



HM Coroner Davies
Cheshire Coroner's Court
Museum Street
Warrington
Cheshire
WA1 1 JX

Date: 23 April 2026

Dear HM Coroner Davies,

Thank you for your report to Canal & River Trust (the "**Trust**") concerning the death of Mr William Elvis Webb and for setting out your concerns. I am responding on the Trust's behalf.

As indicated in the Trust's initial response (dated 3rd of February 2026) to your questions preceding the Inquest, the land surrounding the Shropshire Union Canal in the vicinity of the University accommodation, and crucially where Mr Webb entered the water, is not owned by the Trust. This presents a number of challenges and limits the actions we are able to take directly. Notwithstanding and following the Inquest and the concerns raised in the Regulation 28 Report (dated 26th February 2026), the Trust has taken the following actions:

- I met with Cheshire Fire & Rescue Service and Lisa O'Neill (Mr Webb's mother) on the 13th of March to better understand the location of, and circumstances leading to the tragedy. This meeting was vital in understanding Mr Webb's approach to the Canal immediately before the tragedy, along with the risks to water safety presented by the wider public realm and to determine the family's views.
- The Trust is currently working with the Cheshire Water Safety Partnership (the "**WSP**"), Cheshire Fire & Rescue Services and Cheshire West & Chester Council to determine the ownership of the land surrounding the Shropshire and Union Canal, in the vicinity of the University accommodation and the location where Mr Webb entered the water, in order to determine what can be done.
- Consequently and to address the specific risks presented by the public realm over which the Trust has no control, I have, on behalf of the Trust, requested the WSP's support in writing to relevant riparian owners of the land surrounding the Shropshire and Union Canal, inviting them to a meeting to discuss what further steps can be taken collectively, or on an individual basis to provide additional mitigation of water safety risks in this area. Layout of the public realm, signage, lighting and the provision of Personal Rescue Equipment are to be raised, the necessity and benefit of which will be considered alongside issues such as the depth of the water and the height of the freeboard. We will work proactively with the WSP and the relevant landowners to identify where such measures may be implemented/improved and provide advice and assistance where we are able to do so. Such a meeting will take place by September 2026.

- The Trust shares the consensus with RoSPA, RLSS and the Fire & Rescue Services that education and prevention have proved to be the most effective tools in improving water safety. The Trust run an extensive range of annual campaigns, both individually and in conjunction with partners across the 13 water safety partnerships we are involved with across the region. We also run focussed campaigns which we have developed and adapted where areas of risk have become apparent. Following this tragedy the Trust, along with the support of others (including the WSG and the RNLI), will be approaching the University of Chester with the specific aim of working with them to provide targeted, effective and educational water safety campaigns to its students.
- By the start of the new term in September 2026, in conjunction with the University, we aim to have in place a series of targeted events which brings home to the students the dangers and risks associated with the Canal, and waterways generally, especially under the influence of alcohol or substances and when walking home alone.
- The Trust will update HM Coroner and the family of Mr. Webb on progress of the above actions.

Yours faithfully



Director, North West

Canal & River Trust

National Waterways Museum Ellesmere Port, South Pier Road, Ellesmere Port, Cheshire CH65 4FW

T 0303 040 4040 E canalrivertrust.org.uk/contact-us

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 National Waterways Museum Ellesmere Port, South Pier Road, Ellesmere Port, Cheshire CH65 4FW