

PRESS RELEASE

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STAY WATER SAFE THIS SUMMER URGES CANAL CHARITY

- With swimming pools across the country closed, canal charity urges young people not to be tempted to cool down in open water this summer
- Water temperatures can be extremely cold causing even the strongest swimmers to get into trouble
- There are often hidden risks under the surface of the water

With swimming pools closed due to coronavirus, and with the summer weather ahead, the Canal & River Trust is urging young people not to take a risk by swimming in canals, rivers, reservoirs and other open waters.

The warm summer months are the most popular times for people to visit Britain's canals and rivers; however if anyone is thinking of going into the water, please don't; people can get into difficulties after jumping into the water to cool down. Canal and river water will be very cold, even in the summer, which can take your breath away and paralyse your muscles, making it difficult to swim, and it will often hide dangerous obstacles or currents.

The charity is welcoming people to the waterside but is highlighting other ways to cool down that avoid getting in the water:

- Lounge in the shade of waterside trees rather than getting tangled in waterway reeds.
- Keep your cool – chill out on the bank and enjoy the peacefulness of being beside water.
- If you want to jump and dive, wait for your local swimming pool to open, don't get in locks or canals which can be shallow and have obstructions below the waterline.

Julie Sharman, chief operating officer at the Canal & River Trust, explains: "Spending time by the water is a lovely way to spend a summer's day and our canals, rivers and reservoirs are excellent places for families to visit and cool down. But it's really important that people, especially children and teenagers, are aware of the dangers of going into the water. Taking a dip may be tempting but the consequences can be devastating.

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“Inland waterways can look really inviting but you can’t tell what is below the surface. The water is often murky, and you won’t be able to see the depth or any obstacles in the water. We’re asking people to find another way to cool off this summer – have an ice cream, cool drink or stay in the shade, but please don’t get in the water, it’s just not worth it.”

The Canal & River Trust ‘Explorers’ water safety programme, which focuses on children in Key Stage 2 of the National Curriculum, aims to help young people learn about and enjoy their local canal or river safely. Dozens of volunteers nationwide normally help the Trust each year by visiting schools and speaking to youth groups about water safety and their local canal or river. In four years they have reached more than 125,000 children with water safety messages, however this summer sessions have been impacted by the coronavirus lockdown.

To help with water safety education at home the Explorers team has compiled a range of free activities, resources and games which can be found at www.canalrivertrust.org.uk/explorers/learning-from-home/water-safety.

To find out more about staying safe near canals and rivers, go to: <https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/enjoy-the-waterways/safety-on-our-waterways/summer-water-safety>

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For further media requests please contact:

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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.