

# PRESS RELEASE

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## PEOPLE AND PROJECTS MAKING LIFE BETTER BY WATER

The Canal & River Trust has celebrated some of the fantastic work carried out by its teams and volunteers over the past year with the presentation of its annual Waterways Alive Awards in Birmingham.

The awards are open to teams and volunteers from across the charity and the winners showcase the depth and breadth of the work the Trust carries out.

All the finalists were recognised for their particular achievements. Chief executive Richard Parry announced the winners alongside an award for Apprentice of the Year.

- Best Community Project: **4Life** – putting in place a package of wellbeing volunteering schemes in one of our most deprived communities.
- Best Wellbeing Project: **Let's Fish!** – which enabled 4,000 children across the country to try fishing for the first time.
- Best Construction, Heritage, Engineering or Environment Project: **Stanthorne Repair** – a £2.8m repair of a major breach on the Shropshire Union Canal at Middlewich, bringing the canal back into use for boaters.
- Best Customer Service or Visitor Experience Improvement: **Waterways Experiences: Offside Improvements Grand Union Canal** – helping a small charity that provides boat trips for the disadvantaged to help the Trust by clearing offside vegetation.
- Best Innovation or Productivity Improvement: **Wigan Flight** – took advantage of last summer's drought closure on the Leeds & Liverpool Canal by carrying out a comprehensive programme of improvements that minimised future disruption to boaters.
- Values Team of the Year: **Tees Barrage Operatives**.
- Apprentice of the Year: **Jonathan Ward**.

Canal & River Trust chief executive, Richard Parry, said: "Our Waterways Alive Awards covered some great projects, initiatives and activities. The winning projects and teams were all exceptional and reflect the wide variety of activities the Trust carries out.

Canal & River Trust, Toll House, Delamere Terrace, London, W2 6ND

T: 0203 3204 4514 E: [press.office@canalrivertrust.org.uk](mailto:press.office@canalrivertrust.org.uk) W: [www.canalrivertrust.org.uk](http://www.canalrivertrust.org.uk) Twitter: [@CanalRiverTrust](https://twitter.com/CanalRiverTrust)

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"Our Values winners – the Tees Barrage Operatives – exemplify our positive spirit; despite their location being remote from the rest of our network, they are using the barrage and the river to create a wide range of opportunities to engage and involve people with the Trust, always friendly, enthusiastic and accommodating, whilst also managing a very significant engineering structure – you'll always find a smile and a warm welcome on the Tees! We also recognised our Apprentice of the Year, Jonathan Ward, an engineering trainee in the bridges team, who's impressed all his colleagues with his attitude and approach.

"I would like to thank everyone who entered the awards – it was a tough job choosing between the 58 entries – and congratulate all the finalists for their achievements."

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

**ENDS**

**For further media requests please contact:**

Fran Read, national press officer, Canal & River Trust  
m 07796 610 427 e [fran.read@canalrivertrust.org.uk](mailto:fran.read@canalrivertrust.org.uk)

Notes to editors:

**Best Community Project: 4Life**

A package of wellbeing volunteering schemes was trialled in one of the most deprived communities in the North West. Social prescribing supports people suffering from anxiety, social isolation, depression and those who would benefit from physical exercise by offering practical outdoor conservation tasks to improve physical and mental wellbeing. We have had 12 people referred to our volunteering team from the NHS. A particular success is Bernard, a young man who suffered from depression and anxiety and rarely left his home. Since joining the Trust as a volunteer, Bernard's confidence has improved immensely, he has a new inspiration for life and has found greater confidence by volunteering besides our waterways.

**Best Wellbeing Project: Let's Fish!**

This campaign has expanded from a small start with nine events two years ago, to a bumper year for this wellbeing activity in 2018, when we ran 147 events, involving 20 waterways, 50 qualified angling coaches, 30 angling clubs, and attracted 3,997 children who have tried fishing for the first time. This activity resulted in record 49 juniors attending the Junior Angling Championships.

**Best Construction, Heritage, Engineering or Environment Project: Stanthorne Repair**

The £2.5m project to repair damage caused by the collapse in March 2018 of a 70m section of embankment next to Stanthorne Aqueduct, on the Middlewich Branch of the Shropshire Union Canal had the challenging target of getting the canal open again for Christmas. Project

Managers, ecologists, designers, contractors, media & comms worked together to achieve this. The project was funded by the Trust and players of People's Postcode Lottery who contributed £1.42m. Volunteers from the local community, supported by Trust fundraisers, raised more than £30,000.

**Best Customer Service or Visitor Experience Improvement: Waterways Experiences: Offside Improvements Grand Union Canal**

Waterways Experiences is a small volunteer run organisation, offering accessible day boat trips to people with disabilities, who gave 900 hours, in all weathers, to clear 8km of offside vegetation, benefiting all canal users and saving the Trust an estimated £6,000.

**Best Innovation or Productivity Improvement: Wigan Flight**

The local team produced a programme for improvement works for the flight while it was closed during the 2018 drought. Colleagues, volunteers and young people from The Skills Company (in conjunction with the Desmond Family Canoe Trail) completed more than 400 tasks such as painting, towpath and wall repairs, greasing and repairing lock gate mechanisms, removing litter, graffiti, sprawling vegetation etc. Direct services also brought forward stoppages from the winter programme. We maximised every single opportunity during this period to ensure Wigan Flight was in the best possible condition for customers and the community.