



**Canal &
River Trust**

Making life better by water

Youth Impact Report 2021



Welcome to our 2021 Youth Impact Report

Within this document we will be celebrating and showcasing the youth-focused activities that have taken place in 2021 across the Trust and demonstrating the impact we are making with the individuals, partners, and communities we work with.

The report is split into two sections:

- 1 The **National Perspective** will look at the work undertaken by our central teams who develop our strategy, framework and processes for engaging young people.
- 2 The **Regional Perspective** will focus on the unique activities and approaches of our six regions who work directly with young people.



National partners we work with

Council for Learning Outside the Classroom
The Duke of Edinburgh's Award
John Muir Trust
Mind
National Citizens Service
National Union of Students (NUS)
National Youth Agency (NYA)
The Prince's Trust

Scouts
Sport England
Street Games
SOS UK (Students Organising for Sustainability)
UK Youth
#iwill movement
7PK

The stats



Over 35,000 young people engaged in Trust-delivered activities and events



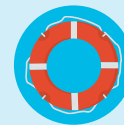
Over 1,300 young volunteers making a difference in local communities



Close to 20,000 hours of youth social action



Around 45,000 children and young people engaged in learning and skills activities



Over 19,000 young people participating in face to face water safety learning sessions (including digital)



Close to 5,000 children and young people engaged through Community Roots



45,000 children and young people engaged in our 'Beat The Street' initiative

All figures are approximate due to the nature of data collection at events and a current changeover of systems.

At the Canal & River Trust, we are passionate about providing opportunities for the millions of people who have waterways on their doorstep to experience the many benefits they offer.

Over the past year we have continued to grow our youth engagement work, and have made progress towards the achievement of the POWER of Youth Charter commitments we made in 2020.

We have worked with more partners, across different sectors and have embraced different ways of working to increase inclusion and broaden representation.

We also diversified our offer, creating more opportunities for young people to engage

digitally, remotely and through self-led activities.

In 2021 we launched a number of new initiatives including our Youth Fellowship and Young Rangers schemes and teams across the country delivered our broadest engagement programme ever with activities ranging from sports to arts, social prescribing to climate action, and citizen science to heritage skills.

By working with young people and partner groups we will continue to



grow this involvement in our work to ensure our canals and rivers remain used and valued, providing vital green and blue spaces for the diverse communities they run through, now and in the future.



Richard Parry
Chief Executive

Throughout 2021, our youth engagement work has been underpinned by 3 key principles; working in partnership, empowering children and young people, and embracing new and inclusive ways of working.

In 2021, we were able to restart many of our face-to-face activities for children and young people and also continued to develop more flexible offers, including online, digital, self-led and remote opportunities.



We also identified two key strategies to really maximise and demonstrate the impact of youth engagement across the Trust:

1. Embed the 'POWER of Youth' charter across the Trust

The Canal & River Trust was one of the first organisations to sign up to the POWER of Youth Charter (see page 4). Marking the next step in the iwill movement, the Charter aims to increase the number of young people engaging in youth social action and the range of opportunities open to them. Our work around the Charter reflects our commitment to supporting youth voice and youth leadership at all levels and focuses on ensuring we are providing

opportunities for young people from all walks of life, particularly those who have been previously underrepresented and those facing barriers to participation.

2. Share our stories of success

Our regional colleagues have always delivered a wide range of fantastic projects and worked with many great partners. Throughout 2021 we have been working with them to amplify the success stories and really share the positive impact of our youth activity. We produced quarterly handbooks with resources to help with showcasing their work and organised regular meetings to identify potential case studies and 'good news' stories. The culmination of this is the Impact Report that you are now reading – the first youth-focused report of its kind that we have produced.



Lucie Unsworth
National Youth & Civil Society Manager

The POWER of Youth Charter and the Canal & River Trust: How are we delivering?

In November 2020 we signed up to the POWER of Youth Charter and made a series of pledges to demonstrate our ongoing commitment to young people. These provide a framework that underpins our

approach and activities, giving direction and consistency but ensuring our regional colleagues have the flexibility to tailor opportunities for specific communities and individual young people.

To read more about our commitments to the Charter and the progress we have made to date, please visit <https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/specialist-teams/youth-engagement/partners-and-funders/youth-social-action/iwill>

POWER OF YOUTH CHARTER

WE WILL...

P

PRIORITISE SUPPORTING YOUNG PEOPLE TO TAKE SOCIAL ACTION

We will create opportunities that empower more young people, particularly from low-income and ethnic minority backgrounds, to be positive changemakers



O

OPEN UP OUR DECISION-MAKING STRUCTURES

We will offer opportunities for young people, particularly from low-income and ethnic minority backgrounds, to participate in decision-making, leading and shaping both the activities they are involved in and wider organisational decisions



W

WORK COLLABORATIVELY WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS

We will work collaboratively with other organisations to create more high-quality opportunities, reach young people from low-income and ethnic minority backgrounds to take part, share learning and achieve shared goals



E

EVIDENCE THE BENEFITS OF YOUTH SOCIAL ACTION

We will capture and share insights, stories and data on how we are working with young people, and the positive impact this has on them, their communities and our organisation



R

RECOGNISE AND CELEBRATE YOUNG PEOPLE'S IMPACT

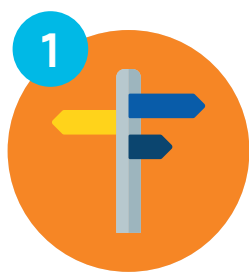
We will use our communication channels to advocate for and celebrate young people as positive and powerful changemakers.



Focusing on the key areas



Throughout 2021, our national work around the POWER of Youth Charter has focused on 4 key areas:



1
Supporting internal colleagues



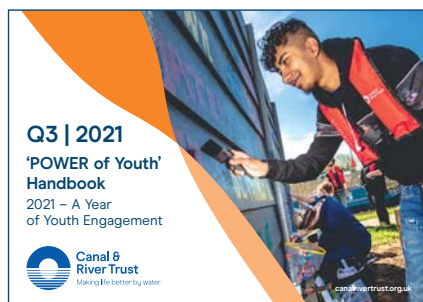
2
Working with external partners



3
Broadening our offer and ways of working



4
Demonstrating impact



Kickstart programme leads to job creation

During 2021, the Trust welcomed a wave of 47 young people to its regional, construction, and digital marketing teams as part of the Government's Kickstart initiative, funded by the Department for Work and Pensions.

