



PRESS RELEASE

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CANAL CHARITY SEEKS COMMUNITY GROUPS TO ADOPT SECTIONS OF WORCESTER'S CANAL

The Canal & River Trust is urging local communities in Worcester to play a bigger part in looking after the waterways on their doorstep, by urging them to 'adopt' up to a one mile stretch of local canal.

The call comes as part of the charity's wider plans to ensure that the region's waterways – such as the Worcester & Birmingham Canal - continue to thrive and don't fall back into the near dereliction of the mid-twentieth century, when some sections were almost lost forever.

Adoption groups will work in partnership with the Trust in order to make their local waterway shine; anything from improving wildlife habitats and access for local people, to creating a linear veg-patch for the community. Each group works at least one day a month for 12 months and agrees the projects they want to prioritise to make their mile matter.

To support the call, the Trust has published an online map that showcases existing adoption groups and areas that are available for people to support. For full details visit <https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/adopt-a-canal>

Richard Parry, Canal & River Trust chief executive, comments: "Local waterways are arguably as important today as they have ever been. They have evolved from freight highways to linear parks in our towns and cities. They are places for us all to escape – havens for both people and wildlife. But to make sure this valuable legacy thrives into the future, we need to capitalise on the huge pride people have in them and encourage groups to work alongside us to make it happen.

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We see how much a stretch of canal is improved if local people are helping us to look after it, that's why we've set an ambitious target for people to show their love for their local canal."

The Trust's adoption appeal is being supported by TV personality and outdoor champion Julia Bradbury, she says: "Two hundred years ago, canals helped to transform the face of Britain, bringing about unprecedented change to our economy and society. The legacy we have today is amongst the finest examples of industrial heritage in the world, yet the biggest threat our waterways face is apathy.

"Last century it was pioneering volunteers who rolled up their sleeves to help save the waterways from being lost forever. And today when I'm out exploring and taking in the waterways I've seen what a difference it makes when local communities come together and make their stretch come to life. I'd encourage anyone with a community spirit and a bit of time to spare to see how they can get involved".

There are already over 160 adoption groups working across the country, including scouts, neighbourhood societies, running groups and schools. The aim is to get a quarter of the Canal & River Trust's network (500 miles) adopted by 2025.

Joy Squires volunteers with the Worcester Canal Group who have adopted a stretch of the Worcester & Birmingham Canal in Diglis. Joy says: "We look after a stretch of the canal from Diglis to Perdiswell, about a mile long in total. We've been going three years now and have over 70 members. At least 20 of us will be out working on the last Saturday of each month. We get help from local resident groups to pick up litter and every three months we use the Canal & River Trust's volunteer boat to help get to places we can't reach from the towpath.

"We're not confined to just litter collection though. We've held a canal festival with the help of the Worcester, Birmingham and Droitwich Canal Society. Everyone enjoyed the weekend, it was full of boats, music and craft stalls. We're planning another one for next year too.

"We've recruited in local experts to lead wildlife walks, as there's huge array of wildlife out on the canal. It's great for people to come and sit and just observe all the flora and fauna. One of our future projects is to work alongside a huge range of local organisations to help improve conditions along the water for all the wildlife. A number of the group artists, and this has enabled us to create murals under a number of bridges. We've even installed a sculpture.

“Hopefully it shows that we are not only keeping our stretch clean and tidy, but also helping to improve it so that everyone in the community can benefit.

The Trust also has more informal volunteer opportunities including volunteer lock keeping and drop-in volunteering sessions so that anyone can get involved with caring for the waterways. More information is available at canalrivertrust.org.uk/volunteer

A nationwide survey conducted by the Trust indicates that people would like to have more access to green space and chances to get involved in their local community, something the charity believes its volunteering options provide:

- A third of Brits think more communal green spaces should be provided for communities to enjoy
- 81% of Brits feel they need more access to nature than they currently have
- Over 91% of Brits want to be involved in their community
- Just a quarter of Brits think they have access to a canal as a green space, yet there's one within five miles of 50% of the populations front door
- The Industrial Revolution marked a major turning point in history, with almost every aspect of daily life influenced in some way, but it seems younger generations don't realise this with only with only 29% of 25 -34 recognising the vital role canals and rivers held

Ends

Notes to editors

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Thousands of miles of canals were built across the nation to help to power the Industrial Revolution over two centuries ago. However, the onset of the railway age forced many to fall into decline by the early and mid-twentieth century. Whilst many canals were lost, hundreds of miles were saved by the endeavours of passionate local people, with canals and rivers brought back into use for leisure, wildlife and tourism to thrive.

The Canal & River Trust is the guardian of 2,000 miles of historic waterways across England and Wales, caring for the nation's third largest collection of listed structures, as well as museums, archives, and hundreds of important wildlife sites. We believe that *living waterways transform places and enrich lives* and our role is to make sure there is always a place on your doorstep

where you can escape the pressures of everyday life, stretch your legs and simply feel closer to nature www.canalrivertrust.org.uk @CanalRiverTrust @crtcomms

For more information on Julia Bradbury's BBC Canal Walks series visit <http://theoutdoorguide.co.uk/walks/canal-walks/>