

Desmond Family Canoe Trail

# 2019 Year Five Impact Report



In 2019...



**Canal &  
River Trust**

Desmond Family  
Canoe Trail

**1144**

young people  
engaged

**58**

young leaders  
active across  
the trail

**7000+**

people engaged  
within the  
community



# Welcome



**Canal & River Trust**

Desmond Family Canoe Trail

The Desmond Family Canoe Trail is a five-year youth project to create the UK's first coast to coast canoe trail from Liverpool in the west to Goole on the Humber estuary in the east. The 162 mile route is funded by a £1.3million grant from the Desmond Foundation, providing training and volunteering opportunities for thousands of young people aged 16-25, on both sides of the Pennines.

The final year of the project in its current format has seen more engagement, more participation and more young leaders recruited and trained than any of the previous years. It has been fantastic to witness the impact that the project has had on communities, the young people representing those communities and our organisation. It's also been great to see teams of people coming together from all walks of life to influence change, participate in projects, make a difference and improve their wellbeing.

August Bank Holiday 2019 saw the official launch of the trail. This was such an exciting time for the Trust, as our young leaders developed their ideas and were given the freedom to deliver them. Five community launch festivals involving music, food, wellbeing, family activities and of course the opportunity to get in a kayak or canoe saw thousands of people enjoying themselves in the sun across the trail.

Other highlights include the creation of three canoe clubs across the trail. Our first club in Bootle is still going strong and this year has seen the creation of clubs in Wigan, including our first #thisgirlcan canoe club, and in Castleford. We have worked with local community groups to ensure the clubs are sustainable long into the future.

The trail may be completed, but our work does not stop there. Our regional teams are planning activities and events and will be working with British Canoeing to promote the trail to both novice and experienced paddlers.

Lastly, I'd like to take the opportunity to thank the team that made 2019 the best year yet for the project. Without their enthusiasm for helping young people to reach their potential, impacting the communities they are based in and working in partnership, the project would not have been such a huge success. So, to the Desmond Family Canoe Trail team, thank you for all your infectious enthusiasm and passion.

**Danny Matley,**  
Desmond Family Canoe Trail Programme Manager

**88%**  
felt more active

"It's been brilliant. The activity helps our young participants to improve their self-confidence, self-esteem & wellbeing."

**8**  
stretches of the canal adopted by community groups

**10**  
new community partners

**91%**  
feel more confident through working as part of a team

**92%**  
felt more connected to their community

**3**  
community canoe clubs (Bootle, Wigan, Castleford)

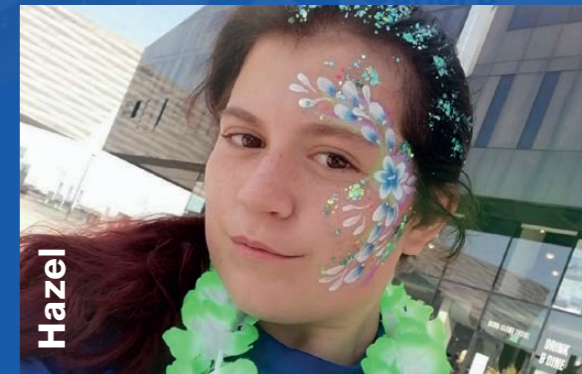
"Friendly staff, amazing activity. Great fun for the whole family."

**96%**  
of people who attended our events would recommend Canal & River Trust to their friends and family

**200+**  
Santas on the water for the 'Santa Splash' two-mile paddle

**89%**  
of young people felt more confident after taking part in an activity

## Young leader from Wigan & Leigh College



I'm currently studying a sports degree at college. About 18 months ago, our tutor arranged an introduction to canoeing with the Desmond Family Canoe Trail. As part of my course, I've coached children in sport on land, but I loved being on the water and wanted to do more!

In March 2018, Vicki the project leader came into our college and gave a presentation to around 60 students, inviting them to take part in a week-long course to become a paddlesport instructor and volunteer at the Canal & River Trust. I signed up for the course and started volunteering as a young leader and helped to grow the new Desmond Family Canoe Trail #ThisGirlCan canoe club in Wigan. So far, I've volunteered over 120 hours.

In 2019, I worked with a team of young leaders to plan and deliver the Desmond Family Canoe Trail coast to coast relay and launch festival in Blackburn. I've also worked as a canoe instructor for students from other colleges in Wigan and given presentations to new volunteers.

I really enjoyed being a part of the event in Blackburn, giving presentations and the #ThisGirlCan canoe sessions because I could see what a difference I could make and how people were returning to our sessions. I feel people came back because of the way I coached and how I supported them on the water.

During my time volunteering at Canal & River Trust, I've become much more confident with everything that I do and say. I've found where I belong and become better at receiving feedback, more creative with coaching ideas and feel a lot calmer dealing with challenges.



# Case studies

## Bradford College



Bradford College's Access to Further Education course consists of students aged 16-19 who have disengaged from education, or have attended school but struggled to gain qualifications due to learning barriers.

The group began their 10-week project with the task of regenerating a patch of land on the Shipley towpath. The site was uneven, with piles of rubbish previously set on fire and the boundary wall was graffitied. The group decided they would make a wellbeing garden, giving the community and towpath users a space to stop and enjoy being by water.

Prior to the group attending the project they had been encouraged to choose a career path, some of which are difficult to achieve without qualifications. The group hadn't had the opportunity to go out and try other types of work so were anxious about choosing their next steps. The young people created a project where everyone could find a role within it that they enjoyed, instead of being forced to do a job they really didn't want to.

