



Canal &
River Trust

Keeping people, nature & history connected

Case Study of Audlem Volunteer Lock-rangers



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What's this all about?

Volunteer Lock keepers are new to the Canal & River Trust, but what do they do and who (and what) benefits?

Audlem is a town on the Shropshire Union Canal with a flight of locks at its heart. The volunteers were recruited to assist people on the boats and towpath alike; to make connections; and to make it a better place to visit.

But did they do this?



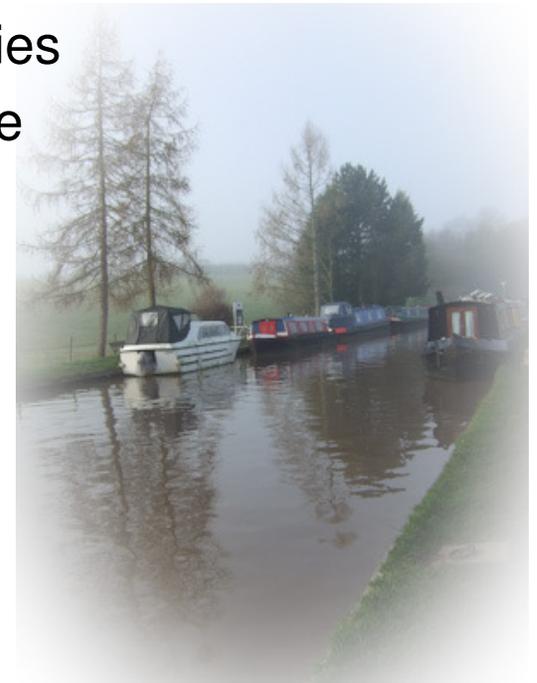


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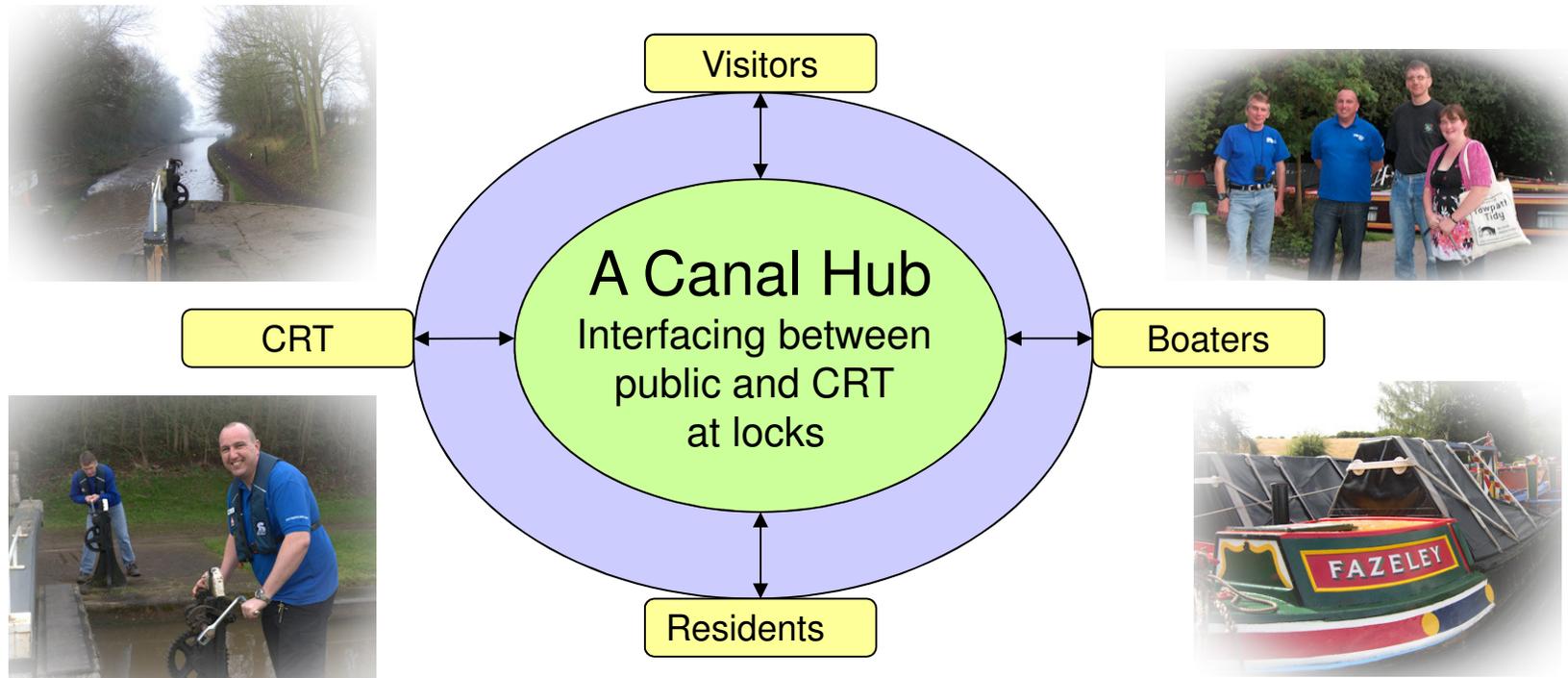
What has been done?

