



**Canal &
River Trust**

Making life better by water

East Midlands Annual Report

2021/22



canalrivertrust.org.uk

Introduction from Regional Director & Regional Advisory Board Chair

After a challenging start to the year, with coronavirus restrictions limiting boating and volunteering, 2021/22 went on to become an incredible year for the canals and rivers in our region. Large numbers of people engaged with their local waterways from communities across the region, and it was a record season for boating.

In Leicester and Nottingham, we've been able to extend our partnership work – reaching new audiences across both cities.

Across the region, we now have 71 active partner groups supporting the work of the Trust. This means nearly all stretches of waterway in Leicester, Nottingham and Northamptonshire are benefiting from community involvement. From social prescribing activities and Community Roots, to Towpath Taskforces and Canal & River Explorers, our community volunteer army has snowballed in the wake of the pandemic.

Our national #ActNowForCanals campaign, including our Plastics Challenge and Citizen Science work, has helped us to engage new volunteers, improving more miles of canals.

It was fantastic to see boaters back out on the water and bumper bookings at our local boat hire bases after the lockdowns of 2020, with some of our locks recording their busiest ever boating season. We saw the official opening of a newly restored lock on the Grantham Canal and held our second East Midlands Boaters Conference.

Our canals and rivers have been vital havens for wellbeing during

the pandemic, and this year we've launched our Waterways & Wellbeing Social Prescribing project enabling people to spend time on and by the water as an alternative way of improving their mental and physical health.

Our volunteers have made an incredible contribution across the region, with our Towpath Taskforces becoming stronger than ever. The numbers of participants and events have increased in Northampton, Leicester and Nottingham. Initiatives like the Nottingham Canal Improvement Partnership have harnessed powerful community engagement. And our government backed Kickstarters have made a valuable contribution during their time with the Trust, with six going on to become Waterway Apprentices.

In the wake of the COP26 climate summit, we are proud to be a part of Nottingham's quest to become Britain's first carbon neutral city by 2028. The City is embracing its waterways to help achieve that goal and last year 100 square metres of floating reed beds were installed on the canal in Nottingham City Centre, absorbing carbon and attracting wildlife into the heart of the City. In September, Robert Jenrick, MP for

Newark, visited the hydro-electric power plant on the River Trent at Nether Weir, shining a light on the role that our waterways are playing in generating sustainable power.

And, of course, none of this is possible without the work that we do to ensure our waterways are safe, accessible and working the way they should. We invested £5m in the day-to-day running of our waterways as well as an additional £4.5million on our winter works programme, replacing lock gates, repairing bridges and restoring historic brickwork. Highlights included replacing lock gates at Locks 3 and 7 at Watford Locks on the Grand Union Canal and replacing the gates at Newark Town Lock on the River Trent, where we welcomed the local community for a public open day.



Phil Mulligan
Regional Director



Anil Majithia
Chair – Regional
Advisory Board

A year in numbers

£5m invested in day-to-day care for the region's waterway

£4.5m
winter works programme

3km
of towpath improved for boaters and local communities

425 volunteers
support us in the region across a variety of roles

More than
10,000
people took part in our events and activities

6 Kickstarters
went on to take up apprenticeships with the Trust

400 people
joined the Waterside Diwali Celebration at Limekiln Lock in Leicester

500 people
engaged with canal-based activities through the Nottingham Waterways & Wellbeing programme

70 boats a day
passed through Braunston locks at the height of the busiest summer ever for boating

Over
1,800
people
took part in waterway activity taster sessions at a series of family friendly events

3,451
children
took part in water safety events

30,000
visitors
to our café at the Canal Museum at Stoke Bruerne, and nearly half also visiting the Museum

71 partner groups
actively volunteering to support the Trust

100
organisations
supported the Nottingham Canal Improvement Partnership in it's first year

100m²
of floating reedbed installed on the Nottingham & Beeston Canal in Nottingham City Centre

Over **230**
metres
of hedges laid across the region

Look back to 2020

Many of the foundations for our success over the past 12 months were laid in 2020, a challenging year with the beginning of the Coronavirus pandemic but a year in which much was achieved.

Nottingham Canal Improvement Partnership

In November 2020 we launched the Nottingham Canal Improvement Partnership to help **improve the Nottingham & Beeston Canal for both people and wildlife**. The Partnership brings together **businesses, community groups, voluntary organisations, and public sector bodies** to help improve the canal for the thousands of people living and working alongside it.

Nottingham Green Flag Award

In November 2020 the whole five mile length of the Nottingham & Beeston Canal was recognised with a Green Flag, putting it amongst the **best open spaces in England**. The Erewash Canal, which runs for 11 miles between Trent Lock and Langley Mill, retained its Green Flag, awarded in 2019. These awards are a culmination of huge amounts of hard work; with volunteers, partnership organisations, adoption groups all working alongside our teams to help improve their local canal.



Winter works programme

Across the winter 2020 to 2021, a major programme of winter maintenance work was carried out across our region, helping to keep our waterways moving. We installed **new lock gates at Blue Bank Lock in Leicester** and held a virtual open day there. The lock is in a conservation zone and the works received funding via the Heritage Stimulus Fund, part of the Government's £1.57billion Culture Recovery Fund. We also **replaced lock gates at Stanton Lock on the Erewash Canal and Lock 15 on the Northampton Arm** as well as replacing the control system at **Stamp End Lock in Lincoln**, the only guillotine lock in the East Midlands.



Restoring Hickling Hut

With the help of heritage apprentices and volunteers, we completed the restoration of the **19th Century workers hut on the Grantham Canal** at Hickling. The hut was mostly built from wooden railway sleepers which would have been readily available when the canal was owned by the railways.