Kickstart was a programme for young people aged 16-24 in receipt of Universal Credit and at risk of long-term unemployment. The programme supported

98% agreed or strongly agreed they felt a sense of achievement

100% agreed or strongly agreed they felt they belonged to their local area

100% agreed or strongly agreed they felt happy

"It's been really therapeutic in a way, mind-relieving really... before I was working, I was in my house all day, but now I'm out and about and I don't have to worry about things."



young people to build up their experience and help them move into sustained employment after they completed their Kickstart-funded role.

In Burnley, Leicester, and Walsall, 23 young people joined the Trust and gained experience in waterway care and customer service, including canal and towpath maintenance and a range of 'green' environmental projects. Another 22 positions were based with the Trust's construction teams, where participants learnt heritage skills ranging from masonry, bricklaying, and carpentry, to canal bank protection and



towpath resurfacing. A further two participants joined the Trust's social media and web content teams to promote the use of canals to waterside communities.

We are immensely proud that 22 of these have gone on to start apprenticeship roles at the Trust. In January 2022, a further 23 Kickstarters will join the Trust working with regional teams in Stalybridge, Wolverhampton and Nottingham.

Empowering and supporting young leaders

Our Youth Fellowship Programme enables young people to be formally involved with the Trust and provide a 'youth voice' that influences our decision making.

All our 'Fellows' are aged between 16-25 and they all bring a unique, fresh perspective to help us shape the future direction of our organisation. To do this effectively they are supported with a voluntary 12-month development programme. This includes a

four-module digital training programme, three in-person professional development training days and the opportunity to undertake a transformative social innovative project. Each member can also access mentoring from senior colleagues, attend advisory groups & boards and

attain accreditation relevant to their role.

As well as being brand ambassadors for the Trust, they also have the opportunity to become a true role model for other young people in their community, as well as the wider charity and environmental sector.



Alice



Tea



Yasin



James



Emily



Teri



Osaru

Digital engagement and production of online digital resources

During 2021, we accelerated the pace of our digital plans, creating a wide range of ways for children, young people, their families, teachers and group leaders to continue to engage in a virtual space.

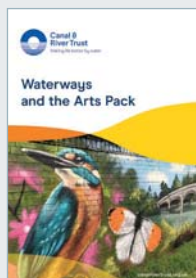
Our colleagues in youth-facing roles developed online resource packs, learning at home bundles and virtual engagement sessions. We also developed new protocols and created toolkits and guidance to ensure our shift to virtual engagement reflected best practice and, as with all of our activities, had safety and safeguarding at its heart.

Based on the topics young people told us they cared most about in our 2019/2020 survey, we created six youth-focused resource packs: Plastics Pollution, the Arts, Wellbeing, Climate Change, Nature on Your Doorstep and Water Safety. These were designed to be useful and useable in a range of ways – independently by individuals, as group sessions led by an external leader or teacher

and as online sessions led by Trust colleagues or volunteers.

The packs are free to download from the website at <https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/youth-resources> and have been very well received to date.

We also provided 2,000 printed copies of each pack that could be ordered free of charge online to help address digital poverty.



How young people are “Keeping the water flowing”

The Trust is working closely with the Inland Waterways Association to ensure that a new generation of passionate waterway-lovers are inspired to protect the future of the canals and rivers around the country and have a key role in the restoration and preservation of the waterways.

Across England and Wales there are around 50 active restoration groups full of volunteers who are committed to saving and preserving their heritage and improving the local environment for the benefit of everyone within the community.

The Trust is helping these groups to engage with young people and provide them with the tools in order to do so. There are already many young people and families who are members of local groups, but there is still an appetite for more.



In March a major youth engagement consultation was launched which looked at the barriers that restoration groups

faced, potential opportunities that could exist, and what training and support they would need to work with young people.

This was followed up later in the year, when groups were invited to a webinar that was delivered by Mita Desai from the Young Trustees Movement. As a young person herself, she eloquently demonstrated the benefits of engaging young people and how to do it effectively. She was joined by Katie Woodroffe from the Trust who provided her perspective on working with young people.



Beat the Street encourages outdoor activities

Our Beat the Street partnership aims to increase levels of physical activity, help address health inequalities and increase usage of canal towpaths.



We also want to promote active travel and improve mental wellbeing amongst participants. Beat the Street generates engagement across multiple media platforms to help participants feel they are a part of something dynamic and worth taking part in. The game is delivered via a website where we see particularly strong engagement on the mapping and leader-board pages showing the programme encourages participation via gamification but also links people to where they live, which makes the activity more sustainable.

Throughout 2021, 111,171 people took part in Beat the Street in Burnley, Leicester & Sheffield. The Sheffield partnership was the largest Beat the Street

programme ever delivered with over 11% of the population (518,000) taking part during the six-week game phase between 16 June and 28 July. 60,187 participants walked, jogged, ran, cycled, scooted and rolled a total of 452,870 miles between them.

Data was collected for all participants who registered on the programme – a total of 72,006 across the three areas. Of these participants, 63% were 18 or under and 37% were from ethnically diverse communities.

We have recently formalised our partnership with Intelligent Health, the creators of the Beat the Street game, which will see us roll out into other areas throughout 2022 and beyond.

“I walked a lot more than normal, lost a little weight and hung out with friends more often.”

