage cables along the Birmingham & Fazeley Canal towpath between Nechells and Summer Lane. Once complete, it will further safeguard electricity supplies to around 20,000 customers in the city centre.

WPD's investment has been designed to accommodate for any increased demands placed on the electricity network into the future by such things as additional development in the city.

Nigel Morrey, WPD's Projects Team Manager for the area said: "The canal towpath is the most direct, easily accessible route into Birmingham City Centre. Our aim is to keep disruption to an absolute minimum and we have been liaising with Birmingham City Council, the Canal & River Trust and English Heritage to agree the best way to do this.

"Temporary walk ways have been built over the canal to avoid diverting the pedestrians from the towpath throughout the majority of the work. In addition, all the spoil and rubble from the excavations will be removed by barges, utilising the existing canal network and helping to further reduce congestion on the surrounding roads."

Peter Mathews CMG, chair of the West Midlands Waterways Partnership for the Canal & River Trust, said: "Our canals were built 200 years ago as a freight route transporting goods all over the country and it is no exaggeration to say that they helped get the Industrial Revolution moving.

"The canals of the twenty-first century offer so much; they are a haven for boaters, engineering-enthusiasts, heritage-lovers, cyclists and walkers and wildlife. That our larger canals are still able to accommodate freight is a testament to their durability - they are still doing the job 200 years after they were built - how many other large scale feats of engineering can claim the same?"

Work on the cable replacement has recently started and completion of the project is expected in March 2014.

The project forms part of WPD's commitment to provide a consistently high level of service to customers. Around £2 billion is being invested by the company on its electricity network between 2010 and 2015.

Note for newsdesks:

About WPD:

- Western Power Distribution (WPD) is the distribution network operator for the Midlands, South West England and South Wales, and is responsible for delivering electricity to approximately 7.8 million customers in the UK.
- WPD is not an electricity supply company and does not bill customers in the UK. Its responsibility is to distribute electricity from the point of generation to homes and businesses.

About the Canal & River Trust:

- The Canal & River Trust is the guardian of 2,000 miles of historic waterways across England and Wales. We are among the largest charities in the UK, maintaining the nation's third largest collection of Listed structures, as well as museums, archives, navigations and hundreds of important wildlife sites.
- We believe that our canals and rivers are a national treasure and a local haven for people and wildlife. It is our

job to care for this wonderful legacy – holding it in trust for the nation in perpetuity and giving people a greater role in the running of their local waterways.

For further information, please see: www.canalrivertrust.org.uk

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