Over 10 sessions the group cleared rubbish, levelled the ground and built planters. They had some classroom sessions where they researched bee attracting and edible plants and words and phrases they felt promoted wellbeing and mindfulness to use on the mural they had chosen to create over the graffiti.

The young people increased their communication skills by handing out flyers promoting Desmond Family Canoe Trail and #YearOfGreenAction, explaining to other towpath users how they were contributing positively. Additionally, they improved their digital skills by documenting their project with film and photography.

## Castleford Community Canoe Club



2019 saw the launch of the canoe trail in Castleford and Goole, the end of the trail for those starting in Liverpool and a whole new beginning for our North East communities.

The project leader of Phase 5 hit the ground running, networking with members of the community as well as introducing paddle sessions in Castleford. Relationships were built with members of the community who, inspired by the paddling experience, became volunteers and established a new canoe club for the Castleford community.

The team of volunteers grew personal paddling skills, completed their Paddlesport Instructor qualifications and became a British Canoe affiliated club in January 2020. This is an exciting journey for all involved.

Chris "Muzzy" speaks of a random purchase of an inflatable kayak during his weekly shop and a chance encounter with the project at a canoe taster session leading to himself and his children becoming the first members of the new club. He is looking forward to seeing more of the community taking part.

Lead volunteer at the club Ali, who kayaked as a teenager, is now a community worker with a local church and says the health, physical and mental benefits are why she got involved and can't wait for others in the community to feel the same. Ali decided that 2019 was a year to get involved in something new in the community, loves being outside and is most at home on the water.

The club offers affordable membership and free canoe/kayak tasters to a diverse range of people and organisations.

## Phase 5 Young Leader



After I completed our National Citizen Service (NCS) project with the Desmond Family Canoe Trail, I became interested in the project and started volunteering straightaway.

I took part in a summer project with NCS to help improve the state of the environment around the canoe trail and have also been involved in canoe sessions and the great Santa Splash event in Castleford.

Through the project I have learnt that canoeing is great, it's one of the best things I've taken part in! I also enjoyed litter picking and cleaning the canals at the same time as having fun on the trail. My highlight was canoeing with NCS and Desmond Family Canoe Trail in Kirkstall as that's when I realised I enjoyed canoeing and the difference I could make volunteering with the Canal & River Trust.

I am now a volunteer directly with the Canal & River Trust and I try my best to be available for anything I can possibly be involved with when I'm not at college. When I volunteer, I really enjoy canoeing, we meet new people all the time which helps me work with people I would never have thought of.

I would recommend getting involved, it increases your water sports skills, makes you feel better and volunteering helps the communities to improve the state and quality of the canals, wildlife and ecosystems around us. My goals were to learn new skills, learn to canoe properly, help make the canals a better place for wildlife and ecosystems and as well as making them a better and safer place for the community and the people who live within them. I have achieved nearly all of these volunteering with the Canal & River Trust and I've only been taking part a few months, there's plenty more time to achieve new things! Thank you the Desmond Family Canoe Trail!

## Burnley Football Club in the Community and Young Leader



I was on an employability project with Burnley Football Club (FC) and the Desmond Family Canoe Trail came in to deliver a community activation project where we identified an area of the canal that we would like to improve and then completed a project for that area.

In October 2018 I became a young leader. Over the last 18 months I've taken part in so many activities, canoeing, canoe-based litter picks, towpath improvement works, the launch relay – paddling through the Foulridge Tunnel, the trail launch festival and working with the other young leaders to raise young people's awareness of the trail in Burnley.

For me, the highlight has been helping to organise and deliver the first launch festival in Burnley last summer. Researching and choosing the activities and stalls, helping to promote the festival on social media, using my link with Burnley FC to bring them down to the event and taking part in the video to celebrate the launch. Seeing all the people at the festival, it was great to know that I had a part in making it happen.

I would recommend the Canal & River Trust to my friends and family. The activities I've taken part in have been a positive experience. I've been supported in searching for employment, valued in what I have brought to the group and project and have enjoyed seeing the trail develop. From starting with the project, I have noticed and felt my confidence increase. I have taken on more roles with other organisations, leading to short term employment and mentoring.



Eat, sleep, paddle, pick up litter and repeat



CANAL VOLUNTEERS SMOOTH THE WAY

UK'S FIRST COAST-TO-COAST CANOE TRAIL OPENS FOR ADVENTURERS



BIGGEST WATERFRONT FESTIVAL IN THE NORTH SET TO MAKE A SPLASH

CELEBRATIONS TO MARK END OF CANAL ROUTE YOUTH PROJECT



Celebration & Recognition

f 153,295 IMPRESSIONS

👍 9,378 ENGAGED FACEBOOK USERS

🐦 457,600 TOTAL TWITTER IMPRESSIONS

📩 319 NO OF TWEETS

❤️ 2,136 TWITTER LIKES

📷 539 TREBLED OUR INSTAGRAM FOLLOWING





## Canal & River Trust

Desmond Family  
Canoe Trail

To find out more about our volunteering opportunities, contact us:

0303 040 4040 | [volunteer@canalrivertrust.org.uk](mailto:volunteer@canalrivertrust.org.uk)

[canalrivertrust.org.uk/volunteer](https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/volunteer)



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/DesmondFamilyCanoeTrail



@desmondfamilycanoe

Canal & River Trust

We're the charity looking after 2,000 miles of canals and rivers in England and Wales because we believe life's better by water.

June 2020 / DMD  
Charity registered no. 1146792