Over time these sleepers had rotted and most of the hut had been enveloped by a hedgerow. The sleepers were restored, the historic brick floor was re-laid, and a new roof added.

Improving access to our towpaths

Towpath improvements make it easier for people to feel the **health and wellbeing benefits of spending time by the water**. We started works to improve the towpath in Leicester between Kings Lock and Aylestone Mill, including improvements to the access point at Packhorse Bridge. Also in Leicester, we created better access points at Blue Bank Bridge and have now installed visitor moorings enabling boaters to stop and visit nearby **Everards Meadows**. Both projects are being carried out in partnership with **Leicester City Council** and **Leicester & Leicestershire Local Enterprise Partnership** with just under £1million **Local Growth Fund** invested.

Towpath improvements were also started on the Trent & Mersey Canal as part of the **Transforming the Trent Valley** project, supported by the **National Lottery Heritage Fund**. The project resurfaced 700 metres of towpath at Willington and 500 metres at Shardlow.

Sculptor aids Blisworth Tunnel Inspection

Sculptor, the **85 year old canal boat that helped put out fires in London during World War II**, came to the rescue again for an emergency inspection of Blisworth Tunnel. After a suspected sinkhole was reported near one of the tunnel's construction shafts, our engineers urgently needed a boat to inspect the tunnel. The Canal Museum's boat Sculptor was moored just along the towpath, so seemed an



ideal option for a quick response. Being part of our Museum collection and on the historic ships register, special permission was granted to use her.

Stoke Bruerne Canal Museum reopening

We began a **major transformation of the Canal Museum at Stoke Bruerne** to improve the experience for visitors. The Canal & River Trust has **invested £300,000** in the project, and **Friends of the Canal Museum** contributed £67,000 towards the redevelopment. As well as new displays bringing to life the stories of the people who built and worked on the local canals, the Museum's café has been expanded across the whole of the ground floor and has new bi-fold windows offering views of the canal and Museum Green. There's also a new commercial kitchen and menu with locally sourced ingredients. The Museum and café reopened in Easter 2020 and the improvements have connected the site to the local community and invited more visitors in from the towpath.

Sculptor, the 85 year old canal boat that helped put out fires in London during World War II, came to the rescue again for an emergency inspection of Blisworth Tunnel.

Region-wide



- 475km of waterways cared for.
- 11 reservoirs.
- Over 1,700 bridges, culverts and locks.
- 2 major visitor destinations – Foxton Locks and Stoke Bruerne.
- 800,000 people in the East Midlands live within 1km of our canals or rivers.
- 57% of those living within 1km of a waterway have wellbeing challenges.

Derbyshire

Friends of the Cromford Canal received planning permission and started work to extend the Erewash Canal past Langley Mill.

We are supporting the **Shardlow Inland Port Steering Group** with its application to the Maritime Heritage Trust and National Historic Ships to give Shardlow Heritage Harbour Status. We also worked closely with the local community to support the first **Shardlow Inland Port Festival**, with over 2000 people attending.

Leicestershire

Leicester Waterways Improvement Partnership is being formed, building on the work of the Trust and **Leicester City Council** by encouraging businesses, universities, voluntary organisations, and community groups from across the city to work together to make the waterways **better for people and wildlife**.

We secured funding from three district councils and **Active Together Leicestershire** to develop a Waterways & Wellbeing social prescribing programme in South Leicestershire, starting in April 2022.

Our **Towpath Taskforce** on the Ashby Canal has helped reinstate steps and handrails at Shenton Aqueduct and replaced steps on the canal access point at Geary's Bridge.

We are a partner in the **Loughborough Town Deal**, where our Riverside Regeneration project will see 2km of the towpath throughout the town centre improved, an investment of £900,000, to be delivered during Autumn 2022.



Lincolnshire

In partnership with the **Grantham Canal Society**, we celebrated the **official reopening of Lock 14** with the first boat going through for 90 years.

With **British Canoeing** we worked with **Lincoln Canoe Club** to survey discharges along the Fosdyke & Witham navigations, to identify where these may be unconsented.

Northamptonshire

We've transformed our **Canal Museum in Stoke Bruerne** with new exhibits and a new café.

We agreed a partnership with charity, **Volunteering Matters**, who have adopted a one mile stretch of the Grand Union Canal near Cosgrove. It's hoped that the adoption will encourage more young people to take an active role in the community after both organisations signed the **Power of Youth Charter**.

The Buckingham Canal Society has formed a trading arm Buckingham Canal Limited and plans to lease the canal in the future. The organisation has applied for £4.5million from the Highways Agency to restore the Buckingham Arm.

Restoration of the towpath beyond Bridge 1 to the west is underway and the **Buckingham Canal Society** installed a mosaic by artist Melanie Watts on Bridge 1 of the Stratford Arm of the Buckingham Canal.

Nottinghamshire

Working with our Meadows community partners, in November we launched the **Isolation to Inclusion EU-funded project** to reach out to people in the community experiencing loneliness and offer them canal-based activity programmes.

We launched a **Waterways & Wellbeing green social prescribing project** giving people in Nottingham access to canal-based activities to help boost their physical and mental health.

With funding from **Transforming Cities**, we are working with **Nottingham City Council** to improve lighting, signage, biodiversity, and access to our waterways.

We've set up a group for **boaters to discuss issues on the River Trent** and identify ways of improving the boating experience on the river.

We held a **'Stay Kind, Slow Down'** cycling engagement event at Trent Lock near Long Eaton.

