



## REPORT TO CANAL & RIVER TRUST COUNCIL

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### EDUCATION – ACTIVITY AND ASPIRATIONS

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#### 1. Purpose of this paper

- 1.1 To set out for the Council our current status in respect of our educational offer and activity, and to invite Council views on the Trust's long term aspirations.

#### 2. Context

- 2.1 The Trust's Articles of Association (adopted 27 March 2012) contain 'Objects' (also published as part of our Charity Commission registration). The reference relevant to education is the Object allowing us:

*“to promote and facilitate for public benefit awareness, learning and education about Inland Waterways, their history, development, use, operation and cultural heritage by all appropriate means including the provision of museums.”*

- 2.2. The *Living Waterways, Transform Places and Enrich Lives* strategy includes two references to education. Our ten year aspiration is to ensure:

- Half a million children and young people reflective of the range of communities we serve will each year broaden their learning and improve their skills through our waterways, museums and attractions
- One million children and young people from a range of communities each year will engage with our waterways through volunteering, arts, education and learning, sport participation, cultural activities and social action

- 2.3 The report includes a summary of:

- Educational Principles
- Formal Education Programmes
  - Key Stage 1 & 2
  - Key Stage 3
  - Further & Higher Education

- Informal Education and Interpretation Initiatives
- Skills Development in Young People

### 3. Educational Principles

Education provides a cost-effective way of creating a lifelong positive engagement with our canals and rivers. Research<sup>1</sup> has shown that if you take children to a heritage place as a child they are twice as likely to visit as an adult.

There is a wealth of evidence which clearly demonstrates the benefits for young people's learning and personal development outside the classroom. Ofsted has produced a range of documents and case studies to demonstrate its importance. When planned and implemented well, learning outside the classroom contributed significantly to raising standards & improving pupils' personal, social and emotional development.

Our guiding principles:

- We strive to ensure the Trust's formal educational offer is relevant, in-line with current teaching practice techniques and curriculum needs, therefore meeting the needs of teachers, group leaders and our funding partners. All educational resources are produced by experienced educational advisors
- We ensure consistently high quality of delivery of our formal educational offer by organising the volunteers involved in this activity centrally. We recruit experienced and skilled volunteers to undertake this work, many of which are retired/ex-teachers. We offer ongoing training for our education volunteers in a wide range of areas including safeguarding, the safe demonstration of locks, presentation techniques and writing for children
- We choose educational locations or 'hubs' depending on the story to be told, its attractiveness to local schools and practicalities such as the availability of appropriate parking for large vehicles, facilities such as toilets and/or wet weather venue availability. This may mean that certain locations on our network are considered unsuitable to offer a full education service, although this does not exclude schools from visiting locally if they wish
- We charge for school visits to our museums and attractions but make all our other educational resources and services available free of charge to schools, youth groups, parents, etc. We do not currently charge for a volunteer-led in-school visits, guided towpath visits or any of our downloadable resources
- We endeavour to ensure all our resources can be delivered with a local flavour, therefore becoming much more relevant to children's learning at school. Our Build a Trail activity, for example, allows teachers and pupils to create their own local canal trail online
- We ensure the children we engage with are kept safe through the implementation of a rigorous safeguarding policy, undertaking references and vetting checks, and offering safeguarding training to all our Explorers volunteers and education staff

### 4. Formal Education Programmes

#### 4.1 Canal & River Explorers: Key Stage 1 & 2 (Age 5 – 11 years)

The Trust's educational offer for this age range was launched in 2012 and consists of:

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<sup>1</sup> English Heritage Taking Part Survey

- professionally produced, curriculum linked, downloadable educational resources covering curriculum topics such as History, Geography and Science. Our water safety resources are always very popular with schools and usually feature as part of any educational activity
- Outreach volunteer support – offering teachers free in-school talks/assemblies and guided, accompanied towpath visits. We currently have 148 Trust volunteers delivering this service with teams located in almost all waterways
- online activities and interactive games for classroom and home use. All interactive games can be used on tablets and smart phones. This has increasingly become an important and essential part of our work as schools become more reliant on technology
- specialist organised events (usually delivered in partnership) that attract larger numbers of children such as a Schools Week in North London, a CBeebies event at Salford Quays, and a STEM festival organised by the National Boat Museum (which attracted 20 schools and over 1,300 children). Similar activity planned for 2015 include “Northwich, the centre of the industrial world?” event, when all 27 schools in Northwich will have the opportunity to visit the Anderton Boat Lift free of charge thanks to a corporate funding partner
- over the past year we have trialled several types of angling taster events and this is proving to be very popular with schools and teachers. By involving local schools in our planned fish rescues, and organising visits where children can try fishing for the first time, we are reaching new audiences and changing local perceptions of our work and of the local canal. In the coming year we hope to reach another 500 children this way