– Female, 19-29 years

“Beat the street encouraged me to go out more which made me feel better and become close with nature”

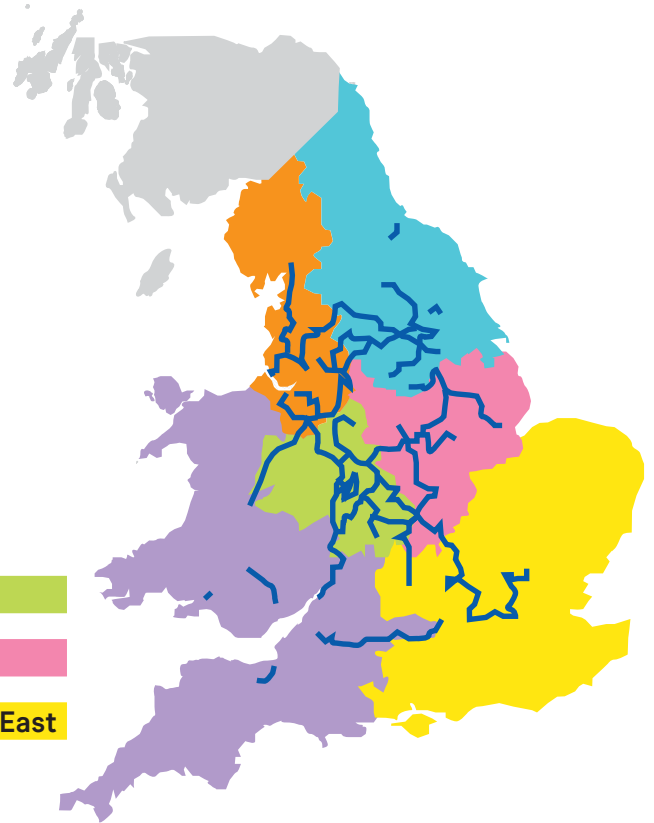
– Boy, 12-18 years

“Taking walks has helped me to clear my mind and has overall made me feel more relaxed and happy. I have begun to find joy in the littlest of things in nature from the leaves to the trees.”

– Girl, 12-18 years
Leicester participants

Our work in action

The following pages showcase some of the regional work we have supported across the country during 2021.



North West

West Midlands

Yorkshire & North East

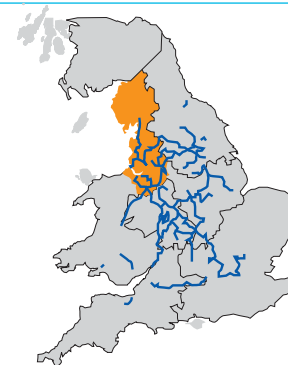
East Midlands

Wales & South West

London & the South East

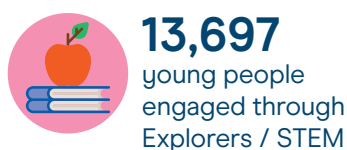
Our work in pictures





Youth engagement activities in the North West

During 2021, youth engagement activities in the North West delivered the following:



All figures are approximate due to the nature of data collection at events and a current changeover of systems.

Partners worked with

- Action For Conservation
- Blackburn Youth Zone
- Catch-22
- Chester Zoo (Cheshire Corridor Project)
- Everton In The Community
- Falinge Park High School
- IMO Charity
- Leonard Can Do Cheshire – Oakwood
- Leonard Can Do Cheshire – Tameside College
- Manchester Metropolitan University
- Parkview Community School (Primary)
- Preston United
- Sanctuary Housing Group, Hoole, Chester
- The Skill Mill
- Water Adventure Centre, Manchester



Former criminal justice service trainees gain support from the Trust

Trainees from the Skill Mill in Rochdale are working with the Trust and the Green Recovery Challenge Fund project in Greater Manchester.

The Skill Mill is a multi-award-winning social enterprise which provides employment opportunities for young people aged between 16 and 18. They employ ex-offenders, which actively reduces reoffending whilst increasing engagement, participation, employability, and educational levels of the young people to increase their life chances.

A group of four young people are working with the Trust's

Project Co-ordinators for two days a week over four months. All the young people in the programme are currently looking for work or planning to re-enter education and have had extensive contact with the criminal justice system.

Working with the Trust they are gaining skills and confidence through completing hands-on practical tasks and contributing to a green recovery across Manchester.

Active partnership creates paddle board opportunities for over 300 young people in Pennine Lancashire

Like most organisations, the Trust was severely affected by the pandemic – particularly with regards to the delivery of events and activities for young people.

This was equally true for a number of the Trust's partners. The cancelled programmes meant that many staff had to be furloughed and even when restrictions were partially lifted,



Pennine Lancashire

Pennine Lancashire was an area that was particularly badly affected by the pandemic. It saw some of the highest death and case rates in the country and high levels of restrictions were in place throughout. As a socially and economically deprived area, it presented many challenges for local children and young people; issues that were made significantly worse through a lack of activities and opportunities to take part in.

the lack of available resources and personnel meant it was difficult to quickly pivot to a pre-pandemic delivery model.

This issue was identified by Sport England who established the Tackling Inequalities Fund (TIF) to help community groups and not-for-profit organisations remain connected with their members and keep them physically active throughout the pandemic. The Trust applied to become an Active Partner of Sport England to support the distribution of TIF and £145,000 of funding was granted for distribution across Pennine Lancashire.

Through TIF, the Trust funded three youth projects across Blackburn to provide introductory paddle sessions to more than 300 young people (many from ethnically diverse communities) who were able to take part in activities that wouldn't otherwise have been possible and train 12 new instructors to make the projects sustainable.

Three youth projects (IMO Charity, Preston United and Blackburn Youth Zone) have since come together to collaboratively create a major legacy paddle sport project which will see the purchase of paddle boards, 'sit on top' kayaks and an additional 12 instructors trained across the three organisations. This will mean that weekly sessions can be delivered to over 100 young people each week.





Young Rangers give nature a helping hand

Over six weeks in the summer, an intrepid group of young people kicked off the the Trust's Young Ranger programme by undertaking a number of ecological and habitat studies around the Anderton Boat Lift in Cheshire.

The group of 12-16 year-olds were made up of home-educated children and those who had just finished their GCSEs. Their tasks included planting a new wildflower meadow, studying flora and fauna in an existing meadow, creating new habitats ('bug hotels' & 'frog and toad abodes') and building a pond.

At the end of one session, the group were shown videos of the wildlife that cameras (set up in a previous session) had captured. Many of the participants were amazed as footage of foxes, badgers and rabbits were shown that were recorded just metres away from where they were stood.

The final task for the group was to give their honest feedback. Every one of them gave a big thumbs up. "I loved it" said one, and when asked which was the best part of the session another loudly proclaimed: "All of it!"



**Anderton
Boat Lift**
Cheshire



The Trust launches first Youth Social Prescribing project

The Trust teamed up with a women and children's support organisation to run a 12-week Youth Social Prescribing project. The programme was co-created by the young participants who collectively shaped the programme and made the decisions on what activities will take place.