Celebrating key achievements



Nottingham Canal Improvement Partnership

In October, over 100 organisations in Nottingham celebrated the first anniversary of The Nottingham Canal Improvement Partnership, which has brought major improvements to the Nottingham & Beeston Canal. The milestone was celebrated at Canalhouse where members of the innovative partnership were joined by Nottingham South MP Lilian Greenwood and the Sheriff of Nottingham, Merlita Bryan.

The Nottingham Canal improvement Partnership aims

to make the canal, which runs through the heart of the city, better for people and wildlife. Projects have included:

- 100 square metres of **floating reed bed** installed on the canal, attracting wildlife into the heart of the city.
- **Street art** at Castle Wharf, celebrating the life of Eric Irons OBE, the UK's first black magistrate.
- **Social prescribing** projects enabling around 500 people to spend time by the water to boost their physical and mental health.
- Linear wildflower meadows have been planted along the canal.
- Seven **bridges have been repainted** and pigeon-proofed by Nottingham City Council.
- **Floating nesting platforms** have been created out of upcycled life buoys by boaters at Castle Marina.
- **Community workshops** have enabled local people to have their say on how the canal could be improved for people and wildlife.



Community Roots in Leicester

Our Community Roots project restarted last summer, **engaging with local people in Leicester** and encouraging them to feel the health and wellbeing benefits of spending time by water.

Leicester was particularly badly affected by the pandemic lockdowns, so we've been keen to support struggling communities. Supported by **The Baldwin Trust**, we arranged two boat trips with the **Somali Women's Café** at St Matthews, and more are planned for Spring 2022.

In October, **more than 400 people joined our Waterside Diwali Celebration** at Limekiln Lock in Leicester for an evening of lights, music and traditional food. Visitors created their own handmade paper divas to float across the water alongside large floating sculptures created by Leicester Belgrave Mela.

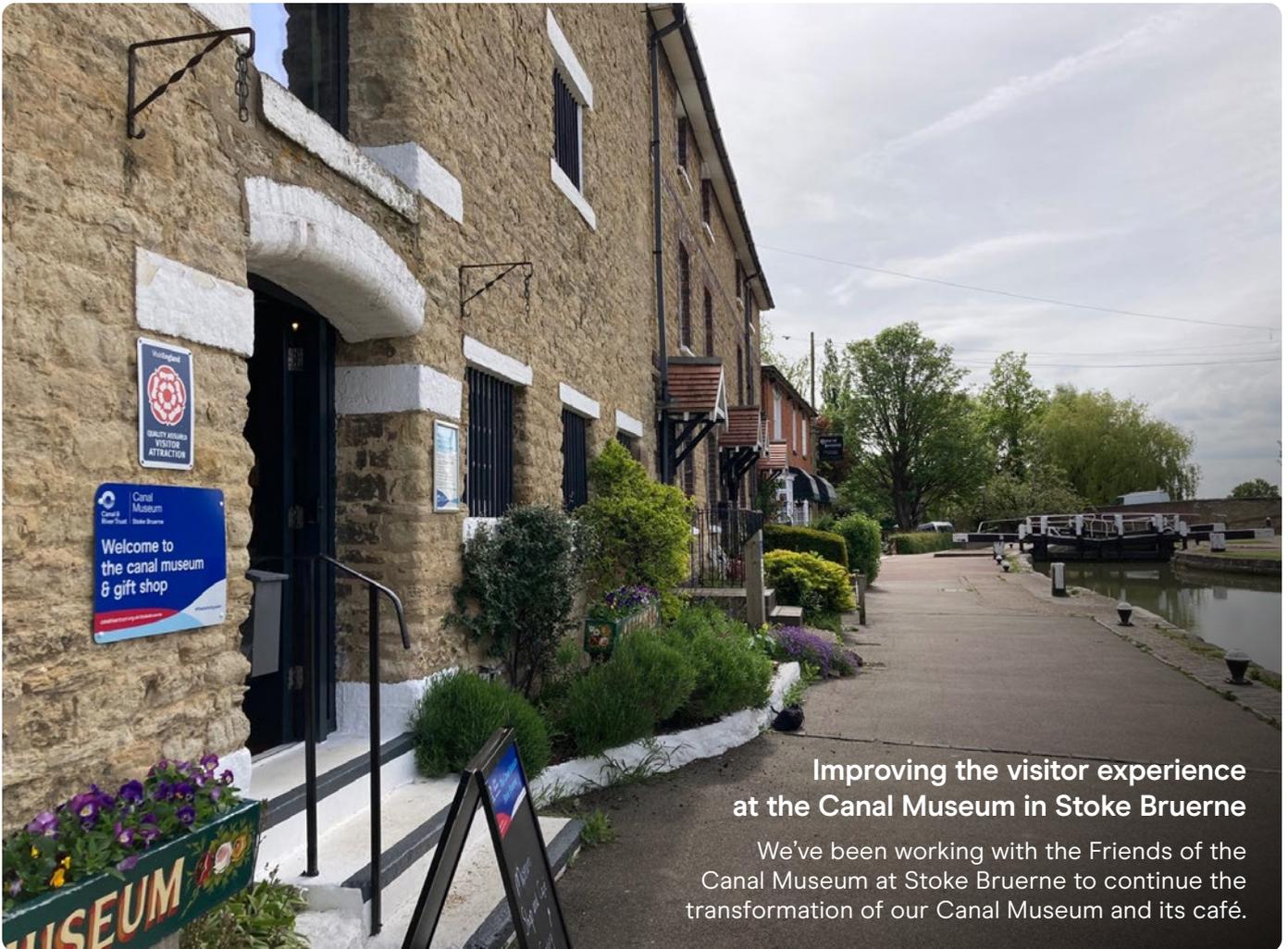
The project has also seen the launch of a **Street Art Trail**, bringing some welcome colour to Leicester's waterways and celebrating all that makes the city great.