We have commissioned external evaluation and receive continuous feedback from teachers which has been overwhelmingly good. Most teachers praise the skills of our volunteers and state that the quality of the learning experience for their children was good, and sometimes exceptional.

*“On these trips, children can learn more in one day than they can from a week in the classroom. And they’ll remember it.”*

*“I was so impressed with the workshop. The best bit was the lesson plan. I have enough ideas to make a topic out of it in the summer term. I think the online resources are fab and the fact that they’re free is a real bonus! It was lovely to meet one of the volunteers as well. It is clear that Les is a mind full of information and that he is eager to share his knowledge!”*

This year the Explorers education programme will reach over **39,000** children. These have been high quality educational experiences, delivered in schools or through waterside visits. This is an exceptional achievement given that in 2012 this figure stood at 3,630.

We are planning, subject to the Board’s approval, to extend the geographical reach of the Explorers programme by appointing an education co-ordinator for the North East and East Midlands’ waterways. Their remit will be to recruit, train and manage teams of education volunteers, and develop locations such as Tees Barrage (North East) and Trent Lock (East Midlands) as key destinations for schools and groups.

**We are aiming to reach 100,000 young people and children (each year) through our various education programmes by 2018.**

#### **4.2 Key Stage 3 (Age 11 – 14)**

The Trust has not yet worked in any substantial way with this age range.

As children move into secondary school demands on their time in and out of school increases. We are also competing with a large number of educational providers and charities hoping to reach this age

range. It is essential that any educational offer aiming to engage this age range is tested and proved to be effective in enhancing learning.

In 2015/6 we plan to devise an innovative and impactful educational offer for the Key Stage 3 focused on waterways and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths). Subject to the Board's approval, we intend to recruit an expert to help us develop this offer and reach this new market.

As part of this work we will develop a youth social action (volunteering) offer which teachers can use to help students develop strong community life skills and character. We are already partnering the Construction Youth Trust, an experienced charity working in this field, and hope to build on this partnership to explore how an element of social action can be incorporated into the learning experience offered to schools in this age group.

We will actively seek out private sector partners and other funding to help us with this work. The Trust is currently working with the Rolls Royce graduate project scheme in Derby to identify and design resources as part of their internal Leading Lights initiative.

#### **4.3 Further and Higher Education**

We have established a large number of relationships with Further and Higher Education Bodies recently. These relationships are focused on our volunteering priorities and not specifically around our education and learning aspirations. There are emerging relationships focusing on enabling PhD student research opportunities and undergraduate placements but these are currently small in number.

A number of Partnership Boards have indicated in their local plans that they view local links with Further and Higher Education Bodies as being a priority for them. It is envisaged that relationships with these bodies will take many forms and the possibilities for involvement in learning opportunities will be wide and varied.

#### **4.4 Informal Education & Interpretation Initiatives**

Interpretation explains the significance of a place or object to visitors, reveals why and how it is important and is often described as informal learning.

The Trust provides opportunities for visitors to discover our canals and rivers and encourages them to learn about their heritage and environment through interpretation. Hopefully this will lead to a behavioural change in visitors. People who take part in our activities will develop a growing enthusiasm for our canals and rivers and become active supporters. They will visit our museums and attractions, they will become advocates for the waterways and our work, they will volunteer to contribute practically or they will donate and become Friends.

