

Canal group bidding for £1m lottery cash

Funding will be used for scheme to re-open historic wharf

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CANAL enthusiasts will submit a bid for £1 million worth of lottery funding next week in a bid to re-open an historic wharf near Telford.

Members of the Shrewsbury and Newport Canals Trust have been working tirelessly for years to try and get water fully flowing again through Wappenshall Wharf, near Telford, and bring it back into use.

Aerial photographs taken in the early 1960s show a healthy, vibrant wharf – but by the late 1970s, as the other picture shows, the canal had been completely infilled.

A small amount of water is running through there again now – but the trust will be able to restore the wharf to its former glory if it gets the go-ahead from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).

Volunteers have already raised more than £200,000 towards the project themselves and hope to get further cash from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra).

But it is relying on lottery cash for the lion's share towards the ambitious £1.8 million project.

Bernie Jones, chairman of the canal trust, said the deadline for submission of the bid was next Monday. "We would hope then to get a final answer from them early in the New Year," he said.

"It's a very anxious time for everyone.

"So much work has gone into this project from so many people, but we are completely reliant on getting this cash to push it through.

"There would obviously be a knock-on effect as well in terms of possibly getting cash for other projects down the line."

Mr Jones said if the project got the go-ahead, the wharf would be called Thomas Telford @ Wappenshall Wharf.

He said there were plans to pay tribute to the engineer, who played a key role in canal building in the late 18th century.

"There are two buildings on the wharf, and the larger building will be used to pay homage to the great man," Mr Jones said.

"Not just for his work on the canals, but also for his work in churches, and on roads and bridges and so forth.

"We will be working closely with the Iron-bridge Museums Trust, which has a huge Thomas Telford collection which has never seen the light of day.

"It will enable us to put on rolling exhibitions. The other building will be used to house a quality cafe and office space."



Wappenshall Wharf in its heyday, which is a scene campaigners are hoping to see come back to life



Wappenshall Wharf as it looks today with the canal water dried up and the area overgrown