

PRESS RELEASE

16 May

WILDLIFE GETS BOOST ALONG REGENT'S CANAL AS LOCAL COMMUNITY GROUPS BUILD FLOATING GREEN ISLANDS

- **PHOTO/FILM/PHOTO OPPORTUNITY:** Wednesday 22 May, Regent's Canal, Mile End (E3 4RR) from 11am

The biodiversity of the Regent's Canal, which weaves through central London, is getting a boost next week with the installation of over 75 metres of floating islands.

The project is being carried out by two volunteer groups, the Lower Regent's Coalition and The Wildlife Gardeners of Haggerston, with support from the wellbeing and waterway charity Canal & River Trust and ecology solutions provider Biomatrix Water.

The project has been made possible with a grant from the Mayor of London's Greener City Fund. The two groups have teamed up with the aim of creating a chain of diverse aquatic vegetation that will eventually connect up their two patches, in Tower Hamlets and Hackney respectively, helping to make the Regent's Canal a true 'green corridor' and a significant part of London's National Park City and its wildlife.

Volunteers will take to the water in Mile End and Haggerston to assemble the floating structures, plant them up and pull them into place along the water's edge on the opposite side of the towpath. These floating islands contain native aquatic plants including Marsh Marigold, Meadowsweet, Purple Loosestrife, Ragged-Robin, Yellow Flag Iris and various Sedges. Once installed they will improve the aesthetics of the canal and create new habitat for urban wildlife such as dragonflies, herons, kingfishers, wrens and fish below the surface.

Molly Gadenz from the Lower Regent's Coalition says: "We know from experience that the canals across London are much loved and well used. Many people from all backgrounds love being by water and the canals provide a peaceful place where we can take a break from the hectic pace of city life. Along the Tower Hamlets and Hackney

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sections of the Regent's, we see such a wide range of people using the canal and its surrounding green spaces for everything from recreation to relaxation, from commuting to calling it home. We are really excited about our new green corridor enhancements – we hope they will be great additions and will create focal points for enjoying and appreciating all the amazing benefits that the canal provides.”

Gideon Corby from The Wildlife Gardeners of Haggerston added: “It’s easy to feel helpless reading about biodiversity loss across the world but here, acting locally, we can make a difference. Imagine our Regent’s Canal having as much greenery and wildlife as somewhere like the Kennet & Avon Canal, that’s the dream and we can realise it. This work brings individuals and community groups together to make our shared environment better for us and for wildlife.”

Tim Mulligan, Canal & River Trust ecologist, says: “The Regent’s Canal is arguably the most popular canal in the country. It’s a unique green space that winds through the heart of the city and is home to a wonderful array of wildlife. We welcome any chance to support this ecosystem and are extremely grateful to the Wildlife Gardeners and Lower Regent’s Coalition for pioneering this scheme: their work is a great example of what can be done as more communities get involved with improving their local waterways. The canal is such a great place, perfect for slowing down, relaxing and escaping the hustle and bustle of the city. Being by the water makes people feel healthier and happier and I’d encourage anyone to pay it a visit.”

The Lower Regent’s Coalition has ‘adopted’ a two mile long section of the canal from Limehouse Basin to Mile End Road in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets and work alongside the Canal & River Trust to provide improvements to the water and towpath. They run regular volunteer events that are free and open to the public, providing an opportunity for the diverse range of people who live in or frequent the area to be a part of protecting and enhancing this important open space. The group’s activities include land and water-based litter picks, graffiti removal and creating wildflower gardens. For more information about the Lower Regent’s Coalition visit <https://en-gb.facebook.com/lowerregentscoalition/>

The Wildlife Gardeners of Haggerston have ‘adopted’ the Regent’s Canal between the Kingsland and Whitmore Road bridges. They also look after the neighbouring Kingsland Basin Nature Reserve. Working with the Canal & River Trust and with the support of local community groups and businesses they make the canal cleaner, greener and wilder. They are participating in National Park City week with an exhibition at The Bargehouse. Follow them on Instagram: living_waterway.

More information about Biomatrix video is available here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fnddBfc-5c>

More details about the Canal & River Trust, including how you can volunteer with the charity or adopt a section of canal, visit canalrivertrust.org.uk

Ends

Notes to editors

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The Canal & River Trust cares for and brings to life 2,000 miles of canals and rivers across England & Wales. We believe waterways have the power to make a difference to **people's lives and that spending time by water can make us all healthier and happier.** By bringing communities together to make a difference to their local waterway, we are creating places and spaces that can be used and enjoyed by everyone, every day. www.canalrivertrust.org.uk