This was the Trust's first youth social prescribing project, and it built on a successful model that has been used to develop programmes for adults across the country. Working closely with link workers, partners, funding organisations and local CCGs (Clinical Commissioning Groups), this multi-agency approach enables the strengths of a number of organisations to be utilised to offer community-based opportunities that might not be otherwise possible.

The mental health of many young people has been particularly affected by the pandemic. Those with existing conditions have seen them get

worse, whilst many more have developed new symptoms in the last 18 months. Isolation and social inactivity have caused many to suffer low mood, low confidence, and withdrawal effects. Left unaddressed these issues can quickly spiral – but by developing Youth Social Prescribing projects the Trust can provide a series of activities that can boost wellbeing and help young people improve their mental health.

The Trust has prepared a varied menu of activities including planting, walking, painting and/ or taking part in water-based sports such as paddle boarding.

What is Social Prescribing?

Social Prescribing is where non-clinical services are issued by GPs or practice nurses (exercise, taking part in activities etc) to support an individual's health & wellbeing. It can be used to support a range of social, emotional or practical needs including mental health – an issue with young people that has been made significantly worse with the Covid-19 pandemic.

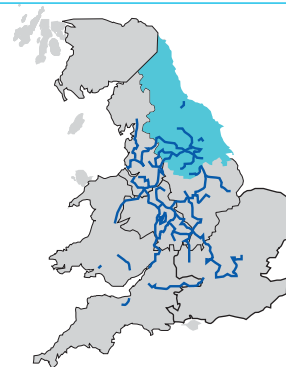
Young people improving deprived communities

Falinge Park High School in Rochdale is a multi-ethnic school with a catchment that includes some of the most deprived areas in Greater Manchester.

A group of students have been working with the Trust to create a new wildlife garden at Lock 52 on the Rochdale Canal. The young people have created a plan for the garden, cleared vegetation and taken part in wildflower planting and habitat creation.

This has been a valuable experience for the participants. Prior to starting the project most said that they spent a lot of their free time indoors. Now, following the project, they all agreed that they would definitely keep visiting the site and spend more time outside.






Youth engagement activities in Yorkshire & North East

During 2021, youth engagement activities in Yorkshire & North East delivered the following:

 **5,500** young people engaged in participatory activities and events

 **60** young volunteers

 **1,500** youth social action hours

 **8,100** young people engaged through Explorers / STEM

 **5,851** children & young people attending water safety sessions

All figures are approximate due to the nature of data collection at events and a current changeover of systems.

Partners worked with

- Armley Local Care Partnership (and partners)
- Beat The Street
- Bradford College
- Darnell Wellbeing
- Forum Central
- Hookers & Clickers
- Interreg Europe
- Kirklees College
- Lady Elizabeth Hastings' CE VA Primary School
- Leeds Autism Services
- Leeds City College
- Leeds City Council
- Sheffield Olympic Legacy Park
- UTC Sheffield
- West Yorkshire Fire & Rescue



Autism-friendly waterfront festival

With the British Medical Association estimating that around 1 in 100 children in the UK have a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder, it is essential that the Trust creates activities that are inclusive for all users of the waterways.

In August, as part of the Leeds Waterfront Festival, the Trust ran an Autism Friendly Event including canoeing, theatre experiences and yoga, as well as various partners offering a range of activities such as a scavenger hunt and a photography competition.

Over 120 active participants engaged, with approximately 1,500 additional people taking part by visiting stalls and enjoying the casual activities in the area. Well-B also made an appearance and was popular with adults and children alike!

It was a great way to introduce young people – particularly those young people who are autistic – to the waterways and experience the sights and sounds in a safe and friendly way.

It was very appreciated by visitors, with comments such as: “I would have struggled to arrange this myself, but my autistic son loved it so thank you very much for organising this”, and “I’ve not had the confidence to leave the house at all since lockdown, but this event got me out and I’m so glad I did”.

<https://www.las.uk.net/news/leeds-waterfront-festival-autism-neurodiverse-friendly-event-success>

Isolation 2 inclusion project funds new health and wellbeing approaches

The Trust is involved in an innovative project in Leeds that aims to improve the lives of families and young people who feel isolated or lonely.

The Isolation 2 Inclusion project is an 18-month EU funded project that unites countries around the North Sea to tackle the growing issue of isolation – a problem made significantly worse by the Covid-19 pandemic. The project, overseen by Interreg Europe, is funding new approaches that improve the health and wellbeing

of participants. The Trust is working with the Local Care Partnership and a number of other key partners to build on its social prescribing model and explore how a fluid participant-led model can be successfully introduced.

The Trust was chosen as a funding partner due to the miles of waterways that flow through the city and the extensive range of health and wellbeing activities that can be delivered alongside them. Where the Isolation 2 Inclusion project differs from other social prescribing offers is that to co-create a truly personalised solution, participants and link workers aren't restricted by a menu of services to choose from. By presenting the varied potential of the waterway as a foundation (outdoor, heritage,

ecology, recreation, relaxation), specific activities (walking, yoga, paddle boarding etc) can then be overlaid to create a bespoke engagement with partners.

Of course, the nature of the process means that participants might favour a non-waterway activity. The aim of Isolation 2 Inclusion is that all participants have the opportunity to be part of the co-creation of activities and solutions that will lend themselves to individual needs. As such, every engagement is celebrated by partners whether they access their own activities or not.

The ultimate aim of the project is to cement a partnership approach within the Leeds area and replicate it in other areas of the country. The I2I project also runs in the East Midlands and it is hoped that by creating a transferable model, the legacy of this project can benefit people across the country beyond the life of this initial project.



A Zest for Trust activities

Zest are a community centre working with people from low socio-economic backgrounds in deprived areas of Sheffield.

The Trust has worked with Zest for a number of years and during the school holidays up to 15 young people from Zest's youth group participated in a mixture of social action and fun-based activities.

The first part of the day is spent volunteering on a range of projects including towpath maintenance, vegetation clearance, litter picking, habitat

building and planting. The afternoon is spent undertaking an activity from the Let's programme such as canoeing from the canoe hub, creating art, or participating in nature-based activities.

The sessions are always incredibly well received, and this has led to the longevity of the relationship between Zest and the Trust.