A local **Sewa Day** group has adopted a stretch of the River

Soar between Limekiln Lock and North Lock and are helping to clear litter and tackle overhanging brambles. Plans are in place for some gardening days, where the group can plant bulbs and shrubs along their adopted stretch.

The project has also seen the launch of a Street Art Trail, bringing some welcome colour to Leicester's waterways





Improving the visitor experience at the Canal Museum in Stoke Bruerne

We've been working with the Friends of the Canal Museum at Stoke Bruerne to continue the transformation of our Canal Museum and its café.

Kickstarters gain work experience on the waterways

We recruited a **team of Waterway Kickstarters**, young people from Leicester, to help care for the River Soar and Grand Union Canal. They started their six-month placements in June 2021 and during this time they helped to build a special canoe access platform at Barrow upon Soar, install new fendering at Barrow Deep Lock, put up fencing at Foxton Locks and clean-up Limekiln Lock.

The Kickstart initiative is a £2billion government programme for young people aged 16–24 who are claiming Universal Credit and are

at risk of long-term unemployment. Funded by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), it supports young people to build up their experience and help them move into sustained employment.

Four of the team have since started **Waterway Apprenticeships** working with our operations team, and two have started Bricklaying Apprenticeships working on some of our bigger construction jobs.

Improving the visitor experience at the Canal Museum in Stoke Bruerne

We've been working with the **Friends of the Canal Museum**

at Stoke Bruerne to continue the transformation of our Canal Museum and its café. Volunteers have played a vital role in the **redevelopment of the Museum**, helping to plan, research and install new exhibits which bring the story of the site to life.

Work is continuing to further develop themes and stories connecting visitors to the site's unique history, including the development of a family-friendly events space on the first floor. A community display case is available for local exhibitions, stories and artefacts that can be offered to local groups. A new pre-loved book area has so far raised over £1,000 for the Museum.

Celebrating key achievements

Over **30,000 people visited the café last year**, with close to half also visiting the Museum. A new team of Visitor Welcome volunteers have been working alongside Friends of the Canal Museum to offer visitors talks and tours, and pop-up events bringing artefacts out of the Museum to show to people visiting the canalside.

We are planning to further develop our events programme including blacksmith demonstrations, interactive trails, specialist talks and hands on activities. We also have ambitious plans to develop the wider site with a series of projects that can be funded externally.

Improvements at Foxton Locks

Foxton Locks is one of our most popular visitor destinations, with around **400,000 visitors a year**. Throughout the year we held a series of **free events, including guided walks, bug hunting, canoeing and pond dipping**.

Boat traffic through the locks recovered well after the lockdowns of last year and we piloted a range of new **volunteering opportunities** – from lock keepers to maintenance volunteers and welcome hosts.

In August we welcomed 20 young people for a **Duke of Edinburgh Award** event which saw the volunteers build a new gate for the nature pond field, create a new orchard path, help clear the area around the remains of the Foxton Inclined Plane Boat Lift and transform an unused room in the Top Lock Cottage into a second-hand bookshop. We are now developing a pop up camping offer to attract overnight stays and have further ambitions to develop a glamping site and a wild play area.



Investing in our waterways

Across the year, our operations teams and contractors work to maintain our historic 200 year old network of canals and rivers, with tasks ranging from dredging, mowing and weed removal, to lock, bridge, tunnel and aqueduct repairs.

The work we carry out over winter is at the heart of our maintenance programme. This year our East Midlands winter works programme included:

- **Replacing lock gates at Locks 3 and 7 at Watford Locks** on the Leicestershire Line of the Grand Union Canal in Northamptonshire, as well as brickwork repairs elsewhere on the flight;
- **Replacing the top and bottom gates at Newark Town Lock** on the River Trent;
- Masonry repairs to the upstream landing approach wall at **Long Eaton Lock on the Erewash Canal**;
- Replacing the bottom gate heel post at **Cossington Lock on the River Soar**; and
- Repairs to **Cosgrove Lock on the Grand Union Canal** in Northamptonshire.

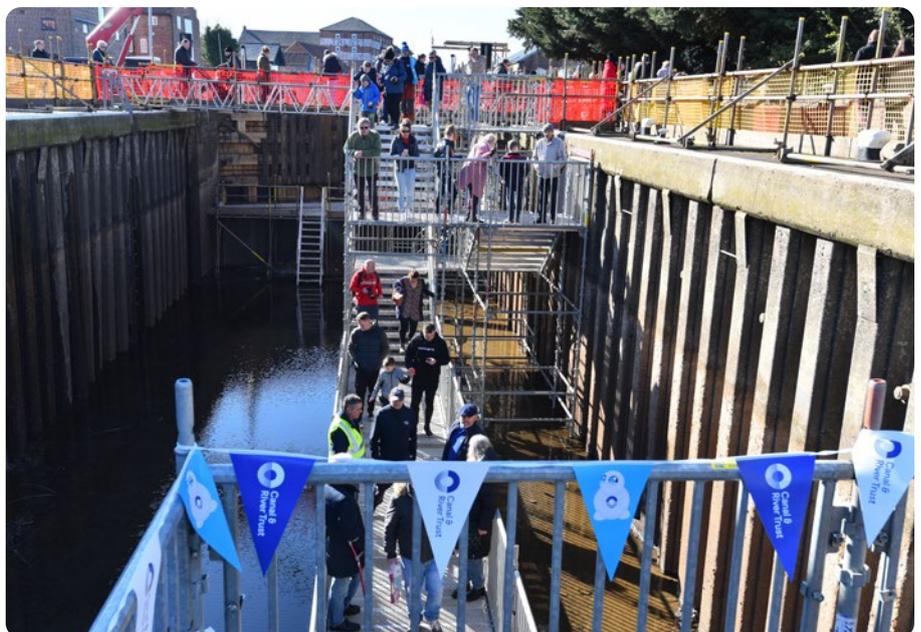
We held an Open Lock Weekend event at Newark Town Lock, in February, giving local people the opportunity to descend into the drained lock and speak to some of our skilled teams. Around 5,000 people attended over the course of the weekend. We also held a virtual open day at our Watford Locks winter stoppage, enabling

