

PRESS RELEASE

14 September 2020

Canal & River Trust launches its largest ever citizen science project to record the benefits of being beside water

The Canal & River Trust has teamed up with partners, including King's College London, and is appealing for people aged 16 or over to take part in its largest ever study of the wellbeing benefits of spending time beside water.

The academic study will enable the Trust to better understand the health benefits of waterways and will help make the case to partners and funders of the importance of looking after and investing in Britain's former industrial canals and rivers.

Those taking part download an app onto their smart phone. Then, three times a day over the following two weeks, they are prompted to answer 'in the moment' questions about how they feel and the environment around them. On each occasion it takes about one minute to complete the survey.

Those taking part are able to access an individualised report summarising their experiences. This could shed light on how being in different types of places, such as being close to birds, trees and water, affects their mood, as well as contributing to the wider study of the impact of different environments on mental health and wellbeing.

Jenny Shepherd, research and impact manager at the Canal & River Trust, comments: "Those of us that know and use the waterways feel instinctively that spending time beside water is good for our wellbeing. With our academic partners, and with the help of the public, we're able to collect our own bespoke data to record how people are affected by their environment and how this changes when they are on or beside water.

"This scale and scope of this research is a first for the Trust. And, with the help of those taking part, we can emphatically demonstrate to decision makers and funders the importance of canals and the vital role they play, particularly in our towns and cities where green and blue space is at a premium. We'd like as many people to take part as possible – having taken part myself, I know

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

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

Patron: H.R.H. The Prince of Wales. Canal & River Trust is a charitable company limited by guarantee, registered in England and Wales with company number 7807276 and registered charity number 1146792, registered office address: First Floor North, Station House, 500 Elder Gate, Milton Keynes MK9 1BB

it literally takes a minute or so just three times a day. It's a fascinating area of study, both to find out about your own individual mood influencers, and for the wider social implications of the environment on wellbeing."

The Canal & River Trust survey, which runs from 21 September to 15 November, is run on the Urban Mind app, from partners King's College London, J&L Gibbons and Nomad Projects. The app is free to download on [App Store](#) & [Google Play](#). To take part please download and select the 'custom' study option and enter the password 'water' when prompted. The survey is confidential and participants are not asked to provide their name, phone, email or any other information which could identify them.

Ends

For further media requests please contact:

Jonathan Ludford, national communications manager
m 07747 897783 e jonathan.ludford@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.

Urban Mind Citizen Science Project

The Urban Mind App

The Urban Mind app is a smartphone-based ecological momentary assessment tool available for both Apple iPhone and Android devices. Urban Mind launched in April 2018 recruiting citizen scientists globally.

Participation in the study is self-selected and anonymous. Once an individual citizen scientist downloads and installs the app, they are presented with information about the study and are asked to provide informed consent, followed by a baseline assessment. This baseline assessment collects information regarding demographics (e.g. age, gender, ethnicity), socioeconomics (e.g. education, occupation), sleeping patterns (e.g. usual wake and sleep times) and mental health history.

Following the baseline assessment, the app schedules a total of 42 ecological momentary assessments across a 14 day period (three assessments per day). The assessments are randomly scheduled based on the participants' baseline-reported sleep schedule. The timeframes when the citizen scientists are awake are divided into three equal intervals, with assessment randomly scheduled across the day. Once an assessment is available, the app will prompt the citizen scientist to respond within three-hour period before the assessment is marked as incomplete.

This allowed individuals to complete the assessment without the need to interrupt any activities they are engaged in.

These momentary assessments collect real time information on an individual's perceived experience of the natural, built and social environment, their location via GPS-based geotagging, physical activity (e.g. step count) and their momentary mental wellbeing. After each assessment, citizen scientists are prompted to capture and submit a photograph of the ground and an eight-second audio clip of their surrounding environment. These photographs and audio files will be used in a digital art exhibition related to the study.

By collecting real-time data, the Urban Mind study will be able to understand how different aspects of the urban environment affect mental wellbeing. The results will inform future urban planning and social policy aimed at improving design & health. Following the success of the original app, the Urban Mind Team has worked with the Trust to develop a bespoke version to help provide evidence that 'life's better by water.'

Urban Mind is a research project by King's College London, landscape architects J&L Gibbons and arts foundation Nomad Projects.

[Frequently asked questions.](#)