Sheffield welcomes international arts project

'Walk with Amal' was an international arts project which saw Amal, a giant 3.5 metre puppet of a child refugee, walk from the Syrian border to the UK to raise awareness of the struggles of refugees.

Amal was visiting Sheffield on her route and Trust staff worked with Good Chance, Handsprung Puppet Company and Sheffield Theatres to enter the city via the Sheffield Canal.

As part of the welcome, local school pupils made a series of welcome banners, and for the day of her arrival, planned a welcome celebration for her aimed at families.

THE
W
A
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The activities included in the 'Walk with Amal' welcome event included Bhangra dancing workshops, crafting clay head puppets of Amal and welcome banners to create a bigger exhibit, mini canal ecosystem building, public street art which the public could add "welcome" in lots of different languages, and live music with a steel pan band.

Two boat rides were also put on to encourage families living close to the canal in Darnall, a diverse



community, to visit Victoria Quays for Amal's welcome. When Amal arrived she entered via a canal boat organised by the Trust and the whole area was bustling with people awaiting her arrival with approximately 4,000 people in attendance including many families and young people.

Engineering engagement with young people

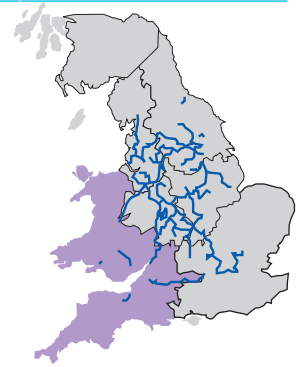
More than 50 Year 9 students from UTC Sheffield's Engineering Department have been involved in a year-long project with the Trust to create a system to remove litter from the canal which will then fit onto canoes in the city.



The students have been working on this project in their term time over the full academic year.

Some incredible designs were proposed. 20 of the top designs were presented as full product design briefs and three winning students were chosen. Of these, two are currently being made as prototypes which can then be tested on the canoes in Spring 2022 when 15 students will visit the hub and test the products.

It is hoped that the finished products will eventually be used for the regular litter picks as part of the canoe hub in Tinsley which is a community centred hub offering free canoeing sessions for disadvantaged families whilst improving the environment of the canal.



Youth engagement activities in Wales & South West

During 2021, youth engagement activities in Wales & South West delivered the following:

 **3,750**
young people engaged in participatory activities and events

 **142**
young volunteers

 **4,770**
youth social action hours

 **2,361**
young people engaged through Explorers / STEM

 **427**
children & young people attending water safety sessions

All figures are approximate due to the nature of data collection at events and a current changeover of systems.

Partners worked with

- Cherry Orchard Primary School
- Cheltenham College
- Discover Paddling, Gloucester
- Fairfield College
- Heddington Primary School
- Just Row Gloucestershire
- Monkton School
- Thatcham Scouts
- Priory Primary School
- Sea Cadets, Gloucester
- Severn Rivers Trust
- Wiltshire Wildlife Trust
- Y Gaer Museum & Art Gallery
- Ysgol y Bannau
- Ysgol y Senn



Variety of skills learnt in Forest School sessions at Jubilee Wood

Twenty Key Stage 2 pupils from a local primary school attended six Forest School sessions in Jubilee woodland, near Caen Hill in Wiltshire.

The pupils learnt a variety of skills, such as identifying plants and animals, making natural sculptures and fire lighting skills. They also spent an afternoon on the Caen Hill Flight, learning about how locks work. In total, the children took part in six 5-hour sessions run by the Trust between May and June.

The group learnt lots of new skills and spent over 600 hours of valuable time learning in an outdoor environment. Practical fun activities included foraging

for elderflower and making cordial, using tools to make objects such as pendants, making musical instruments and shelters, and identifying plants and animal species.

Aside from learning these new skills many of the children grew in confidence and significantly developed their social and communication skills. The school have already asked if the sessions could be repeated in 2022.



Safety partnership with SkillZONE in Gloucester

The Trust has been working with a Gloucester-based safety prevention organisation called SkillZONE to raise awareness of the importance of water safety.

One of the Explorers volunteers at the National Waterways Museum in Gloucester, Tim Hawkins, also gives up his time to support SkillZONE. This led to a partnership between the two organisations that ran throughout the summer holidays.

SkillZone were running a number of pre-booked family sessions throughout the summer to experience different danger scenarios. Trust staff brought in their 'Spot the Dangers' banner, met with families in reception and engaged with the children about what dangers and hazards they could see on the banner.

Overall, we spoke with 187 children about how to stay safe around inland waterways in Gloucestershire.

The partnership will continue in 2022 as a permanent banner will be located in SkillZONE's water safety room.



Getting creative in Wales with the Y Gaer Museum & Art Gallery in Brecon

With Covid restrictions specific to Wales in place, the Trust has had to work innovatively and creatively to deliver a full range of engagement activities to young people.

During June and July, the Trust worked closely with Y Gaer Museum & Art Gallery who opened for school visits on non-public days and created a safe working space for activities to take place.



In total 58 children took part in full day visits, including hands-on STEM learning activities, water safety, a boat trip, helping the lock keeper and curriculum-relevant guided walks.

One of the days was filmed for a children's TV programme by the TV company Boom Cymru who worked with the Trust's Welsh speaker Rhys and ensured that the children were fully involved in filming throughout the day.



College students gain employability skills

Fairfield Farm College in Wiltshire is a specialist college for students with learning disabilities. Every week 5-6 students visit the canal around Bradford on Avon and undertake maintenance tasks around the site.

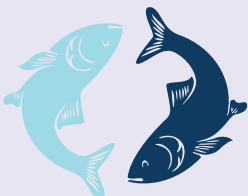


The group maintain the car park by clearing leaves, cutting back overhanging vegetation, weeding around the fruit trees, painting, fixing fences, planting trees, cutting the grass and collecting litter. They occasionally help with planned preventative maintenance on the locks and with the lock gate cleaning project. The group also visit other parts of the canal, such as Hilperton and Avoncliff, to carry out similar tasks.

The students are attending college to help prepare them for full or part time employment. The tasks that the students carry out whilst volunteering on the canal help develop employability skills. These include timekeeping and punctuality, developing social skills, using tools and equipment and health & safety. Not only are the group making a big impact on the towpath but their fantastic work is making a big impact on their career opportunities through valuable work experience.

