



**Canal &
River Trust**

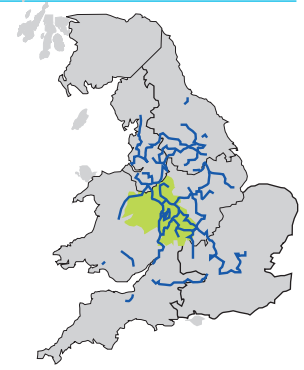
Making life better by water

2021 Youth Impact Report West Midlands



This certificate was awarded
for taking part in the 2021
event.

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Youth engagement activities in the West Midlands

During 2021, youth engagement activities in the West Midlands delivered the following:

-  **4,731** young people engaged in participatory activities and events
-  **809** young volunteers
-  **9,204** youth social action hours
-  **13,898** young people engaged through Explorers / STEM
-  **10,640** children & young people attending water safety sessions

All figures are approximate due to the nature of data collection at events and a current changeover of systems.

Partners worked with

- Birmingham Met (Roundhouse)
- Birmingham 2022
- EcoSikh UK
- Eidgah Academy
- Gen22
- Great Barr Muslim Foundation
- Lote Tree Primary School
- Masjid Al Falaah
- New Hope Global
- River City Detectives Group
- St Marks Catholic Primary School
- Staffordshire Fire & Rescue Service
- Stoke College
- West Midlands Police Cadets
- Young Trustees Movement

Unique partnerships extend engagement opportunities

Offering opportunities – especially in deprived areas – can be difficult, but a partnership approach can bring multiple benefits for everyone involved.

The 'Our Space' project has not only generated new ways of working, but it has made a big impact in local communities.



The Wildside Activity Centre in Wolverhampton and Middleport Matters in Stoke

are two organisations that play essential roles within their local areas. By working together with both, the Trust has been able to engage significantly more individuals than if it had attempted it alone.



Both organisations operate close to local canals. By providing a range of activities for residents to participate in, many young people have engaged with the canal for the first time. With both organisations operating in widely diverse communities, the partnerships have ensured that opportunities are available to individuals from a varied mix of backgrounds and ethnicities.

The Trust has run lots of activities with young people including canoeing and conservation sessions. Through Eco Clubs, tree planting and litter picks, young participants have shown a greater responsibility for their community and demonstrated a passion to maintain the tidiness of their space.



Working with Urban Wilderness to support youth ‘happenings’ across Stoke-on-Trent

There’s a great deal of youth activity ‘happening’ in Stoke-on-Trent as the Trust continues to support Urban Wilderness to deliver a number of art-based activities along the Etruria Canal.

Bringing together local artists and young people from a variety of backgrounds, the activities will encourage residents from adjacent communities to explore their local spaces.

The remit of Urban Wilderness is predominantly focused on working with young people from deprived communities and presenting development opportunities that might otherwise not exist. This cohort is traditionally difficult to engage, and many challenges existed in maintaining relationships over lockdown. Fortunately, the team were able to do this, and post-pandemic, project managers have been able to reunite participants with their projects.



The shift to online workshops and mentoring has created opportunities for a new cohort of young people – ‘young activists’. Highly motivated and focused, these young people have been able to utilise technology and the availability of mentors to mobilise and create their own opportunities to benefit their communities. Through the development of micro-bursaries, young people have been able to create activities and gain funding to put them into action. Examples have included a (socially distanced) mini-community festival and a website for recycling awareness.

These two groups of young people (physical and online) were brought together for a major event across Stoke-on-Trent called ‘The Happening’.

Urban Wilderness worked with over 20 young people in the consultation phase and this resulted in the appointment of five artists who worked with a range of community audiences (including young people) to transform a number of low-usage spaces. This created a ‘festival of new public art’ and people were encouraged to explore (as a group or individually) and think about how they were engaging with it.





Daniel's fishing journey with Let's Fish!

Daniel is from Walsall and struggles at times with his attention levels and modifying his hyperactive behaviour. He attends a school for young people with special educational needs and disabilities.

Daniel discovered Let's Fish! by accident and is now well and truly hooked!

Daniel: "It actually all started when me, my Nan and my Grandad were on a walk on the canal and I saw some people fishing and I said to my Nan 'you promised you would take me fishing!'. So, my Nan managed to find Let's Fish!.

I enjoy it, it's calm. Children these days are like always playing on their PlayStation, Xbox and Nintendo Switches. It's really nice with Let's Fish! for people to come out, have some fun and enjoy themselves. Because that's what fishing is all about."

Throughout 2021, the Trust have run hundreds of free Let's Fish!

sessions in the West Midlands and throughout the country. Fishing is a fun activity, it's good for the mind and body and it's an activity that the whole family can enjoy.

Daniel usually attends the sessions with his Nan, Lorraine, who has thoroughly enjoyed seeing the beneficial impacts of the programme on Daniel's wellbeing and behaviour.

Daniel's Nan: "I am so proud of this young man. My heart could just literally beat out of my chest. He has done us so proud; he is a credit to us. At home he's on his Xbox, he's on his PlayStation. His legs are going. He's like an Energiser bunny.

When he comes fishing, he sits there, and he's calm. We go

in the car and Daniel is on his phone. But now we go fishing and we don't have the phone. All we talk about is fishing. It's been brilliant!

Let's Fish! is the best idea ever. It gets your children out in the fresh air and it takes them away from technology. Let's Fish!, especially during 2021 has been an absolute life saver. Not only to parents because you've got the children under your feet, but to the children themselves.

The Trust wouldn't be able to run Let's Fish! events without funding and is supported by players of People's Postcode Lottery, the Environment Agency, the Angling Trust and a large number of local groups and smaller funders.

Stoke National Citizen Service offers week of canal-based activities



In 2011, Stoke City Football Club celebrated 10 years of delivering the National Citizen Service (NCS) and once again the Trust supported the programme by offering a week of canal-based activities.

In total 94 young people took part in groups of over three weeks. Whilst every group completed a range of activities, for one of the weeks, they were able to select from a range of activities provided by partners. The Canal & River Trust 'week' is always in hot demand and as a result, groups have to pitch themselves to be the lucky group selected.

Over the week, 15 young people spent an entire week working on social action projects around Stoke.

On Monday, they painted over a graffiti covered wall, in readiness for a new mural designed by Stoke College.

They spent Tuesday cleaning the bridge at Etruria and a wet Wednesday working on the digital aspect of their project.

On Thursday, they walked 16km on a mammoth litter pick from the BET365 stadium to Westport Lake (and back again!) and on Friday they celebrated their achievements with pizza at the football ground.

The Stoke City NCS scheme is the highlight of the year for many participants, and it plays an important role in developing a range of essential life skills. At the end of the summer a massive celebration event was held for participants, their parents and all the many partners – including the Trust – who make this such a fun and great project.



For more information on our youth & community engagement work
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