

# PRESS RELEASE

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## **CANAL CHARITY HAILS SUCCESS OF ‘ACTIVE WATERWAYS CHESHIRE’ WITH LAUNCH OF NEW WALKS PROGRAMMES**

The Canal & River Trust charity has launched a new series of Let’s Walk programmes and social rambles across Cheshire, building on the success of a three year ‘Active Waterways’ project.

Funded by a Sport England National Lottery grant, the Active Waterways project attracted nearly 400 people over 55 to meet up for regular walks along the county’s beautiful waterways. This helped to improve people’s mental and physical health, reduce isolation, encourage new friendships and provide opportunities to learn more about the area’s rich waterway heritage.

In the final 12 week programme this spring, 55 new participants enjoyed walking, cycling, canoeing, mindfulness, litter picking and heritage-themed activities in a range of locations across Cheshire.

All new volunteer leaders and many participants from the project have pledged to continue their fitness drive long-term by signing up to the charity’s new walks programmes. Their enthusiasm will now be harnessed and provide the foundation for a new series of weekly morning waterway walks, with different groups based in Chester, Nantwich, Northwich, Macclesfield and Ellesmere Port. Starting the week after the Jubilee bank holiday, the social rambles are graded ‘easy’ and will be open to everyone from the age of 18 upwards. And for inactive adults wishing to gain confidence and join a more structured programme, Let’s Walk will be returning with a 12 week programme from 11 July onwards. All walks should be booked in advance on the Canal & River Trust website.

Poppy Learman, Active Waterways project manager with the Canal & River Trust, said: “We are thrilled with the success of Active Waterways and the difference the project has made to so many people’s lives, particularly during the pandemic. We recognise many older people lost confidence in going out and about as a result of successive lockdowns. Loneliness or isolation were major problems, so the group activities were designed to bring people under similar circumstances together.

“Sport England research shows that inactivity among over 55s is responsible for just as many deaths as smoking. Over 65% of participants thought the sessions had encouraged them to become more

Canal & River Trust

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active and we are delighted that all 19 volunteer group leaders have decided to remain with the Trust as volunteer organisers, which is a fantastic outcome.”

Moving forwards from the project, Vicki Birch, the Trust’s North West participation, health and wellbeing manager, is looking forward to welcoming the volunteer leaders and participants to the Trust’s wider Let’s Walk programme.

She said: “Life truly is better by water and we are delighted to continue the brilliant work started by the Active Waterways project by harnessing that enthusiasm into future waterside walking programmes. We would encourage anyone who wants to improve their health and wellbeing to get in touch and join us on the new weekly saunters exploring the county’s beautiful waterways.”

**For more information or to reserve a place on the social rambles or Let’s Walk programme in Cheshire, go to**

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/canal-amp-river-trust-north-west-33409711283>

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**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).