Unlocking the Severn provides exciting youth activities

Hundreds of thousands of the fish species twaite shad used to migrate up the River Severn to reach their natural spawning grounds. Unfortunately weirs installed in the mid-19th century blocked this annual migration.



UNLOCKING THE SEVERN

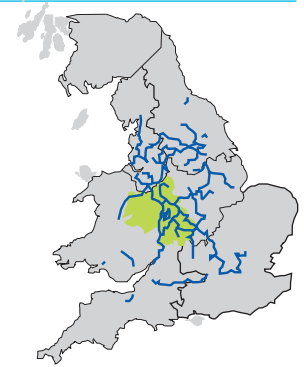
The initiative Unlocking the Severn will provide fish passage at six barriers on the River Severn and its River Teme tributary. This will restore 158 miles of river habitat and benefit a host of other important fish species including salmon and eel.

Young people visiting Diglis Island are able to take part in a STEM activity that gives them a real insight into the fish pass and why it was built. The Epic Engineering activity gives them the opportunity to explore engineering concepts behind building fish passes. Another (existing) STEM activity related to water pressure in locks has also been piloted as an additional activity for high school groups.

135 school children have taken part in a range of pilot activities in preparation for a 2022 launch that

will connect community groups along the river, engage over 6,000 school children, and create opportunities for hundreds of volunteers.





Youth engagement activities in the West Midlands

During 2021, youth engagement activities in the West Midlands delivered the following:

-  **4,731** young people engaged in participatory activities and events
-  **809** young volunteers
-  **9,204** youth social action hours
-  **13,898** young people engaged through Explorers / STEM
-  **10,640** children & young people attending water safety sessions

All figures are approximate due to the nature of data collection at events and a current changeover of systems.

Partners worked with

- Birmingham Met (Roundhouse)
- Birmingham 2022
- EcoSikh UK
- Eidgah Academy
- Gen22
- Great Barr Muslim Foundation
- Lote Tree Primary School
- Masjid Al Falaah
- New Hope Global
- River City Detectives Group
- St Marks Catholic Primary School
- Staffordshire Fire & Rescue Service
- Stoke College
- West Midlands Police Cadets
- Young Trustees Movement

Unique partnerships extend engagement opportunities

Offering opportunities – especially in deprived areas – can be difficult, but a partnership approach can bring multiple benefits for everyone involved.

The 'Our Space' project has not only generated new ways of working, but it has made a big impact in local communities.



The Wildside Activity Centre in Wolverhampton and Middleport Matters in Stoke

are two organisations that play essential roles within their local areas. By working together with both, the Trust has been able to engage significantly more individuals than if it had attempted it alone.



Both organisations operate close to local canals. By providing a range of activities for residents to participate in, many young people have engaged with the canal for the first time. With both organisations operating in widely diverse communities, the partnerships have ensured that opportunities are available to individuals from a varied mix of backgrounds and ethnicities.

The Trust has run lots of activities with young people including canoeing and conservation sessions. Through Eco Clubs, tree planting and litter picks, young participants have shown a greater responsibility for their community and demonstrated a passion to maintain the tidiness of their space.



Working with Urban Wilderness to support youth ‘happenings’ across Stoke-on-Trent

There’s a great deal of youth activity ‘happening’ in Stoke-on-Trent as the Trust continues to support Urban Wilderness to deliver a number of art-based activities along the Etruria Canal.

Bringing together local artists and young people from a variety of backgrounds, the activities will encourage residents from adjacent communities to explore their local spaces.

The remit of Urban Wilderness is predominantly focused on working with young people from deprived communities and presenting development opportunities that might otherwise not exist. This cohort is traditionally difficult to engage, and many challenges existed in maintaining relationships over lockdown. Fortunately, the team were able to do this, and post-pandemic, project managers have been able to reunite participants with their projects.



The shift to online workshops and mentoring has created opportunities for a new cohort of young people – ‘young activists’. Highly motivated and focused, these young people have been able to utilise technology and the availability of mentors to mobilise and create their own opportunities to benefit their communities. Through the development of micro-bursaries, young people have been able to create activities and gain funding to put them into action. Examples have included a (socially distanced) mini-community festival and a website for recycling awareness.

These two groups of young people (physical and online) were brought together for a major event across Stoke-on-Trent called ‘The Happening’.

Urban Wilderness worked with over 20 young people in the consultation phase and this resulted in the appointment of five artists who worked with a range of community audiences (including young people) to transform a number of low-usage spaces. This created a ‘festival of new public art’ and people were encouraged to explore (as a group or individually) and think about how they were engaging with it.





Daniel's fishing journey with Let's Fish!

Daniel is from Walsall and struggles at times with his attention levels and modifying his hyperactive behaviour. He attends a school for young people with special educational needs and disabilities.

Daniel discovered Let's Fish! by accident and is now well and truly hooked!

Daniel: "It actually all started when me, my Nan and my Grandad were on a walk on the canal and I saw some people fishing and I said to my Nan 'you promised you would take me fishing!'. So, my Nan managed to find Let's Fish!.

I enjoy it, it's calm. Children these days are like always playing on their PlayStation, Xbox and Nintendo Switches. It's really nice with Let's Fish! for people to come out, have some fun and enjoy themselves. Because that's what fishing is all about."

Throughout 2021, the Trust have run hundreds of free Let's Fish!

sessions in the West Midlands and throughout the country. Fishing is a fun activity, it's good for the mind and body and it's an activity that the whole family can enjoy.

Daniel usually attends the sessions with his Nan, Lorraine, who has thoroughly enjoyed seeing the beneficial impacts of the programme on Daniel's wellbeing and behaviour.

Daniel's Nan: "I am so proud of this young man. My heart could just literally beat out of my chest. He has done us so proud; he is a credit to us. At home he's on his Xbox, he's on his PlayStation. His legs are going. He's like an Energiser bunny.

When he comes fishing, he sits there, and he's calm. We go

in the car and Daniel is on his phone. But now we go fishing and we don't have the phone. All we talk about is fishing. It's been brilliant!

Let's Fish! is the best idea ever. It gets your children out in the fresh air and it takes them away from technology. Let's Fish!, especially during 2021 has been an absolute life saver. Not only to parents because you've got the children under your feet, but to the children themselves.

