

PRESS RELEASE

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CANAL CHARITY LAUNCHES ACTIVE WATERWAYS PROJECT FOR CHESHIRE'S OVER 55s.

Cheshire's canals and rivers are at the heart of a new 'Active Waterways' project by the Canal & River Trust charity, aimed at encouraging people over 55 to get active and healthy.

Supported by £222,000 of National Lottery funding from Sport England and in partnership with Active Cheshire, the new project is a key initiative within Sport England's plan 'Towards an Active Nation' and will make use of the county's many beautiful waterways – part of the 2,000 miles of canals and rivers cared for by the Trust.

Project leaders Anika Neill and Emma Hicks will be working hard over the next 21 months to recruit new Active Waterway volunteers to get involved with supporting and initiating activities in their own local areas across the county. All volunteer leaders will be offered a comprehensive training support programme.

They will also be setting up a range of health and well-being events and groups in the six hub locations of Northwich, Ellesmere Port, Middlewich, Macclesfield, Congleton and Audlem. The project will also reach out to existing community groups to increase their activity levels.

Sport England research shows that inactivity among people over 55 is responsible for just as many deaths as smoking. In Cheshire and Warrington just over 40 % of the population (c.370,000 people) are over 55 and of these 53% (nearly 200,000) do less than two and a half hours of gentle exercise per week. Active Cheshire research indicates the main reasons for inactivity are health (54%), work and family commitments (26%) and lack of interest (15%).

Anika Neill, Active Waterways project manager with the Canal & River Trust, said: "This is a wonderful chance for us to provide new health and fitness opportunities for older people in Cheshire. We know our canals already offer great ways to enjoy the big outdoors for walkers, boaters, joggers, anglers, cyclists and paddle boarders.

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“We hope this project will reach people who may not be used to being active on a regular basis. Life truly is better by water and in Cheshire we have some of the most beautiful rural waterways in the country.”

The River Weaver Navigation, Trent & Mersey, Shropshire Union and Macclesfield canals will all be involved in hosting activities for the project.

A special consultation has been launched to seek views and ideas on what types of activities people would like to participate in. If you are over 55 and live in Cheshire, you can find the online survey here: <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/ActiveWaterways>. Entrants will be entered into a prize draw to win shopping vouchers.

For more information or to get involved, please go to the Canal & River Trust website www.canalrivertrust.org.uk/volunteer/opportunities. If you are an organisation interested in supporting or co-delivering the project, please contact Anika Neill at anika.neill@canalrivertrust.org.uk or Emma at emma.hicks@canalrivertrust.org.uk. Mobile 07990 612700.

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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.

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