people to take a behind the scenes tour of the works from the comfort of their own homes.

Alongside our winter works programme, we invested £5m on day-to-day care of our waterways. Works have included:

- **Dredging thousands of tonnes of mud and silt** from the side ponds at Foxton Locks, used to store water for the operation of the locks. Before the dredging began, our specialist fisheries contractors carefully relocated fish to another part of the canal.

- We carried out **£70,000 of dredging works**, focused around Ratcliffe Lock on the River Soar and Stoke Lock on the River Trent. Our contractors Land & Water removed over 1,700 tonnes of material between the two sites improving navigation for boaters in the region.
- **New residential and visitor moorings** are being installed on the Leicester section of the Grand Union Canal at Memory Lane Wharf.
- **Offside tree works** making passage easier for boaters have been completed on the Trent & Mersey Canal as well as the Grand Union Canal between Foxton and Saddington and on the Market Harborough Arm.
- **More than £40,000 has been invested in reservoir safety works**. The investment included safety related tree works at





reservoirs in Naseby, Drayton, Saddington, Butterley and Daventry.

In addition to the investments above the Trust relies upon a **wide range of partners and funders** that support our work to improve the waterways for the benefit of local and visiting communities. During 2021/22 we have delivered a programme of projects which has included:

- Completing the **towpath upgrades through Leicester** and at Blue Bank bridge next to Everards Meadows, working in partnership with **Leicester City Council** with funding from the **Local Enterprise Partnership Local Growth Fund**.
- Completing access improvements at Shardlow and Willington as part of the **Transforming the Trent Valley Landscape Partnership Project** funded by the **National Lottery Heritage Fund** and a Section 106 contribution from **South Derbyshire District Council**.
- Working in partnership with **Oadby & Wigston Borough Council** to undertake a

development study for the **Kilby Bridge** area, south of Leicester. Funding has been sourced from the Local Enterprise Partnership's business rates pool.

- The restoration of Dakins Bridge on the Ashby Canal with support from **Hinkley and Bosworth Borough Council**.
- Over the course of the year we have also developed a pipeline of projects for delivery in 2022/23 to the value of around £3m.

Towpath improvements have made it easier for people to feel the benefits of being by water



Community engagement & wellbeing

Green & Blue Social Prescribing

In March 2021 we were awarded £50,000 from the **Thriving Communities Fund** for our **Waterways & Wellbeing** project, helping people in Nottingham to tackle mental and physical health problems.

A partnership of local organisations, including the **Canal & River Trust, Nottingham Community & Voluntary Service, Notts County Foundation, Canalside Heritage Centre, Nottingham Photographers Hub** and local foodbank **Himmah** have delivered a variety of activities to help boost wellbeing. These include canoe and paddleboard sessions, narrowboat experiences,

photography, arts activities, cookery classes, gardening by the canal, volunteering opportunities and guided walks.

GPs, social prescribing link workers and other primary care professionals can refer people to these non-clinical services to support their health and wellbeing. Across the year over 500 people took part and four wellbeing volunteers have been recruited to help deliver the programme. Two of them had previously been socially prescribed the Trust's wellbeing paddle sessions. Our first impact report demonstrates strong evidence that this programme has a positive effect on mental wellbeing for its participants.

The project has also received funding from **GreenSpace**

the green social prescribing pilot in Nottinghamshire which has enabled us to employ our Community Wellbeing Coordinator to grow this important service. We're now working with **Active Together, Blaby District Council, Harborough District Council** and **Oadby & Wigston Borough Council** to establish a similar project in South Leicestershire, which has also been supported by **Market Harborough Building Society** funding the purchase of new paddleboards.

Wellbeing Activities

- We've worked with **NHS Leicestershire Partnership Trust** and **Leicester City Council** to develop walking activities for employees to encourage the use of the waterways for travelling into work.
- We have been working with **Live Well Leicester** to incorporate the City's waterways in health walks and have developed walking routes with **Leicester City Council** and other partners.
- Working with **Nottingham's Education Sanctuary Team** we held Wellbeing & Storytelling Walks with a group of young refugees.
- We have organised a winter kayak paddle for staff from **NHS University Hospitals of Leicester Trust** and canoeing and paddleboarding taster





sessions for health and social care professionals in Nottingham.

- We enabled **PaddlePlus** to deliver paddling sessions from our Kilby Bridge site over the summer months.
- We contributed funding to the **'Beat the Street'** game in Leicester, delivered by **Intelligent Health** in partnership with Leicester City Council's Public Health Team. We also worked with Oadby & Wigston Borough Council to deliver a **'Beat the Street'** game in

Wigston. These projects saw 40,461 people play the game which aims to boost physical activity levels for adults and children. **Thirty-eight per cent of participants said they used canal or river towpaths more often as a result.**

- We welcomed over **10,000 people to 150 community events and activities** across the East Midlands and enabled 1,800 people to try everything from photography to paddleboarding and angling through our participatory events.