The Trust wouldn't be able to run Let's Fish! events without funding and is supported by players of People's Postcode Lottery, the Environment Agency, the Angling Trust and a large number of local groups and smaller funders.

Stoke National Citizen Service offers week of canal-based activities



In 2011, Stoke City Football Club celebrated 10 years of delivering the National Citizen Service (NCS) and once again the Trust supported the programme by offering a week of canal-based activities.

In total 94 young people took part in groups of over three weeks. Whilst every group completed a range of activities, for one of the weeks, they were able to select from a range of activities provided by partners. The Canal & River Trust 'week' is always in hot demand and as a result, groups have to pitch themselves to be the lucky group selected.

Over the week, 15 young people spent an entire week working on social action projects around Stoke.

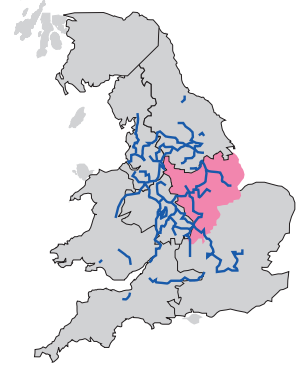
On Monday, they painted over a graffiti covered wall, in readiness for a new mural designed by Stoke College.

They spent Tuesday cleaning the bridge at Etruria and a wet Wednesday working on the digital aspect of their project.

On Thursday, they walked 16km on a mammoth litter pick from the BET365 stadium to Westport Lake (and back again!) and on Friday they celebrated their achievements with pizza at the football ground.

The Stoke City NCS scheme is the highlight of the year for many participants, and it plays an important role in developing a range of essential life skills. At the end of the summer a massive celebration event was held for participants, their parents and all the many partners – including the Trust – who make this such a fun and great project.





Youth engagement activities in the East Midlands

During 2021, youth engagement activities in the East Midlands delivered the following:

 **9,000**
young people engaged in participatory activities and events

 **140**
young volunteers

 **1,600**
youth social action hours

 **2,437**
young people engaged through Explorers / STEM

 **606**
children & young people attending water safety sessions

All figures are approximate due to the nature of data collection at events and a current changeover of systems.

Partners worked with

- Beat the Street Leicester, Wigston and Northampton
- Birstall Litter Pickers
- De Montfort University
- Leicester City Football Club in the Community
- Loughborough Grammar School
- NEST
- North Leicestershire Litter Wombles
- Nottingham Trent University
- Sewaday
- Space inclusive
- The Prince's Trust
- University of Northampton
- Volunteering Matters Northampton
- World Against Single Use Plastic
- Young Carers



Kayak Club volunteers clean up canal

Local students from Nottingham Trent University's Kayak Club helped the Trust tackle invasive vegetation along sections of the Notts Beeston Canal.

The canal was full of floating pennywort, a non-native invasive species, that causes a range of problems including changing the availability of oxygen in the water, threatening fish and invertebrates, choking drainage systems and crowding the native water plants. It was also severely narrowing the width of the canal.

Ten students took part – six in kayaks and four on the bank. The pennywort blooms were removed by those in the kayaks and then hauled from the water by those on the towpath. The vegetation was placed at the back of the towpath to enable the pennywort to rot down

naturally. The waterway is now more navigable for boaters as the blooms are no longer taking up large sections of the waterway.

The students liaised with the Trust to ensure the activity could be undertaken safely, ensuring all relevant risk assessments were conducted prior to the task as well as ensuring they had the correct licences for their kayaks to enter our waterways. They were supported by Trust representatives on the day, however they organised how to remove the pennywort from the water as a team.

Trust supports 38 young people to complete their Gold Duke of Edinburgh award



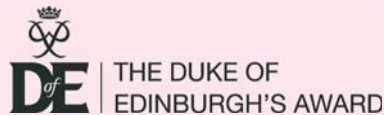
Foxton Locks in Leicestershire has been welcoming young people from around the country to complete their Gold Duke of Edinburgh (DoE) award.

Two five-day and four-night residential courses have been hosted enabling 38 young people to complete the 'Volunteering Residential' part of the Gold award.

A campsite was built within the 34-acre site, and staff from the Trust, DoE and volunteers worked closely to run a varied programme of activities that took place throughout each day and night.

Activities included:

- Creating wildlife and ecologically-friendly paths
- Clearing vegetation from a Scheduled Ancient Monument
- Maintaining and managing eight weirs ensuring safe route for water in the side ponds and clearing a number of wildlife pools
- Installation of a 'Rutland' gate



- Assisting lock-keeping – ensuring the safe travel of boats through the famous Foxton Locks, which are the longest, steepest staircase flight of locks in the UK
- Painting toilet block ceilings
- Clearing vegetation and low branches from the long-stay car park

2021 was the fourth year that Foxton Locks has supported DoE to deliver residential courses. Despite delivering no activity in 2020 due to Covid, many of those who had to put the award on hold, were able to be accommodated in 2021.

The opportunity to spend five days and four nights away from home is much more than

a volunteering residential. Attendees quickly build new long-lasting friendships and develop a range of new skills that will help them in many parts of the lives. These include teamworking, communication, confidence building – not to mention practical skills like fence building, pond clearing and lock-keeping!

In addition to completing the DoE award, Trust staff also delivered the John Muir Award which encourages people of all backgrounds to connect with, enjoy and care for wild places.

The activities generated lots of positive comments including this from one of the adult leaders: "I have worked in a lot of residential settings with young people and have rarely felt as welcomed and included by your staff as we were; the students felt exactly the same.

They were integrated seamlessly into each of the working groups, treated as equals and trusted with any job that they were given. Your staff worked alongside them, whatever the job, encouraging and supporting them through sunshine and rain!"

The impact of the award is best summed up by a young participant who encouraged his parents to make a 200-mile round trip drive to look at the work he had completed during his time at Foxton. Such is the pride that young people feel – they can't wait to come back and show it off to friends and family!





Volunteering Matters adoption launch event

A partnership between the Trust and Volunteering Matters was launched in November during iWill week.

Volunteering Matters have adopted a 1 mile stretch of the Grand Union Canal in Cosgrove, Northamptonshire. A group of ten young people will be responsible for maintaining this space so that it can be used for a variety of community-based activities.

