

PRESS RELEASE

15 July 2021

As the school holidays start, canal charity asks families to stay safe by water this summer

- As the temperature rises people ignore safety in favour of a cooling dip.
 - There are hidden risks under the surface of the water.
- Charity asks families to pledge to stay away from the edge this summer.

The Canal & River Trust, the waterways and wellbeing charity which cares for 2,000 miles of waterways in England and Wales, is urging families, particularly with children, to stay out of the water and to pledge to stay away from the edge this summer.

With the inaugural World Drowning Prevention Day taking place on 25th July, at the start of the summer holidays, the charity is asking families to stay SAFE near water – Stay Away From the Edge. Repeating this message to children will help them remember what to do near water.

Summer is one of the most popular times for people to visit Britain's canals and rivers. With more people remaining local and holidaying close to home this year, the Trust is expecting many of its waterways to be particularly popular. In summer 2020, during the pandemic, canals were a local outdoor lifeline for many people. Visits in many urban areas more than doubled as people headed to one of the Trust's canals or rivers for their exercise and to get closer to nature.

However, of the 400 people who drown in the UK every year (1), more than half the fatalities happen at inland waters such as canals, rivers, lakes, quarries and reservoirs (2).

The charity is asking people to experience all the safe ways to enjoy the canals this summer but to avoid getting in the water:

- Canal and river water will be really cold, even in the summer, and emersion in cold water could bring on cold water shock. Have a cool drink instead.
- If you want to jump and dive, head to your local swimming pool. Canals can be shallow and you could hurt yourself if you jump in.

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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 e, 500 Elder Gate, Milton Keynes MK9 1BB

- Lounge in the shade of waterside trees, rather than get tangled in waterway reeds.
- Have an ice lolly at a waterside café.
- Keep your cool – chill out by the water and enjoy the feeling of peacefulness it brings you.

Debbie Lumb, national health & safety advisor at the Canal & River Trust explains: “Spending time on or by Britain’s waterways is a lovely way to spend a summer’s day and they are excellent places for families to explore during the warm weather. But it’s also important that people, especially children and teenagers, are aware of the dangers of cooling off by going for a dip. The consequences can be devastating.

“Inland waterways, like canals, rivers, reservoirs and docks can look really inviting but you can’t tell what is below the surface. The water often isn’t clear and you won’t be able to see the depth or any obstacles in the water. Please stay away from the edge and don’t get in the water, it’s just not worth it. If you want to swim outside, find an open water swimming club near you by visiting the Canal & River Trust website.”

“There are lots of water safety themed activities available for children on our website, a great thing to do when out for a stroll along the canal and a chance to talk to kids about water safety at the same time.”

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 and can also be used towards a number of Cub Scout and Brownie badges. Dozens of volunteers nationwide help the Trust each year by visiting schools and speaking to youth groups about their local canal or river.

If you’d like to see the free resources available or if you’re interested in helping the Trust educate young people about their local canal or river, visit www.canalrivertrust.org.uk/explorers

For tips on how to talk to your children about water safety and staying safe near canals and rivers, go to: <https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/enjoy-the-waterways/safety-on-our-waterways/water-safety-tips-for-parents>

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For further media requests please contact:

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#BeWaterSafe #respectthewater

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 @CanalRiverTrust

The Canal & River Trust is a contributing member of the **National Water Safety Forum** (NWSF), a UK-focused, voluntary network, working together in order to reduce water-related deaths and associated harm.

Reference:

- (1) Statistic based on the WAID data (Water Incident Database) 2014 published by the National Water Safety Forum.
- (2) Statistic based on the WAID data (Water Incident Database) 2014 published by the National Water Safety Forum.