Community Co-design – shaping the future of our waterways

We've been working with communities in Nottingham to understand how they would like to see the Nottingham & Beeston Canal improved. A group of local residents took part in weekly co-design workshops, facilitated by **Farrer Huxley Landscape Architects** and **Willmott Dixon**, to develop a project creating a linear community space by the canal through the installation of benches, interpretation boards, signage and planting.

Six community groups came together for a Bench Design Workshop facilitated by **Farrer Huxley Landscape Architects** and an Associate Artist from the **Nottingham Contemporary Art Gallery**. The participants included young people with hidden disabilities, people who have suffered strokes, a mental health peer support group, boaters, Trust volunteers, participants from our wellbeing sessions and a group of people of African Caribbean heritage who raise awareness of the links of heritage buildings and assets to the transatlantic slave trade.

Engineering students at Nottingham College are now in the process of drawing up the designs for fabrication. **Nottingham Business Improvement District**, **Browne Jacobson Solicitors** and **Nottingham City** ward councillors have committed match funding to support the ongoing project.



Engaging Children & Young People

- Working with our **Canal & River Trust Explorer** volunteers we've held 35 water safety sessions across our region, engaging over 3,400 children. We've worked with schools and youth groups, hosting events online and at our education centres at Trent Lock, Foxton Locks and the Canal Museum at Stoke Bruerne. We also delivered water safety events at **Wild Woods** in Lincolnshire and Newark's **Fun Palace**.
- Working with **Leicester Outdoor Pursuits Centre** and **The Prince's Trust** we delivered a social action programme to a group of 12 young people.

The programme focussed on supporting young people to gain hands-on experience to help with access to employment as well as team building activities such as canoeing and rock climbing.

- We attended the **Madani Islamic Faith School's** annual Careers and Volunteering Fair in Leicester, and we arranged a **Plastics Challenge** litter pick with 140 pupils who collected over 100kg of rubbish from their local canal.
- In the summer we supported the **NCS programme in Leicester** with 18 young people supporting our **Plastics Challenge** campaign, completing over 540 hours of volunteering and awareness of plastic pollution.

Volunteer Task Forces and Community Partner Groups

Over the year our volunteers and partners have carried out a vast amount of work to care for the regions' waterways:

In Derbyshire

- Our **South Derbyshire and Erewash Towpath Taskforces** were out over Christmas cutting back offside vegetation.
- Heritage repairs were carried out at Bridge 20 on the Pinxton Arm of the Cromford Canal after volunteers received training in the use of **traditional lime mortar**.

In Leicestershire

- **WASUP** and **Leicester Community Links** created a community garden at Belgrave Lock; a variety of native trees have been planted, as well as plants, flowers and shrubs, with further work planned.
- **Out in the Wild** forest school at the **Red Circle Angling Club** helped us to reach members of the local Muslim community and arrange a water-based litter pick on the River Soar.
- **Sewa Day** community group has adopted a section of the River Soar between Lime Kiln Lock and North Lock, focusing mainly on vegetation management and litter removal.

In Lincolnshire

- We helped the **Grantham Canal Society** to install a slipway at Woolsthorpe, adjust the weir at Denton and repair several major leaks.
- Supported by **British Canoeing**, local canoe clubs helped us survey discharges into our network along the **Fosdyke & Witham Navigation**.

In Northamptonshire

- **Volunteering Matters** adopted a mile of the Grand Union Canal near Cosgrove, helping to keep the stretch special for people and wildlife by painting lock gates, installing signage, improving hedgerows and planting canalside gardens.
- **Friends of the Canal Museum at Stoke Bruerne** and Northampton University have worked with us to offer undergraduate students volunteering work experience, supporting their team project work and individual development.

- **The Braunston Canal Society** planted a hedge at locks 4 and 5 of the Braunston Flight, painted weir fences and helped the Trust with safety works at Braunston Tunnel.
- **The Inland Waterways Association** installed a defibrillator at Lock 14 on the Northampton Arm, funded by **Hunsbury Meadows Parish Council**.

In Nottinghamshire

- **The Navigation Inn** adopted a stretch of the Nottingham & Beeston Canal, including Castle Lock; painting the lock furniture and carrying out regular litter picks to help improve the area.
- **Nottingham Trent University** students helped to transform the area around the **Canalside Heritage Museum** at Beeston, clearing vegetation, litter picking, and painting fences, benches and bridges.
- **Nottingham Kayak Club** and **Holme Pierrepont Canoe Club** supported the Trust to remove fly-tipped rubbish on the Nottingham & Beeston Canal collecting over 16 bags of rubbish, traffic cones and road signs.



- Volunteers from **Castle Marina** removed scrap metal waste discarded by magnet fishers on the towpath of the Nottingham & Beeston Canal. Together with the **Nottingham Narrowboat Project**, they've also installed a series of wildlife nesting platforms created out of old throw rings and rope.
- We worked with **Littleover Community School** and **Stoke Woods Action Group** to plant over 100 trees at Stoke Woods in Stoke Bardolph.



Caring for our heritage & environment



We've installed floating reedbeds along the canal in Nottingham, softening the edge and attracting wildlife.

Creating healthy hedgerows

Hedgerows provide vital habitats for a wide variety of wildlife, offering shelter and food. Hedge-laying is a traditional method of bending and partially cutting stems so they grow horizontally, creating healthy hedgerows.