- We carried out pilot research about the volunteer lock-keepers' at Audlem flight, Shropshire Union Canal and the impacts of their volunteering
- We took an exploratory approach to:
 - Finding and interviewing those affecting and affected by the volunteers
 - Discovering the impacts of volunteers' activities
 - Understanding how these impacts have come about
- We used of a towpath survey to see if there is corroborative evidence
- We calculated the Social Return on Investment (SRoI) ratio –putting a value to everything that is achieved (no small challenge)
- A full report has been completed available on request



Achievement 1

A canal-side social hub



*“Volunteers provide a **link** between the **marina** and **village**. Particularly **passing on news** of canal closures, work on canal etc. The marina put it on their website. I talk **to the volunteers** and pass these conversations **on to residents** when they come into the café. **The volunteer** in turn passes on info about the marina **to the village** and **visiting boaters**. Volunteers are marvellous, just as important as community police. Volunteers are passionate. **Its all about building community** and is **a job that needs doing.**”*

Marina Coffee Lounge Manager



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The Canal-side Social Hub

- This isn't a physical hub
- Volunteers build links within and between the 4 sections of the canal-side community (boaters, residents, visitors & CRT)
- The hub encourages the passing on of information
- It enables CRT to take part in the canal-side community
- It supports:
 - Conversation and social cohesion for Community
 - Social benefits for the volunteers
 - Increased customer satisfaction and public image for CRT



Achievement 2

Help at lock flights: for single-handed and older boaters



*“They’re always **willing to help** boaters come rain, hail or shine. Their **friendly** attitude and **offer of assistance** is noted not only by local boaters, but those from afar.. Even during the cold and wet days of winter, we still get a friendly nod from these tireless people and appreciate **their dedication** to maintaining what is 'our local road' through the village. They are always welcome to a warm cup of tea whenever they get time for a break. They are a very welcome and worthwhile **asset to our locality**, their absence would be sorely missed!”*

A Resident Boater



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Help at lock flights: for single-handed and older boaters

- More inclusive boating
 - Single handed boaters
 - Older boaters
- Help for all boaters
 - Local knowledge and advice
 - Catching ropes
 - Help with locks
 - Organising queuing boats



Achievement 3

Litter free Towpath - Visitors Welcome!



77% of residents surveyed rated keeping the Audlem canal area tidy as one of the main values of the volunteers. Those surveyed, rated the upkeep of the canal and area an average of 6.0 out of 7. They were also asked how CRT were doing nationally at managing and maintaining the canal system and their response was 4.8 out of 7



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Litter free Towpath Visitors Welcome!

- Litter free towpath is
 - A tourist asset for Audlem
 - A better experience for visitors, residents and boaters
- Volunteers are attentive to the canal environment
 - Residents believe that there is a reduced risk of major problem (e.g. a canal breach)
- Improved towpath safety for the community
 - Volunteers have water safety and first aid training





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Conclusions



- 50% of boaters felt closer to CRT due to volunteers
- 80% of residents valued having volunteers
- SROI ratio of 1.24 – the research paves way for measuring future improvements and a national SROI
- Stakeholder views and survey results to feed volunteer discussions on what they have learned and what they may want to do differently
- There are now 61 locations nationally with volunteer lock keepers
- Opportunities for further research and measurement nationally
- If you would like a copy of the full report or would you like to help, get in touch with volunteer@canalrivertrust.org.uk

And a big THANK YOU to all the volunteers involved, especially Jane Searles for carrying out the research

