

Litter is a very real problem on our waterways. Every year we spend a significant amount of money and time clearing fly-tipped rubbish, plastic bags and other debris from the canals, rivers and towpaths in our care. Any discarded rubbish blown in from the streets gets caught in the water, so in each area we're dealing with a whole community's littering.

As the Lee Navigation travels towards the Thames, it carries with it litter from further upriver, which collects at locks and weirs and gets trapped in undergrowth. We carry out a weekly clear-up by boat, concentrating on the main problem areas at Lee Bridge Weir and Old Ford Lock. We are currently in talks with our contractor to have two boats out solidly for two weeks of every month during the summer weed season, between 1 April and 30 September, which will scoop up weed and rubbish.

During the Olympics, external funding was allocated by the Olympic Delivery Authority to keep the waterways free from weed and rubbish, and contractors carried out a daily service.

As a charity, we do not have the resources to carry out everything we would like to do. We work with some fantastic volunteers and partners, including Thames 21, and have a number of community clean-ups along the Lee which we encourage people to get involved in. Of course with more support and funding we could do much more.

Sam Thomas, maintenance manager "It's a never-ending task for me, my team and the many local volunteers who work with us to clear up after the inconsiderate minority who think it's acceptable to drop litter. We hugely appreciate the support we get and would encourage people who care about the Lee to get involved and help us."

Find out more about volunteering with the Canal & River Trust at:
<http://canalrivertrust.org.uk/volunteering>. For volunteering with Thames 21 please visit: <http://www.thames21.org.uk/>

If you see any instances of pollution on the Lee, please contact the Environment Agency's hotline on 0800 80 70 60.