

## PRESS RELEASE

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October 2021

### **FORMER INDUSTRIAL CANALS ARE THE MOST ATTRACTIVE SPACES IN OUR TOWNS AND CITIES**

*Charity teams up with the University of Warwick to understand what makes canals so appealing and why they are no longer seen as dumping grounds for shopping trolleys*

Today, 13 October 2021, the Canal & River Trust, the charity which looks after 2,000 miles of canals and rivers across England and Wales, is launching an academic study with the Data Science Lab at Warwick Business School to understand what it is about canals that make them the most attractive spaces in our towns and cities, according to the public.

Built to be the motorways of their age, today's canals have gone from dereliction and decline to being reinvented as places for leisure and wellbeing, with University of Warwick and The Alan Turing Institute having already established that canals come out on top as the most highly rated scenic feature, in built up urban areas.

Now, waterways and wellbeing charity, the Canal & River Trust, has teamed-up with its academic partners to understand the features and characteristics which make canals so beautiful – the extent to which it is the scenery of the historic locks and bridges as well as the greenery of the trees and wildlife. The insights will help the Trust understand why the human brain responds so well to these 200-year-old, industrial environments and what elements have the biggest impact on positively contributing to our health and wellbeing.

People up and down the country are being asked to participate in the Science of Scenic Beauty study by rating images of canals and rivers online, to create hard data defining the key elements, or science behind scenic beauty.

GP and best-selling author, Dr Amir Khan, known for his regular appearances on Good Morning Britain and Lorraine, says: "The Canal & River Trust's canals provide vital blue and green outdoor

space, particularly in some of the nation's most built-up and deprived communities. Spending time in these precious spaces can provide benefits gained from exercise, more sunlight, cleaner air, and the regenerative power that comes from being close to nature."

Richard Parry, chief executive of Canal & River Trust, continues: "Throughout the pandemic, canals have been an on-the-doorstep lifeline for millions, including many of the one in eight residents in the UK who do not have a garden.

Government methodologies show that the Trust's canals provide around £1bn in savings to the NHS each year through physical health and wellbeing benefits associated with active visits.

That is why we are asking people to join the Science of Scenic Beauty study, so we can better understand what makes canals so impactful on people's health and wellbeing."\*

Take part in the Canal & River Trust Science of Scenic Beauty study and help make more miles of canal blue, green and better - because life is better by water.

For further information on the Canal & River Trust and details on how you can support, please visit: <https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/>

## ENDS

For all media enquiries and images, please contact the team at [Charlie.pelter@canalrivertrust.org.uk](mailto:Charlie.pelter@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](http://www.canalrivertrust.org.uk)

*\*This figure represents the estimated annual NHS cost savings from improved physical health due to active visits to our canal network. This figure has been calculated by using the number of active visits (based on Waterways Engagement Monitor data- a monthly survey completed by over 1,000 people across the country each month) from which can be estimated the improvements in quality adjusted life years (QALYs) due to active visits using government recommended methodology. The physical health benefits are estimated in monetary terms on the basis of the avoided medical costs of improvements in quality adjusted life years (QALYs) for individuals whose visits to the network are assessed to be physically active. A per visit avoided cost of £3.44 (in 2021 prices) is applied as set out in Defra's (2020) Enabling a Natural Capital Approach (ENCA) guidance<sup>3</sup>.*

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