

PRESS RELEASE

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BILL BAILEY JOINS CHARITY'S CALL TO GET ACTIVE TO TACKLE WATERWAYS PLASTIC POLLUTION

- Litter reports on canals and rivers up 68%
- “We can make a significant difference” says Strictly star

Waterways and wellbeing charity Canal & River Trust and Strictly Come Dancing winner Bill Bailey are calling on people across England & Wales to boost their health and happiness and make a difference in their local communities at the start of 2021 by joining the fight against plastic pollution.

Canals and rivers have been havens for mental and physical health during the pandemic, with more weekly visits to local towpaths since last March in many urban areas. However, this has been accompanied by a rise in littering, up 68% in 2020, putting the nation's precious waterway wildlife habitats at risk and causing an unsightly problem.

By combining a Plastics Challenge litter pick with their local daily exercise people can help stop 14 million pieces of plastic and litter from entering the canals and rivers each year.

The charity has teamed up with Bill Bailey and other celebrities including Deborah Meaden, Eamon Holmes, Saira Khan, Helen Glover, Nicola Thorp, to share this important message and encourage people to get involved this month. The Wombles characters, who famously help the environment by collecting and recycling rubbish in creative ways, are also supporting the campaign with a short animated film.

Strictly Come Dancing winner, comedian and keen paddle boarder, Bill Bailey, said: “Plastic is a huge issue and it's only going to take a massive effort of will to make an impact. If everyone gets involved by doing a little bit when they are out on the towpath,

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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

we can make a significant difference, catching it at source before it floats out to sea. Please join the Canal & River Trust's Plastics Challenge to help make your local canal a place all of us can enjoy."

It's not just famous faces that feel passionately about the issue. Mother and daughter Jacqui and Jaime from Hemel Hempstead started plogging, a combination of jogging and picking up litter as a way to spend time together, exercise and have a positive impact on their local environment. Jaime is passionate about making a difference when it comes to plastic pollution.

"Running along the canal together is a great way to get away from it all and take some time without the day-to-day distractions of work and school," said Jacqui, "Despite the plastic and litter the canal is still a beautiful place to come and have a run and we just clean it as we go. It's very satisfying to know that we've helped the environment whilst out for a jog."

It is incredibly simple to take part in Plastics Challenge, which is supported by players of People's Postcode Lottery. Paddle board pros, reluctant runners, sunrise strollers and wildlife wanderers can combine these activities with a litter pick. Individuals can pledge their support for the Plastics Challenge on the charity's [website](#).

The Canal & River Trust's towpaths provide valuable green space in the heart of many communities and remain open so that people can enjoy exercise and being in the outdoors, close to nature close to home.

To make a pledge to support the Canal & River Trust's Plastics Challenge, visit www.canalrivertrust.org.uk/plasticschallenge or follow us on social media @CanalRiverTrust #PlasticsChallenge

Thanks to players of People's Postcode Lottery the Canal & River Trust has recently received support from its Postcode Climate Challenge initiative. This will go to support the charity's Plastics Challenge and have an impact in helping to reduce plastics in our waterways.

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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 river navigations 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 @CanalRiverTrust

The charity saw a 68% increase in reports from the public about unsightly litter on the towpath and in its canals and rivers in 2020.

People should carefully follow Government guidelines on social distancing and washing their hands, the Trust is asking visitors to carry out a short litter pick while enjoying some exercise at their local canal or river. To ensure everyone takes part in the challenge safely it's created a handy [guide](#) which can be downloaded from the Canal & River Trust website. Please make sure you wear gloves or use a litter picker if you have one, and please take home what you collect and recycle what you can.

The charity worked with Coventry University to publish a 'state of the nation' analysis of plastics and other litter found in its waterways. The report found that if no action was taken, we estimated that 14 million pieces of plastic would end up in and around our canals and rivers every year. Full report [here](#)

Further information around the Plastics Challenge, why it is important and additional resources can be found at www.canalrivertrust.org.uk/plasticschallenge

People's Postcode Lottery

- People's Postcode Lottery manages multiple society lotteries promoted by different charities and good causes. People play with their chosen postcodes for a chance to win cash prizes. A minimum of 32% from each subscription goes directly to charities and good causes in Britain and internationally. Players have raised more than £600 million so far. For details of the charities and good causes which are promoting and benefitting from the lottery draws, please visit www.postcodelottery.co.uk/good-causes/draw-calendar
- It costs £10 a month to play and winning postcodes are announced every day. The maximum amount a single ticket can win is 10% of the draw proceeds. For details, please visit www.postcodelottery.co.uk/prizes
- New players can sign up to pay using direct debit by calling 0808 10 9 8 7 6 5. New players who sign up online at www.postcodelottery.co.uk can pay using direct debit, debit card or PayPal.
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