



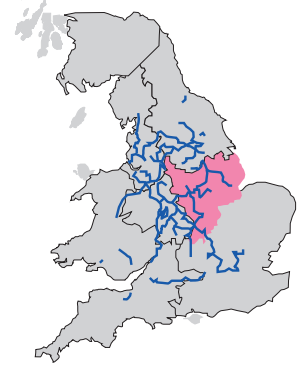
**Canal &  
River Trust**

Making life better by water

# 2021 Youth Impact Report East Midlands



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



# Youth engagement activities in the East Midlands

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



**9,000**  
young people engaged in participatory activities and events



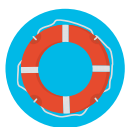
**140**  
young volunteers



**1,600**  
youth social action hours



**2,437**  
young people engaged through Explorers / STEM



**606**  
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

- Beat the Street Leicester, Wigston and Northampton
- Birstall Litter Pickers
- De Montfort University
- Leicester City Football Club in the Community
- Loughborough Grammar School
- NEST
- North Leicestershire Litter Wombles
- Nottingham Trent University
- Sewaday
- Space inclusive
- The Prince's Trust
- University of Northampton
- Volunteering Matters Northampton
- World Against Single Use Plastic
- Young Carers



## Kayak Club volunteers clean up canal

Local students from Nottingham Trent University's Kayak Club helped the Trust tackle invasive vegetation along sections of the Notts Beeston Canal.

The canal was full of floating pennywort, a non-native invasive species, that causes a range of problems including changing the availability of oxygen in the water, threatening fish and invertebrates, choking drainage systems and crowding the native water plants. It was also severely narrowing the width of the canal.

Ten students took part – six in kayaks and four on the bank. The pennywort blooms were removed by those in the kayaks and then hauled from the water by those on the towpath. The vegetation was placed at the back of the towpath to enable the pennywort to rot down

naturally. The waterway is now more navigable for boaters as the blooms are no longer taking up large sections of the waterway.

The students liaised with the Trust to ensure the activity could be undertaken safely, ensuring all relevant risk assessments were conducted prior to the task as well as ensuring they had the correct licences for their kayaks to enter our waterways. They were supported by Trust representatives on the day, however they organised how to remove the pennywort from the water as a team.

## Trust supports 38 young people to complete their Gold Duke of Edinburgh award



Foxton Locks in Leicestershire has been welcoming young people from around the country to complete their Gold Duke of Edinburgh (DoE) award.

Two five-day and four-night residential courses have been hosted enabling 38 young people to complete the 'Volunteering Residential' part of the Gold award.

A campsite was built within the 34-acre site, and staff from the Trust, DoE and volunteers worked closely to run a varied programme of activities that took place throughout each day and night.

### Activities included:

- Creating wildlife and ecologically-friendly paths
- Clearing vegetation from a Scheduled Ancient Monument
- Maintaining and managing eight weirs ensuring safe route for water in the side ponds and clearing a number of wildlife pools
- Installation of a 'Rutland' gate



- Assisting lock-keeping – ensuring the safe travel of boats through the famous Foxton Locks, which are the longest, steepest staircase flight of locks in the UK
- Painting toilet block ceilings
- Clearing vegetation and low branches from the long-stay car park

2021 was the fourth year that Foxton Locks has supported DoE to deliver residential courses. Despite delivering no activity in 2020 due to Covid, many of those who had to put the award on hold, were able to be accommodated in 2021.

The opportunity to spend five days and four nights away from home is much more than

a volunteering residential. Attendees quickly build new long-lasting friendships and develop a range of new skills that will help them in many parts of the lives. These include teamworking, communication, confidence building – not to mention practical skills like fence building, pond clearing and lock-keeping!

In addition to completing the DoE award, Trust staff also delivered the John Muir Award which encourages people of all backgrounds to connect with, enjoy and care for wild places.

The activities generated lots of positive comments including this from one of the adult leaders: "I have worked in a lot of residential settings with young people and have rarely felt as welcomed and included by your staff as we were; the students felt exactly the same.

They were integrated seamlessly into each of the working groups, treated as equals and trusted with any job that they were given. Your staff worked alongside them, whatever the job, encouraging and supporting them through sunshine and rain!"

The impact of the award is best summed up by a young participant who encouraged his parents to make a 200-mile round trip drive to look at the work he had completed during his time at Foxton. Such is the pride that young people feel – they can't wait to come back and show it off to friends and family!





## Volunteering Matters adoption launch event

**A partnership between the Trust and Volunteering Matters was launched in November during iWill week.**

Volunteering Matters have adopted a 1 mile stretch of the Grand Union Canal in Cosgrove, Northamptonshire. A group of ten young people will be responsible for maintaining this space so that it can be used for a variety of community-based activities.

The first task was a comprehensive vegetation management programme. The entrance to the towpath was cleared, steps made accessible and overhanging branches on the towpath cut back.

Volunteering Matters have undertaken this project as part of their commitment to support young people to make a difference in their community. With towpaths now being used for many different reasons including general exercise such as walking and cycling, dog walking and commuting, this mile long stretch of maintained space will be extremely valued by those that use it.



## Canoeing course boosts physical and mental wellbeing



The Trust has been working with Meet, Greet & Eat running a series of paddle sessions for young people struggling with social isolation, loneliness, anxiety, and depression as part of the Nottingham Waterways & Wellbeing programme.

As part of a team, cooking and providing food to the elderly and the isolated in their community, each person can develop confidence and gain experience to help them in the wider world.

Working in partnership, the Trust and Meet, Greet & Eat ran a series of paddle sessions for young people struggling with social isolation, loneliness, anxiety, and depression as part of the Nottingham Waterways & Wellbeing programme.

Participants were anxious about meeting in the city centre so a six-week canoeing course

was arranged in an out of town location – the Holme Pierrepont Nottingham water sports centre.

It was the first time that many of the group had ever been on the water and the activity was very much seen as a collective and shared experience. In addition to supporting each other as a team, many reported the feeling of calmness of being on the water and how it was benefiting both their physical and mental wellbeing.

The group enjoyed the course so much they are now looking at a range of other water-based activities they can take part in.



For more information on our youth & community engagement work  
please email [lucie.unsworth@canalrivertrust.org.uk](mailto:lucie.unsworth@canalrivertrust.org.uk)



**Canal &  
River Trust**

Making life better by water