Examples of our current work in this area:

- We recently trained some of our Explorers volunteers in costumed interpretation. This will enable them to confidently take on the characters of significant historic individuals and enhance the visitor experience particularly at our museums and attractions
- At the Gloucester Waterways Museum we are about to start work on the Heritage Lottery Funded Project "From Birmingham to the Sea" which will include galleries and exhibitions, a floating classroom space and an extensive learning programme
- At the National Waterways Museum we are currently developing a new learning space. It will be a flexible open-plan space where we can run events or use as a classroom. Later this year we will be working on the 'Window on the World' project which will interpret the slipway and two historic boats

- Following an audit using the Kids in Museums Manifesto we have planned and are delivering a range of family learning activities at all of our museums and attractions. A new Under Fives room has also been refurbished adding an Explorers wallpaper to make the room visually more appealing to families
- As part of the new national signing strategy we are developing a suite of interpretive panel templates
- Following a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund the Revealing Oldknow's Legacy project will reveal, conserve and interpret Samuel Oldknow's legacy in Marple, through archaeology, learning and volunteering opportunities

Almost all Partnership Boards have indicated their eagerness to deliver more interpretation schemes in their local areas, such as the development of local trails, and see this as important tool to engaging local people.

#### 4.5 Skills Development in Young People

Through our Youth Engagement programme, and with financial support from funders and partners, we are able to offer young people opportunities to enhance their skills and employability.

Examples of this include:

- the Heritage Skills Trainee Programme (funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund – Skills for the Future, the Radcliffe Trust and the Norton Foundation), where 42 heritage skills trainees will be recruited over three years. Each participant will gain an NVQ level two in Heritage Waterways Management
- the Cabinet Office funded project on the Caldon Canal in the Churnet Valley. The Trust is engaging 30 young people (16–24 year olds) on a 6-month personal development and social action programme, undertaking a wide range of practical tasks and activities to improve their life skills and employability. All participants are working towards a City & Guilds accredited Level 2 Certificate in Work Based Environmental Conservation and various other awards and training throughout

The future development and progression of such programmes will be reliant on external funding, and due to the nature of this work will often be focused on funder outcomes and outputs. In order to ensure the Trust is best placed to maximise the impact of these partnerships, for both the waterways, the young person involved, the Trust, and the funder, subject to the Board's approval, we are investing in additional youth project management resource in 2015. This resource will help us develop and nurture more of these types of partnership and begin to draw together a coherent thread for this activity.

#### 5. Education Sector Profile, Reputation and Marketing

The education sector is an extremely competitive one and if we are to grow activity in this area we need to ensure our reputation for delivering high quality educational experience amongst teachers and schools is good, and our educational offers are well-known and accessible.

- The education team have visited the **NEC Education Show** for several years now, reaching many educational professionals and building awareness of our work
- This year the Trust has been awarded the **Learning Outside the Classroom Quality Badge** for the Canal & River Explorers programme at 21 sites. The badge is a nationally recognised indicator of good quality educational provision and is an award that combines the essential elements of provision – learning and safety – into one easily recognisable and trusted accreditation scheme. Holders of the LOtC Quality Badge are required to pass a robust assessment, designed to ensure that they are meeting schools' learning and risk management needs, no matter what activities they offer

- We promote our activities and resources on **Twitter, Facebook and websites** which are aimed at teachers. The Times Educational Supplement recently rated two of our online resources, produced as part of our school's marketing campaign, as "five star" for their relevance to the new National Curriculum
- We will continue to work with production companies to achieve **TV and radio exposure** to promote our educational work. Blue Peter filmed a fish rescue last year resulting in us reaching many thousands of children. More recently an episode of "My Story" on the CBeebies channel this month, featured the National Waterways Museum and one of the Explorers' volunteers (Cath Turpin) and her granddaughter (Lucy). We regard these opportunities as being a huge part of our educational offer, whilst being more light touch than in our school programmes, these types of media enable us to reach wider audiences and raises awareness in children and young people
- We are continuing to promote our half-termly **newsletter** sent to all primary schools in England and Wales. We currently have 1,383 named teachers currently subscribed to our information service. Our research has revealed that through these named teachers we now have access to 465,003 pupils who are enrolled at these schools

In 2015, subject to the Board's approval, we will recruit an educational marketing specialist who will help us target communication and marketing material at those schools most likely to take up our offer (local) and those in most need (social deprivation and/or educational disadvantage indicators). This will enable us to increase our social impact and ensure we reach children who live closest to our canals first.

This additional role will help us connect to national education policy more effectively and generate partnerships with key influencers in the education sector.

We hope also to improve the processes behind our educational work, to make it easier for teachers to access our services. This will include the introduction of online visit booking and quality evaluation for schools and groups.

## **6. Summary**

- 6.1** This paper aimed to set out for the Council our current status in respect of our educational offers and activity, and to invite Council views on the Trust's medium-term action plan and long-term aspirations.

March 2015