

PRESS RELEASE

5 August 2021

Leeds Waterfront Festival To Host New Neurodiverse-Friendly Event

Leeds Waterfront Festival, which is running through the summer over five different dates, is to host a new neurodiverse-friendly event on Friday 13 August from 11am to 4pm.

Canal & River Trust, in partnership with Leeds Autism Services (LAS), are excited to announce a new event which takes place at Leeds Dock and Armouries Square.

Sam Cresswell, youth & community events coordinator at Canal & River Trust, said: “It’s great to be working in partnership with Leeds Autism Services on the first event of its kind for Leeds Waterfront Festival. We have a wide range of activities on offer for all ages to enjoy, from canoeing to yoga sessions, a scavenger hunt, arts activities, a photography competition and interactive theatre with Rusticus. We will also be joined by mobility charity William Merritt Centre, and the Royal Armouries will be open with indoor exhibits, horse shows and gun demonstrations.”

Sam added: “I’m passionate about helping communities get to know their local canal, especially as we know how spending time by water can boost happiness and help us to relax. With nearly 1.1 million people in our Yorkshire & North East region living within 1km of their local canal, it’s a great resource on the doorstep and I hope this event will help open up opportunities to even more people.”

Danielle Furness, partnership & development officer at Leeds Autism Services, added: “Our charity supports autistic adults and works with families, communities and businesses to promote autism understanding and inclusion. We’re delighted to be partnering with Canal & River Trust on an event that we hope will support autistic, learning disabled and neurodiverse people access Leeds Waterfront Festival whilst raising awareness about ways we can help make events and activities more accessible to neurodiverse people.”

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

Michael Duffy, a member at Leeds Autism Services, said “It’s been hard to stay positive at times during the pandemic, but I can’t wait to help out at the Waterfront Festival and have some fun. I think it will be a much-needed event.”

To make the event more accessible, there will be ear plugs available on the day, a quiet zone has been created for people who need a bit of time out, there are changing facilities, easy-read signage and information, disabled parking and a drop-off point close to the entrance.

Most events are free of charge. It is advised that you book your preferred activities in advance to secure a place. There will be spaces available on the day, but please try to arrive early to ensure you get a place for everyone taking part, including personal assistants or anyone participating for support.

This event will focus on providing a range of engaging activities to enjoy, there will be opportunities to talk to Canal & River Trust and Leeds Autism Services about their charities, where you can get further information and ways to support.

For more information about this event and to book your place on activities please visit:
<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/leeds-waterfront-festival-autism-neurodiverse-friendly-event-tickets-161900630143?aff=ebdssbdestsearch>

For more information about Canal & River Trust visit: www.canalrivertrust.org.uk

For details about Leeds Autism Services (LAS) visit: www.las.uk.net

**Neurodivergent is an umbrella term for a specific set of conditions, including autism, ADHD, dyspraxia and others.*

ENDS

Media Opportunities:

Interviews available with Canal & River Trust, Leeds Autism Services and Michael Duffy, to talk about his own experience.

For interviews, photos and opportunities on the day please contact:

Matt Cornish, Communications Executive, Canal & River Trust (Wed-Fri)

e: matt.cornish@canalrivertrust.org.uk

Naomi Roberts, Communications & Campaigns Manager, Canal & River Trust (Mon-Wed)

e: naomi.roberts@canalrivertrust.org.uk

Notes to Editors:

Leeds Waterfront Festival: Autism & Neurodiverse-friendly event programme

Canal & River Trust: all ages

- Canoe taster sessions in Leeds Dock, for all abilities (pre-booking advised)

Royal Armouries: Tudor Summer: all ages

- Indoor exhibits
- Horse Shows in the tilt yard next to Armouries Square (12:00 & 15:00)
- Gun Demonstration in the amphitheatre by the river (13:00)

Leeds Autism Services: all ages

- Photography Competition (drop-in)
- Waterside Scavenger Hunt (drop-in, pick up a guide)

William Merritt Centre: all ages

- Switch adapted toy demo & try out (drop-in)

Yoga Hero: adults

- Beginners Yoga by water (45 minute sessions)

Rusticus: children (& young at heart!)

- Interactive theatre experiences along towpath (60-90 min, advise to pre-book)

Leeds Autism Services: children (& young at heart!)

- Arts & Crafts sessions - canal boat stencils and 'make your own boat' (drop-in)

Canal & River Trust

We are the waterway and wellbeing charity that 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 transform their local waterway, we are creating places and spaces that can be used and enjoyed by everyone, every day.

www.canalrivertrust.org.uk

Twitter: @CRTYorkshireNE / @CanalRiverTrust

Yorkshire & NE Waterways:

- 509km of waterways (16.51% of the national network are in this region)
- 1,097,360 people within the Yorkshire & NE region live within 1km of their local waterway
- 19 canals and rivers in the Yorkshire & NE region are looked after by the Trust

Leeds Autism Services (LAS)

We have been helping people with autism reach their true potential for over 30 years. We campaign for the rights and recognition of autistic people and believe that education and understanding of autism is the key to creating a more autism friendly society. We work with autistic people, families, communities and businesses to encourage a better understanding of autism and are able to provide information, advice, bespoke training and consultancy.

Twitter: @LeedsAutism #AutismPositivity #Neurodiversity