The first task was a comprehensive vegetation management programme. The entrance to the towpath was cleared, steps made accessible and overhanging branches on the towpath cut back.

Volunteering Matters have undertaken this project as part of their commitment to support young people to make a difference in their community. With towpaths now being used for many different reasons including general exercise such as walking and cycling, dog walking and commuting, this mile long stretch of maintained space will be extremely valued by those that use it.



Canoeing course boosts physical and mental wellbeing



The Trust has been working with Meet, Greet & Eat running a series of paddle sessions for young people struggling with social isolation, loneliness, anxiety, and depression as part of the Nottingham Waterways & Wellbeing programme.

As part of a team, cooking and providing food to the elderly and the isolated in their community, each person can develop confidence and gain experience to help them in the wider world.

Working in partnership, the Trust and Meet, Greet & Eat ran a series of paddle sessions for young people struggling with social isolation, loneliness, anxiety, and depression as part of the Nottingham Waterways & Wellbeing programme.

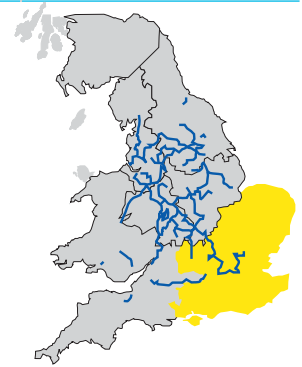
Participants were anxious about meeting in the city centre so a six-week canoeing course

was arranged in an out of town location – the Holme Pierrepont Nottingham water sports centre.

It was the first time that many of the group had ever been on the water and the activity was very much seen as a collective and shared experience. In addition to supporting each other as a team, many reported the feeling of calmness of being on the water and how it was benefiting both their physical and mental wellbeing.

The group enjoyed the course so much they are now looking at a range of other water-based activities they can take part in.





Youth engagement activities in London & South East

During 2021, youth engagement activities in London & the South East delivered the following:

- 
2,284 young people engaged in participatory activities and events
- 
40 young volunteers
- 
100 youth social action hours
- 
7,005 young people engaged through Explorers / STEM
- 
2,980 children & young people attending water safety sessions

All figures are approximate due to the nature of data collection at events and a current changeover of systems.

Partners worked with

- Arcadis
- Archimake
- Camden Borough Council – Outdoor Learning
- Daniel’s Den
- Edward Wilson School
- Electra Milton Keynes Community Boat
- Enact Youth Club
- Ferry Lane School
- Harbinger Primary School
- Phoenix Canoe Club
- Prince of Wales School
- Raynham Primary School
- Spotlight Youth Centre
- STEM Learning
- US Embassy
- Westminster University
- Wykeham School



Primary school pupils influence decision making

The Trust is currently working with London Borough of Ealing to look at the long-term development of a site in Norwood Green that runs alongside the Grand Union Canal.

Colleagues from the Trust worked with a targeted group of pupils from Norwood Green Junior School to gain a unique insight into how they would like the site to be used.

Rather than undertake a survey or a focus group, the pupils were invited to take part in a specially tailored weekly Explorers scheme over five weeks. During this time the pupils took part in a number of activities including water safety, STEM, a history workshop, and two site visits to the Trust floating classroom.



Whilst completing the tasks, Trust colleagues were able to engage with the young people and gain insight that would have been impossible to acquire using more traditional research methods.

The information gathered has been collated into a comprehensive proposal to adopt a local stretch of the canal that will provide health and wellbeing benefits for all aspects of the community – including other young people!

Boosting the health and wellbeing opportunities of young people in East London's Tower Hamlets

Young people in Tower Hamlets, East London had the opportunity to create and fund their own health and wellbeing projects via the Trust's innovative Youth Grant Makers scheme.

Tower Hamlets contains some of the most deprived communities in the country and this directly results in high levels of inequalities – particularly around employment and health and wellbeing.

Working with Spotlight – a creative Arts youth service in Tower Hamlets for young people aged 11-19 – the Trust funded a £5,000, eight-week project that encouraged young people to design health and wellbeing projects and access funding to bring them to life. By allowing young people to create their own projects, gaps in service provision could be identified and addressed.



The project provided young people with the opportunity to make key decisions and gain a range of key employability skills that they wouldn't traditionally get as part of their education – such as leadership, project managing and budgeting. By boosting individual CVs with new skills and developing new health and wellbeing activities, the Trust was able to improve the lives of young people and the communities they live in.



Nature on the doorstep workshop proves inspiring for Wykeham Primary School

In May, the Trust ran a mosaic design and education session with students from Wykeham Primary School in Brent.

The pupils learnt about nature on their doorstep and studied the eels in Grand Union Canal. The young group used their new knowledge to create mosaics in an arts workshop. The individual pieces were used collectively to provide inspiration that an artist could use in a public space on the River Brent.

The event was enthusiastically received by pupils and teachers alike.

"I learnt about eels and how they migrate in the water." (Year 6 student)

"I love learning about swans and want to show mummy where they live." (Year 6 student)

"It was great to work with the Canal & River Trust, it looks like the children learnt a lot about the animals in the water. We will organise a trip to the water in the summer to see the space." (Teacher)



© Jack Perks



Family wellbeing boat trips prove popular

Speaking with the families on their boat trips, Islington Boat Club (IBC) identified a need to support those with mental health issues.

They reported how being on the water had a positive impact and seeing changes to individual's behaviour within an hour of the trip.

The skipper of one boat trip noticed a passenger who was incredibly withdrawn at the start of the trip, with their head down. As time progressed this individual became completely absorbed by the trip, and by the end of the hour was making eye contact, chatting to the skipper and was keen to come back

for another trip. Another trip included a single parent and her young son who have no family or support networks in London and had been further isolated by the lockdown as they were unable to form a bubble with anyone. The trip gave them the confidence to sign up with IBC for future activities which will hopefully enable them to meet other families and young people.

The discussions the skippers had with the families on the trips reinforced with them the

positive impact that even a one-hour trip on the canal can have. Based on these findings IBC are looking at ways they can support adult mental health through their activities in the future. They are now in the process of looking for funding for a positive mental health project which will use the narrowboat as a tool to enrich the lives of people with mental health difficulties.

For more information on our youth & community engagement work
please email lucie.unsworth@canalrivertrust.org.uk



**Canal &
River Trust**

Making life better by water