

Stanley Ferry trash screen Q&As

We've heard reports there's more rubbish than ever collecting at the trash screen. Why do you think the problem with rubbish in our inland waterways is getting worse?

Sadly, members of our team have reported an increase in the amount rubbish we're seeing collect at the Stanley Ferry trash screen. After high rainfall we definitely see more rubbish and driftwood and detritus along our waterways.

We commissioned an independent report to look at the state of plastic and rubbish in our waterways and published this in June. We launched our #PlasticsChallenge to highlight this problem and ask the public to help us tackle this problem.

#PlasticsChallenge facts and figures

- Canal & River Trust launches a plastics challenge to stop the UK's canals and rivers being 'plastics highways' to the oceans
- New research states that over half a million items of plastic reach the oceans from the charity's canals and rivers every year
- If every visitor picked up and recycled just one piece of plastic each time they visit, the canals and rivers would be plastic free within a year
- Around 570,000 items of plastic reach the world's ocean each year via the canals and rivers.
- The largest type of litter found along the canals is plastic (59% including polystyrene)
- Around 80% of the litter found in the oceans comes from litter dropped inland
- Almost 1 in 5 people admit to dropping litter

Where is this rubbish coming from?

The trash screen is clearly doing its job – to protect the 19th century Stanley Ferry Aqueduct, which has listed monument status and is of international importance.

During times of high rainfall, rubbish is often swept along by faster flowing water and accumulates at places like Stanley Ferry trash screen – this is where it becomes most visible and most shocking to see.

Our recent report shows that the source of the litter is a mix of items that are dropped either accidentally or intentionally by visitors, and items blown onto the waterways from local buildings and businesses which back onto canals and rivers.

Rubbish and driftwood caught up in the trash screen is coming from upstream, blown into or dumped into the River Calder, one of the waterways looked after by the Environment Agency.

What do you think of the volunteer efforts to clear up the site? Is there anything you would like to say to them?

The action taken by these volunteers clearly illustrates the passion people have to protect and look after our environment, our canals, rivers and oceans.

We can't condone anyone putting their life in danger to remove plastics and rubbish from waterways, and strongly ask that no further clean-ups like this are undertaken to prevent any loss to life or serious injury. However, we can recognise the passion to protect and look after the waterways that has led these volunteers to take action and thank them for the positive impact they have made for the benefit of their local community.

Sadly, these efforts only offer a short-term solution. It's likely this site will be filled with waste and driftwood again in the next few months. Plastic pollution, fly-tipping and littering our waterways is an ongoing battle for our charity – so while these heartfelt efforts are assisting with the outcome, we need to put into practice longer term solutions to deal with the ongoing causes that impact this complex site.

Our charity has lots of volunteering opportunities for people to get involved and make a difference. We also run an adoption scheme for groups interested in looking after designated sections of our rivers and

canals. We ask that anyone interested in making a difference and helping us to tackle plastic pollution visits our [website for details](#).

Why can't you just clear up the litter?

The river flows are very fast during this time of year. Access to the site needs to be scheduled during the summer months, when water flow is often at its lowest. We have in the past carried out several clean-up operations during these times, but due to the complexity of accessing the site safely we are unable to carry these out as regularly as we would like. Costing around £40,000 per operation to use specialist equipment for the safe retrieval of litter, plastics and driftwood – it only provides a short-term solution, with more debris and litter stacking up just months after, especially after high rainfall.

We have a significant project planned for summer 2021 to improve the structure to make maintenance of both the structure easier and the removal of litter and plastics brought down by the river.

Why is it taking so long for action to be taken?

We appreciate this has been a long-standing concern for the community and seeing the scale of the issue we face in our waterways is shocking and distressing.

Our charity spends around £1 million a year to remove plastic and litter from across our waterways. We simply can't spend everything needed to collect and dispose of all the rubbish on our waterways and other vital maintenance would suffer.

We have a duty of care to look after, maintain and protect the over 300 miles of waterways, listed structures and reservoirs and we have to prioritise areas of most concern.

What are your plans for the future for this site?

We have a significant project planned for summer 2021 as part of our business plan, likely to be costing in excess of £250,000.

The trash screen provides an access point over the River Calder. Planned engineering works will include strengthening the existing decking to improve accessibility for walkers and cyclists and enable heavy maintenance vehicle access to maintain the structure and safely remove litter, plastics and debris.

Importantly, we need to look at how to redress the cause of the plastic and litter ending up in the water in the first place. This needs a wider discussion working with the Environment Agency and Wakefield Council.