We've been working with **volunteers at Stoke Bruerne and Crick** to fill in gaps in our

hedgerows. Over 44 metres of hedgerow were upgraded at Stoke Bruerne, and a further 45 metres on the Northampton Arm. We have also arranged a series of hedge-laying training events on the Grantham Canal at Gamston, with volunteers from **Friends of Cotgrave Country Park** and the **Grantham Canal Society**, as well as training at Snarestone with the **Ashby Canal Association**.

Creating linear wildlife corridors in Nottingham

Working with our Nottingham Canal Improvement Partnership teams, we've planted **linear wildflower verges** and installed more **floating reedbeds** along the Nottingham & Beeston Canal to attract wildlife into the heart of the city, and support Nottingham's aspiration to be the first carbon neutral city in the UK by 2028.

Coca-Cola has adopted a stretch of the Nottingham & Beeston Canal and provided £10,000 funding for 25 square metres of floating reed bed wildlife habitat through their employee-nominated 'Support my Cause' scheme. **Volunteers from Severn Trent Water and Coca-Cola helped to plant up and install the reedbeds near Castle Wharf.**

Local firm, **Harris Lamb**, helped to survey the aquatic plants under the surface of the canal revealing a variety of species in the centre of the city.



Tackling plastic pollution in our waterways

Throughout the year we've promoted our **#PlasticsChallenge** campaign at events, with school groups and in the local media. We also worked with the environmental charity the **Hubbub Foundation**, to launch the **'Treasure Your River'** campaign in Nottingham, calling for businesses, community groups, residents and other organisations to help reduce litter entering the River Trent.

Family events have been held at Castle Wharf, where people helped tackle litter with **remote-controlled litter-busting boats**, as well as enjoying canoe and paddleboard taster sessions. We've also been holding **regular volunteer clean-ups** along the Nottingham & Beeston Canal, with the message that items dropped into the canal, which runs through the heart of the city, are washed into the river and eventually out to sea.

Mowing and biodiversity

We conducted a six month trial at sites on the Grand Union and Erewash Canals altering our mowing regime to encourage a **greater diversity of plants and provide better cover and foraging opportunities for insects, birds, mammals and reptiles**. As a result of the trial, which also considered

the needs of boaters, anglers and other visitors to our waterways, the new mowing regime has been adopted on our waterways nationwide.

Improving biodiversity

- We took part in a project to restore the rare **'Nottingham Crocus'** to green spaces in the city, by planting bulbs along the Nottingham & Beeston Canal.
- Thanks to £83,000 funding from **EDF Energy** we are planning to install an eel pass at Stoke Lock Weir on the River Trent, helping this critically endangered species to navigate the weir.
- Staff and students from **Nottingham Trent University** helped us to tackle the **invasive weed Floating Pennywort** on the Nottingham & Beeston Canal. Students used canoes to help remove the weed which can form thick mats on the surface of the water.
- The **Newark Quaker Meeting** has adopted a stretch of land alongside the River Trent, where they plan to plant native trees and improve the area for biodiversity.

Protecting our heritage

- Thanks to funding from **Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council**, we repaired a wall and



brickwork on the historic Dakins Bridge on the Ashby Canal at Congerstone.

- Stoke Bruerne Canal Museum's **historic working boat 'Sculptor'** went to a dry dock in Northwich for important conservation works and is due back in April. Historic working boat 'Ilkeston' has been moored outside the Museum instead, giving visitors the chance to see an historic working boat from the Museum's collection.
- We worked with volunteers from **Friends of Cromford Canal** to provide training in the use of traditional lime mortar. The team put their skills to use on the Grade II Listed Bridge 20 of the Cromford Canal, Pinxton Arm.



Awards & celebrations



Recognising our Leicester Kickstarters

In November we hosted an event at the National Space Centre celebrating the achievements of our Leicester Kickstarters.

The event marked the culmination of the Kickstarters' six-month placements with the Trust, with six of the group securing apprenticeships with the Trust.

More than 60 local partners, as well as the family and friends of the six Kickstarters saw and

heard about the range of skills and experiences the young people had gained.

Forming the Leicester Waterways Improvement Partnership

A new **Leicester Waterways Improvement Partnership** is being formed. It aims to build on recent improvements carried out by the Trust, **Leicester City Council**, and other local partners. The Partnership brings together

businesses, community groups and local authorities from across the City to find ways to work together to make the waterways even better for people and wildlife.

More than a third of people living in Leicester live within one kilometre of the River Soar and Grand Union Canal running through the heart of the City, so there's huge potential to make a big difference to people's lives through improvements to the waterways.

Lock 14 officially reopened

In August we celebrated the **official reopening of Lock 14 on the Grantham Canal** with the first boat in more than 90 years passing through the lock. The reopening was the result of a three-year partnership with **Grantham Canal Society** which saw the formerly derelict lock restored by volunteers. The restoration was made possible by £830,500 funding from the **National Lottery Heritage Fund**, and the Society has applied for further funding to restore locks 12 and 13.



Green Flag award for Foxton

In October our Foxton Locks site was awarded **Green Flag status for the first time**, joining 2,000 of the best open spaces in the country. This staircase of locks is the longest and steepest in Britain and is one of the most popular destinations on our network.

The Trust's staff and volunteers work all year round to ensure Foxton Locks remains a special place for people and wildlife. The award judges commended the site's 'distinct character and strong sense of place which is valued by many' and praised the team there who 'are clearly very dedicated to the site, its history and the investment in its volunteers.'

