



# PRESS RELEASE

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## CHESHIRE STUDENTS RE-MOULD FORMER CANAL CLAY PIT BUILDING

Joinery students from Reaseheath College have put their building skills to the test by refurbishing a small former clay pit office on the banks of the Shropshire Union Canal Middlewich Branch, near Church Minshull in mid Cheshire.

In a joint project with the Canal & River Trust charity and volunteers from SUMBA (Shropshire Union Middlewich Branch Adopters), the third year students have rescued the dilapidated building by installing a new door, window, roof timbers, tiles and guttering.

SUMBA obtained a community grant from Cheshire East Council for the building materials, which were transported to site, along with the eight students, in true canal style by the Trust's 72 feet historic workboat 'Malvern'.

The brick hut used to be a manager's office for the Cholmondeston clay pit which was operational from the late 1960s until 2002, providing clay for re-lining the canal. The building forms the focal point of a waterside clearing which has now been turned into an attractive picnic area, thanks to SUMBA's enthusiastic volunteers. Over the coming months they will be working hard to install a new picnic bench, interpretation panels and boat access to the site. The table will be made by 'Men in Sheds' from Crewe, using wood recycled by SUMBA volunteers when they repaired the nearby Brickyard Bridge.

Duncan Davenport, local customer operations manager with the Canal & River Trust, said: "We have the challenge of looking after 2,000 miles of the nation's waterways. Volunteer projects like this can make a massive difference to how visitors enjoy our beautiful canals.

"SUMBA volunteers have done a fantastic job, over many months, in transforming this former claypit site into a peaceful canalside picnic haven. For boaters and for walkers taking a short stroll from Venetian Marina, this will be a lovely place to stop and enjoy the Cheshire countryside.

"We are particularly delighted to join forces with Reaseheath College to secure the future of the heritage claypit building. We hope it will be the start of a close relationship which benefits both students and the Trust.

Graham Russell, SUMBA's coordinator added: "The students have done a great job with the hut and it's good to be able to involve our local college and Men in Sheds in our waterway project. SUMBA welcomes new volunteers and information about our work and contact details can be found on our website [www.sumbavolunteers.org](http://www.sumbavolunteers.org)."

To find out more about volunteering or donating to the Canal & River Trust, please check out the website: [www.canalrivertrust.org.uk](http://www.canalrivertrust.org.uk), email [enquiries.northwalesborders@canalrivertrust.org.uk](mailto:enquiries.northwalesborders@canalrivertrust.org.uk) or telephone 0303 040 4040.

**ENDS**

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**Notes to editors:**

**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.

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**SUMBA**, made up of enthusiastic canal volunteers, has adopted five and a half miles of canal from Barbridge Junction to Church Minshull under Canal and River Trust's 'Adopt Your Local Canal' scheme - which aims to get more people involved in their local waterway. Supported by the Trust they hold work parties throughout the year to maintain and visually enhance their stretch of canal by cutting back vegetation, painting locks and infrastructure, litter picking, lock keeping and hedge laying etc.