Isn't it your responsibility to clear this up? Whose responsibility is it?

It's frustrating that our charity is left to clean up the mess dumped in our waterways. Our canals and rivers are inadvertently acting as 'plastics highways', transporting rubbish from where we live out to sea.

We need people to help us tackle this and that's why we've launched #PlasticsChallenge to help raise awareness and ask for help. Without volunteers and people with passion for their local environment we couldn't achieve as much as we do.

Media Statement – issued to Wakefield Express 2/10/19

Devastatingly, our canals and rivers are inadvertently acting as 'plastics highways', transporting rubbish from where we live out to sea. This is most clearly visible during times of high rainfall, when rubbish is often swept along by faster flowing water and accumulates at places like Stanley Ferry trash screen. Encouragingly though, lots of people have seen BBC's Blue Planet and share the Trust's mission to eradicate plastic from our waterways. We think that if each person who visited our waterways picked up just one piece of litter from the towpath or river bank, they could be plastic free within a year.

As the charity that looks after the Aire & Calder Navigation and the Stanley Ferry Aqueduct we are asking people to help by volunteering or donating to support our work. We already spend around £1 million a year to remove plastic and litter from across our waterways.

Specifically at Stanley Ferry we face a complex access issue to safely remove the litter accumulated behind the trash screen which protects the aqueduct and traps litter swept along by the River Calder, looked after by the Environment Agency. At the moment the river flows are very fast and access to the site needs to be scheduled during the summer months, when water flow is often at its lowest. We have a significant project planned for summer 2021 to improve the structure to make maintenance of both the structure easier and the removal of litter and plastics brought down by the river.

We recently launched a nationwide campaign to highlight the problem of litter and plastics in our waterways. We would love to hear from anyone interested in helping to look after their local waterway and help our charity to tackle plastic and litter. Find out more about Canal & River Trust's Plastics Challenge and read our research report, visit www.canalrivertrust.org.uk/get-involved or follow us on social media @CanalRiverTrust #PlasticsChallenge

The Stanley Ferry Aqueduct was designed to carry a 50-metre long stretch of the Aire & Calder Navigation over the River Calder. Considered to be the largest aqueduct built from cast iron it was built between 1836 and 1839 it has international significance as one of the earliest through-arch bridges in the world – opening a full 100 years before the world's most famous example, Sydney Harbour Bridge.

Media Statement issued to Wakefield Express – 9/10/19

Sean McGinley, director Yorkshire & NE at Canal & River Trust said:

“The action taken by these volunteers clearly illustrates the passion people have to protect and look after our environment, our canals, rivers and oceans. While we cannot condone their actions, which were incredibly dangerous and put lives at risk, we can recognise their passion to look after the waterways and thank them for their efforts. We strongly advise that no further clean-ups like this are undertaken at the site to prevent any injury or loss to life. Our charity has lots of volunteering opportunities for people to get involved and make a difference, including an adoption scheme for groups keen to look after sections of our rivers and canals. Please visit our website for details – www.canalrivertrust.org “

“We appreciate this has been a long-standing concern for the community and seeing the scale of the issue we face in our waterways is shocking and distressing. Sadly, the efforts of these individuals only offers a short-term solution, with waste and driftwood likely to fill the trash screen again with high rainfall. Plastic pollution, fly-tipping and littering our waterways is an ongoing battle for our charity – so while efforts are well intended, we need longer term solutions to deal with the ongoing causes that impact this complex site and this needs wider discussion with key stakeholders in the area.

“Earlier this year the Trust published findings of an independent report ‘Plastics Challenge’ - the first detailed analysis of the scale of the plastic and litter problem we face on our waterways. We now know that litter and plastics in our rivers and canals come from a mix of items that are dropped either accidentally or intentionally by visitors, and items blown onto the waterways from local buildings and businesses which back onto canals and rivers. Read the [Plastics Challenge report here](#). “We have a significant project planned for summer 2021, forecast to be costing in excess of £250,000. Planned engineering works will include strengthening the existing decking to improve accessibility for walkers and cyclists and enable heavy maintenance vehicle access to maintain the structure and safely remove litter, plastics and the natural debris and detritus.”

Plastics Challenge facts and figures

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- The largest type of litter found along the canals is plastic (59% including polystyrene)
- Around 80% of the litter found in the oceans comes from litter dropped inland
- Almost 1 in 5 people admit to dropping litter
- Our charity spends around £1 million a year to remove plastic and litter from across our waterways.