



Plan your action

You've now found out lots about the issues facing your local waterway. Using all that information, it's time to plan an action that will make your waterway better for everyone.

Taking action means doing something that will help. These are some ways you could take action:

Make the waterway nicer by cleaning it up or planting wildflowers to attract bees and butterflies

Help improve the area for wildlife by building bird and bat boxes, hedgehog homes or bug hotels

Have a waterway fun day, where you invite people to visit your local waterway and have a party

Join in with a planned Trust activity or event and run a session for young people

Organise a plastics challenge event and work with a local artist to turn the rubbish you collect into sculptures you can put along the towpath or at our museums

Plan a photo treasure hunt – take photos of various things along the canal (bridge numbers, a set of steps, a mural, a particular lock) and encourage people to head out and find them

Run a wellbeing activity for members of the local community such as towpath yoga or a group cycle

Plan a guided walk to tell people all about the canal whilst helping them keep active

Adopt a waterway through the Canal & River Trust Pocket Adoption Scheme

Discuss your ideas with your Trust leader and the rest of your group.

There are lots of things to consider and your leader will be able to advise you on what may or may not be possible. They can also put you in touch with other people across the Trust who will have specialist knowledge (ecologists, heritage advisors, environment team etc).

- How do your ideas respond to things people have told you in your surveys?
- How do your ideas reflect the difference you want to make?
- How will you share what you have done with others in your community?





Make your plan

What will you do?

Outline the main aims of your project. What are you trying to achieve?

How will you do it?

What action are you actually going to take? It might help to break your project down into smaller chunks so you can see what needs to be done. Think about safety too – you'll need to do a risk assessment for your activity and make sure you have all the right clothes and equipment to stay safe. This sounds a bit daunting but don't worry, at the Trust we're experts at safety so your leader will be able to help you with all of this and make sure we're keeping everyone safe throughout the project.

Who will do the action?

Think about who is in the group – what skills do you have and what skills do you want to develop? How can you make the most of your strengths and work together as a team? How will you identify roles and allocate people to do them? Is this an open event where you want members of the public to join you or will it all be done by you and your group?



Where will it be?

What's the location of the activity? How will people get there? Does it have welfare facilities (loos and somewhere to wash your hands) nearby?

Will you invite anyone special?

Is there anyone that could help support your activity or help spread the word?

When will you do it?

Think about the time of year, the time of day, whether you want to do it at a weekend?

How will you know if you have been successful?

It's a good idea to think about how you will measure success. You could carry out surveys on the day, interview people who are involved or take before and after pictures if you are planning physical improvements. You could arrange a group discussion afterwards to discuss the activity / event while it's still fresh in people's minds.

How long will it last?

Is this a one off activity or will you do it over several days / weeks?

What happens next?

How will you make your activity sustainable?

Who else may you need to talk to?

Think about internal people at the Trust as well as other people and groups within your community.



Take action

Now that you've got a great idea, it's time to do it for real. You can work together so that everyone does a small part and gets involved.

In this part of the activity pack you can:

- Write a letter to your local MP or any other VIPs you would like to ask for support from.
- Think about using social media to promote your action.
- Think about making your action sustainable.
- Evaluate your activity – did it go well? Did you achieve what you set out to? What could have gone better? Did people enjoy the activity?

Use this space below to jot down ideas about your action



Write a letter

If someone with a lot of power or influence gets involved with your action, it could help to spread the message to even more people.

Think about inviting someone important to take part in your action: it could be your MP, a local celebrity, a senior manager at the Trust. You could use this letter template to invite them to help with your action.

Template letter

Address

(You can use the local Trust office if you prefer)

(Today's date)

Dear

My name is *(insert name)* and I am part of *(name of group you are involved with)*. I've been working on a social action project at our local waterway, which is in *(place name)*.

We visited the waterway and *(talk about some of the things you did during your waterway visit, and what you learned from your detective work)*.

Now we're going to take action and try to make our local area better. Here's how we're going to do it. We would like you to help us by: *(Think carefully about what you ask this person to do, for example coming to your event or writing about you on social media. Explain how their actions could help you with your project)*.

We hope you will consider helping with our project.

Please let us know if you are able to support us *(include Trust leader's email address or group email rather than a personal one)*

Thank you,

(your name)

Using social media

Along with letting the community know about your plans, and asking influential people to help you take action, another good way to spread your message widely is to use social media.

Some social media tips:

- Use an existing or set up a new group account rather than using a personal one
- Posts with pictures or videos often do better than just text
- Use your platform to have conversations, rather than just broadcast your ideas
- Check your privacy settings and know how to block people
- Make sure you have permission from anyone captured in photographs before you share them
- Hashtags can help with finding similar content, especially on Twitter and Instagram

Pros:

- Offers the chance of getting feedback in real time.
- An informal method of communicating that can target particular audiences, for example other young people.
- Posts can reach people all over the world and spread messages virally.

Cons:

- It's time consuming to build up a big following. If you create new social media accounts for your project, will your posts be seen?
- Comments can be misunderstood or taken out of context
- Information is forever in the public domain and cannot easily be taken down



Safety and sustainability

At the Trust safety is of the utmost importance and whatever we do, we always think about how we look after ourselves and each other at all times.

It's really important that any action you plan and take is done in a safe way and follows our procedures and guidance. Your Trust leader will be able to advise you on what you need to do to make sure you are keeping yourself and others safe. Taking action might mean speaking to members of the public, visiting a waterway again or posting updates online. Whatever action you take, there will be some risk involved. It's important to think about these risks and take steps to avoid them if you can.

Think about three risks you might face when you take your action. What will you do to minimise them?

1.

2.

3.

A lot of planning has gone into the action that you are going to take. We want this to be a change that lasts a long time, not a quick fix. This is the principle of 'sustainability', and it's really important for the success of your action.

Think of three ways you could make your action more sustainable, and say how you plan to do it.

1.

2.

3.



Evaluate your activity

So now you have done your activity, it's time to sit down, pat yourselves on the back and take a well-deserved break.

It's also important to take some time to reflect on the whole experience – recognise and celebrate what went well and consider any improvements that could make the activity even better if you do it again. It's good to think about what you achieved personally, as well as on a group level.

What went well?

What could have gone better?

What I achieved personally / what am I most proud of?



What's next?

For the project...

Think about who is going to look after the site now and whether there's a role for your group to play. Could you make the activity a regular thing? Could you adopt the stretch of canal? Could you lead guided walks or plan a community event to show everyone what you have done?

For me...

Think about what you want to do next – are there any skills you really want to develop further? Are there different roles you may want to take on in another project?

Thank you

So that's it, you have successfully planned and delivered a social action project to improve your local waterway for your community. All that's left to say is a massive thank you and congratulations from everyone at the Trust!! With your help, we can make our canals and rivers beautiful, safe spaces where communities can spend time relaxing, keeping active, socialising and enjoying nature.

Together we really can make life better by water for the millions of people who live and work alongside our wonderful waterways.