

PRESS RELEASE

1 October 2019

Canal charity needs public help to solve mystery pollution problem

Waterways and wellbeing charity, Canal & River Trust, is urging the public to help with a mystery problem affecting Olton Reservoir in Solihull.

Working with volunteers from the Trust, Severn Trent Water and the Environment Agency, as part of the ConnectRight campaign, the charity is trying to work out where some mystery pollution seems to be coming from. Appearing intermittently in a stream that feeds water to the reservoir, the pollution turns the water a milky white colour which sometimes has a pungent smell to accompany it. Now the charity is asking for local people to help solve the mystery and to help work out where this pollution is originating from.

Olton Reservoir was built in 1799 to supply the Grand Union Canal and is the largest area of open water in Solihull. It is home to a wide variety of waterfowl and the local sailing club use the water for leisure activities.

Alex May, environmental scientist at the Canal & River Trust, said: “This has really got us scratching our heads. We’ve been out on several occasions to see if we can find the source of this pollution, but frustratingly we haven’t yet found it.

“Many people do not realise that what you put down your drain doesn’t always end up in the sewage system. Drains that are intended only for rain water often end up being connected to a local canal, river or reservoir so if you pour something into this drain system it could end up polluting our waterways.

“With research showing that being next to water makes you happier and healthier it’s not nice to visit our beautiful waterways and see pollution or smelling bad smells. The 500 miles of waterways we look after across the West Midlands are beautiful places to visit throughout the year and are also really valuable habitats for wildlife. With help from the public we’re determined to solve this problem at Olton Reservoir making it a special place for people and wildlife once more.”

People living in the B91 and B92 are being urged to check their plumbing and to make sure their drains are connected to the correct drainage system and to live by the mantra of ‘only rain

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down the drain'. Washing machine, toilets and shower/bath drains can be misconnected so instead of draining into the sewers they drain directly into our waterways which, in severe cases, can harm or even kill the local wildlife.

If anyone has any information about where this pollution is coming from or would like to report a misconnection, please contact the Canal & River Trust on 03030 404040.

The ConnectRight campaign is a partnership between environmental regulators, water companies, authorities and other professional and interested organisations working together to reduce water pollution from drains and sewers <http://www.connectright.org.uk/>

For more information on the Canal & River Trust including how you can volunteer or donate money to support our work please visit www.canalrivertrust.org.uk

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For further media requests please contact: Sarah Rudy, comms & campaigns manager on 01908 302 584 / 07788 691 219 or email sarah.rudy@canalrivertrust.org.uk

Notes to Editors

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