We also retained the **Keep Britain Tidy's** Green Flag status on the Erewash Canal and the Nottingham & Beeston Canal.



Volunteer of the year

The **Marsh Trust** Volunteer Awards recognised Barbara Hillier as the East Midlands volunteer of the year. Barb started volunteering as a lock keeper on the River Trent in 2011, then she became a Towpath Ranger on the Erewash Canal, and she is now lead volunteer on the Nottingham & Beeston Canal.

In October our Foxton Locks site was awarded **Green Flag status for the first time**

Raising our profile

- We received national coverage of our **Waterways & Wellbeing green social prescribing** project in The Times, Daily Star, Times Radio and across the Global radio network, including LBC, Smooth and Capital. The project was also featured locally on BBC East Midlands Today, BBC Radio Nottingham and the Nottingham Post.
- **Lilian Greenwood MP** joined us for the **Nottingham Canal Improvement Partnership anniversary** and also took part in one of our Waterways & Wellbeing canoeing sessions on the Nottingham & Beeston Canal.
- **MP for Loughborough Jane Hunt** met some of the young people helping us to care for Leicestershire's waterways as part of the Kickstart programme.

- **Daventry MP Chris Heaton Harris** joined us for a visit at Braunston to find out about our work in the area, and **Andrea Leadsom, MP** for South Northamptonshire enjoyed a tour of the **Canal Museum at Stoke Bruerne**.
- In August BBC East Midlands Today and BBC Radio Lincolnshire joined us for the **reopening of Lock 14 on the Grantham Canal**. The event also featured on the BBC News website, ITV Central News and the Grantham Journal. A video showing the first boat in 90 years to go through the lock was viewed via our Twitter account more than 15,000 times.
- We met **Robert Jenrick, MP for Newark** at the Nether Weir hydro-electric power plant on the River Trent, one of 11 hydro

sites on the Canal & River Trust's network. Here the single 70KW Archimedes screw generates enough energy for 175 homes each year and provides electricity for the local Kings Marina.

- In November we were interviewed for a BBC Look East TV news item on our **Volunteering Matters canal adoption programme at Cosgrove**, launched during **#iwill week**.
- BBC East Midlands Today, BBC Radio Lincolnshire, BBC Radio Derby and BBC Radio Leicester all covered our campaign to recruit more **volunteer lock keepers at sites** across the region.



Tackling issues

Tackling waterway weed

Duckweed caused a real issue for people and wildlife on the Fossdyke Canal and the River Witham. Under the right conditions, it forms thick mats blocking sunlight and reducing oxygen levels, causing problem for wildlife, boaters, anglers and rowers in Boston.

We invest around £80,000 a year tackling weed on the Fossdyke and Witham, and this year we brought an extra weed boat onto the river to help clear around 100 tonnes of weed a day.

The weed was a mixture of duckweed and the non-native water fern, Azolla. **We introduced thousands of weevils that feed only on Azolla** to help tackle the problem.

We also work with the **Environment Agency** to reduce the amount of duckweed entering the navigation from a number of feeder channels. The Agency installed booms across the feeders at each intersection and allow the Trust's lock keepers to operate sluice gates to help flush the weed away.

Volunteers from the **Grantham Canal Society** also helped us to release weevils on the canal at Harlaxton to tackle a problem with Azolla there.

Working with boaters on the River Trent

We've held a series of **'working together' sessions** where boaters can share their knowledge and

experience to help improve boating on the River Trent. Topics discussed included communication, signage, maintenance, customer service facilities and how the Trust tackles vandalism and anti-social behaviour.

Dealing with winter flooding

In December heavy rainfall during Storm Barra led to **flooding along the Upper River Trent**. Our local operations teams worked night shifts and weekends to manage the water, using locks and sluice gates and clearing debris. Our volunteers also cleared up tree branches and other debris blocking the towpath along the Nottingham & Beeston Canal. **Storms Eunice and Franklin brought further disruption**, with our teams and contractors working to manage water levels and tackle fallen trees across the region.

Improving water supply on the Grantham Canal

We worked with representatives of **Grantham Canal Society and Kinoulton Parish Council** to improve water supply to parts of the Grantham Canal. Supply to the Grantham Canal, which is not navigable to boats and disconnected from the waterway network, is limited meaning that in periods of hot, dry weather water levels in the canal can drop.

We've been working together to identify leaks and other ways of

maximizing the available water. This follows works last year to clear overgrowing reeds from the centre of the canal, aiding the flow of water.

Dredging our waterways

Some sections of our waterways have required additional dredging to improve navigation for boats. In some places siltation and the formation of sand bars has been caused by **adverse weather and a reduction in boat movement during lockdown**.

We dredged the River Soar at Radcliffe Lock and Limekiln Lock as well as carrying out **spot dredging on the River Trent** between **Holme Lock and Cromwell Lock**.

Raising awareness of the dangers of Magnet Fishing

Magnet fishing is an ongoing challenge on our waterways. The pastime, which is not permitted on the Trust's waterways, can lead to unwanted metal items being left next to busy towpaths. We've worked with **Leicester City Council, the Police, the Environment Agency and the local rowing club** to take steps to reduce **magnet fishing in Leicester**. New signage and social media communication are helping to raise awareness of the dangers and consequences of magnet fishing.



Canal & River Trust

Making life better by water

Thanks to all our partners & supporters

It is impossible to list all the statutory and voluntary organisations, community and partner groups, corporate supporters, funders and individuals who work with us to deliver projects and activities and to maintain and care for our waterways. But our thanks go to all of you that have supported us over the past two years, and we look forward to working with you in the future.

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