



PRESS RELEASE

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CELEBRATING THE WORK OF THE PEOPLE MAKING LIFE BETTER BY WATER

The Canal & River Trust has celebrated some of the fantastic work carried out by its staff and volunteers over the past year with the presentation of its annual Waterways Alive Awards at the Anderton Boat Lift.

The awards are open to staff and volunteers from across the charity and the winners showcase the sheer variety of the work the Trust carries out.

All the finalists were recognised for their particular achievements, and Chief Executive Richard Parry announced the winners in the four main categories alongside an award for Apprentice of the Year.

- The award for Best Operations or Works went to the £1.2m Marple Makeover which saw major repairs to an entire heritage lock flight and aqueduct
- A staff-led project which has helped to improve efficiency and employee engagement saw the replacement of out-dated mobile technology to over 600 bank staff pick up the award for Enterprise or Innovation
- The award for Community Activity went to Spirit of Stonebridge which has turned a heavily vandalised area on the River Lee with the highest repair bills of any operational property on our network into a busy community hub, enjoyed by local people
- For the first time, there was a category for the Trust's Values Team of the Year for those teams that consistently employ the organisation's values. This went to the South East Boat Licence Support team, who exemplify how important it is to be true to the Trust's values when facing some of the more challenging issues that the charity has to deal with when supporting boaters
- The Trust also recognised Apprentice of the Year, Paula Baron, a Wigan masonry apprentice who has worked on several heritage landmarks and big projects across the country, and runner-up M&E apprentice Jeff Croker who is based in Gloucester.

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Canal & River Trust chief executive, Richard Parry, said: “This year we had more entries than ever before, and yet the quality of the work remained higher than ever. This is testament not only to the great work we do but also the passion and commitment of all those who are doing so much to make life better by water. All of our finalists have made a very positive difference to our waterways and the people who use them, and the impact they can have. The winning projects and teams were all exceptional and reflected the wide variety of activities the Trust carries out.

“I would like to thank everyone who entered the awards and congratulate all the finalists for their achievements. Across this year’s entries I have seen more great examples of our creativity and innovation; of teamwork and partnership; of reaching out to find new opportunities whilst consistently delivering excellence in our core work; and an outstanding commitment to the Trust’s vision and values. We can all be proud of what they - and we all - have achieved.”

More information about the Waterways Alive Awards winners is available on request.

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For further media requests please contact:

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Notes to editors:

Best Operations or Works:

Marple Makeover – The lock chamber wall at Grade II listed Lock 15 on the Marple Flight, Peak Forest Canal had moved, making the lock too narrow for navigation. The wall was carefully dismantled, the bricks numbered, and repairs made behind the rebuilt wall. With the flight closed it was the perfect opportunity to carry out 88 pieces of work across the lock flight, ranging from vegetation clearance to large scale washwall repairs. Grade I listed and Scheduled Ancient Monument Marple Aqueduct was built without an offside parapet. Increasing visitor numbers led to the decision to install parapet railings. After consultation with Historic England, Stockport Council, boaters and the local community, a bespoke solution, forming a sympathetic and lasting addition to the structure, was designed.

Community Activity:

Spirit of Stonebridge – A forlorn and unloved section of the River Lee experienced such persistent vandalism that in 2015 the Waterside Centre at Stonebridge Lock was the most expensive operational property on our network because of repeated repairs. The estates team found tenants to run a community café in the former classroom and a £12,000 grant from Tesco’s Bags of Help helped to kick-start a community engagement project. We worked with the café, the disabled children’s charity Action for Kids, the Lea Valley Regional Park Authority, the Friends of Tottenham Marshes, boaters, community payback teams, volunteer lock keepers and two adoption groups to build an edible garden and terrace next to the café, convert an

empty room into a volunteer welfare and training space, and reorganise the bin compound, waste and refuse area.

Enterprise or Innovation:

Unlocking Mobile Opportunity – The project looked at the long-running concerns of operations teams about the performance of their Motorola TC55 phones. From the outset, rather than a technology project, this was an opportunity to engage with colleagues to help select and distribute a device of their choice that would improve communication and make their job easier. It was essential that it was driven by user need. Throughout, a broad-based project team carried out testing, surveyed colleagues, ran workshops, and carried out 22 roadshows to allow as many people as possible to experience the shortlisted handsets. During the roll-out of the new phones to 648 colleagues, 33 device champions, from all disciplines, gave 61 training sessions in eight weeks. Users gave the sessions 9 out of 10 and confidence with the phones 8.7 out of 10.

Values Team of the Year:

South East Boat Licence Support – It is not easy to explain the complex nature of the work the team does. Licensing rangers are out in all weathers doing boat checks and interacting with customers. Licence support officers deal with complex cases and without exception act with compassion, understanding, and excellence. Some of the most difficult cases are handled with sensitivity and professionalism by colleagues who often face criticism and abuse as they carry out their duties.