



**TRAFFORD
COUNCIL**

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[Redacted]
HM Coroner's Office
The Coroner's Court
1 Mount Tabor
Stockport
SK1 3AG

Our Ref: TR/007348
Your Ref:
Date: 9 May, 2018



Dear Sirs

**RE: Regulation 28: Report to prevent future deaths
Casper Blackburn.**

I refer to your report on this matter dated 3rd April 2018.

Trafford Council takes this matter very seriously and since the unfortunate and tragic death of Casper has set up a multi-agency Trafford Water Safety Group to consider matters of water safety across the Borough.

Therefore, in response to your report the Council has contacted both the Trafford Water Safety Group and the Bridgewater Canal Company Limited and has brought these matters to their attention. The Council understands that the Chair of the Trafford Water Safety Group and a representative of Peel will be meeting in May to discuss an action plan for alleviating any future danger.

Unfortunately, the Council has a very limited ability to take direct action as it is not the relevant landowner in respect of the path which runs alongside the canal, nor is it responsible for the public right of way which runs over that path. In both instances the responsible party is the Bridgewater Canal Company Limited. However, the Council has approached the Bridgewater Canal Company to seek to find a resolution to improve the safety of the users of the path and to improve safety measures

Yours faithfully

Tim Rhodes, Principal Solicitor EGEI
Legal & Democratic Services
Trafford Borough Council

Director of Legal and Democratic Services: Jane Le Fevre
TR / 007348 / 530923

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24 May 2018

HM Coroner Manchester South
Coroner's Court
1 Mount Tabor Street
Stockport
SK1 3AG



Dear Madam

Caspar Blackburn (deceased)

Thank you for your letter addressed to Peel Holdings which has been passed to The Bridgewater Canal Company Limited ("BCC"), the statutory navigation authority for and the company that owns and manages the Bridgewater Canal ("the canal"). BCC is a wholly owned subsidiary of Peel Holdings Land and Property (UK) Limited.

We acknowledge receipt of your letter and Regulation 28 report dated 3 April 2018 and note in particular the observations in section 5 of your report, which have been considered very carefully.

Before responding to your observations, we would like to express our sincere sympathy to the family of Mr Blackburn and our sadness at his death.

Background information

The canal is a 39 mile canal between Runcorn and Leigh and the towing path which runs alongside the canal provides a multi-user route.

There are approximately 4,000 miles of inland waterways in the UK managed by around 50 Navigation Authorities and other organisations. The Canal and River Trust is the largest of these managing over 2,000 miles of canals and rivers, most of which are accessible by the public. By comparison the canal is 39 miles long and is one of the few canals not to be nationalised in the 20th Century. The public have had access to the Bridgewater Canal since it was completed over 250 years ago.

BCC is a member of a number of water safety groups and federations of canal users and the prevention of incidents, including drowning, is always a priority for BCC and these groups. Decisions in relation to safety are always taken very seriously and are made by BCC with as much input from the groups as possible, as well as consultation with canal users wherever possible.

The canal is of great historical importance locally and, indeed, globally and it brings extensive environmental and heritage benefits to the areas it passes through. In recognition of this a project to regenerate the canal, promoted and funded in part by the Bridgewater

Canal Trust, commenced in 2003. Just over 26 miles of the canal towpath has been improved as a result of this project to date, with further work planned for the future.

The aim of the regeneration is to provide a better surface for the towpath, increased seating and public information for the canal, and provide improved access to encourage new users of the canal. The regenerated sections of the canal form the Bridgewater Way. The area in which this sad incident occurred was in an area that had been regenerated.

Information relating to the canal is available on the Bridgewater Canal website which can be found at www.bridgewatercanal.co.uk.

The website includes a code of use for all users of the canal, including pedestrians. The code of use contains a number of warnings regarding using the canal, including highlighting the fact that towing paths are unlit. There are also a number of natural and historical features along the canal which may present a hazard for pedestrians and due to the close proximity of deep water, it is therefore not recommended to use the path in the hours of darkness and in poor light conditions.

Response to concerns

The towing path in the regenerated areas consists of a light golden colour stone and is approximately 1.8 metres wide in the area in question. There is then a grass verge approximately 0.5 metres wide before the coping stones bordering the canal itself.

It is not intended that lighting will be introduced to the canal by BCC. To introduce lighting in the urban and rural areas would have a significant adverse impact on the heritage and natural environment of the canal which would be entirely detrimental to local areas for users of the canal, residents and the ecology and wildlife which thrives along the canal. It may also present other safety issues and encourage night time use which is not advisable. We understand that this is also the policy of the Canal and River Trust.

Thank you for your report dated 3 April 2018 and for the opportunity to respond to your observations.

Signed.....
For and on behalf of The Bridgewater Canal Company Limited

Position.....DIRECTOR.....

Dated.....24 MAY 2018.....

CH.



Canal &
River Trust



Coroner's Office
1 Mount Tabor Street
Stockport
SK1 3AG

FAO Ms Rachel Galloway

Your Ref: 8398/CH

20th April 2018

Dear Ms Galloway,

RE: Casper Harvey Blackburn

Thank you for your letter dated 3rd April 2018, addressed to the Trust's Chairman, Allan Leighton. As the local safety advisor for the area in which Casper sadly died, your letter has been passed to me to reply on behalf of the Canal & River Trust ('the Trust') on this occasion, however, please can I ask you to address all such correspondence in the first instance to:

Head of Legal and Governance Services
Canal & River Trust
First Floor North, Station House
500 Elder Gate
Milton Keynes
MK9 1BB

May I take this opportunity to extend the Trust's sincerest condolences to Casper's family for their loss; our thoughts and sympathies are with them at this extremely difficult time.

Turning to the Regulation 28 report enclosed with your letter, I can see that it recommends action should be taken regarding lighting on the towpath of the Bridgewater Canal where it is believed likely that Casper entered the water.

However, the Canal & River Trust has no jurisdiction or responsibilities regarding the Bridgewater Canal or the land at this location. I believe is in fact the responsibility of Peel Holdings and because I can see that the Regulation 28 report is being sent to Peel Holdings, in the circumstances I do not believe the Trust is required to take any further action.

Canal & River Trust First Floor North Station House 500 Elder Gate Milton Keynes MK9 1BB

T 0303 040 4040 E customer.services@canalrivertrust.org.uk www.canalrivertrust.org.uk

Patron: H.R.H. The Prince of Wales. Canal & River Trust, a charitable company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales with company number 7807276 and registered charity number 1146792, registered office address First Floor North, Station House, 500 Elder Gate, Milton Keynes MK9 1BB



Canal &
River Trust

Please do not hesitate to contact me if the Trust can be of any further assistance in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'S. G. B.', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

[Redacted]
Safety Advisor

Tel 01606 723801

Mob 07702 847012
[Redacted]

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