



Cultural and Environmental Assets



Home to globally renowned canals and the third largest heritage estate in the UK, our open access network is the UK's longest linear green-blue space and a vital part of the nation's nature recovery network.

A changing climate impacting on heritage and biodiversity in the UK

As a result of climate change, the UK is experiencing more severe weather patterns which is the greatest threat to the nation's built heritage and biodiversity. The UK is already one of the world's most nature-depleted countries, being in the bottom 10% globally for biodiversity, with just 53% of its biodiversity remaining – far below the global average of 75%.



Cultural and Environmental Assets

Our heritage estate & stewardship

In the 18th and 19th centuries, our canals changed our nation's fortunes. Today, this network is recognised as one of the finest working examples of industrial heritage in the world.

As the custodian of these culture and heritage assets, the Trust conserves, promotes and provides open access to this historic network. These are valued and enjoyed by individuals and communities along with domestic and international visitors.

2023 marks 25 years since the first national Heritage at Risk Register managed by Historic England. This first register listed 125 waterway heritage assets as being 'at risk'. Over the intervening years, we have systematically reduced this

number and today, only one heritage asset remains on the list – Hanwell Lock Flight.

However, the impact of changing weather patterns upon a fragile and ageing infrastructure is making the task of keeping our historic canal network open, safe and resilient increasingly challenging. To maximise the benefits from our historic estate and rich cultural heritage, we must balance competing needs, adopt different ways of working and embrace innovation.

Our waterways heritage is a collection of:



Iconic buildings and structures such as Anderton Boat Lift, Pontcysyllte Aqueduct



Everyday heritage such as locks and arched accommodation bridges



Canal furniture, fittings and the marks of time such as 200-year-old rope marks from horse-drawn canalboats



Historic boats and other artefacts



Associated knowledge, skills and maintenance techniques

Globally renowned heritage

third largest heritage estate

2,705

Listed Buildings

304

Conservation Areas

6

Historic Battlefields

46

Scheduled Ancient Monuments

7

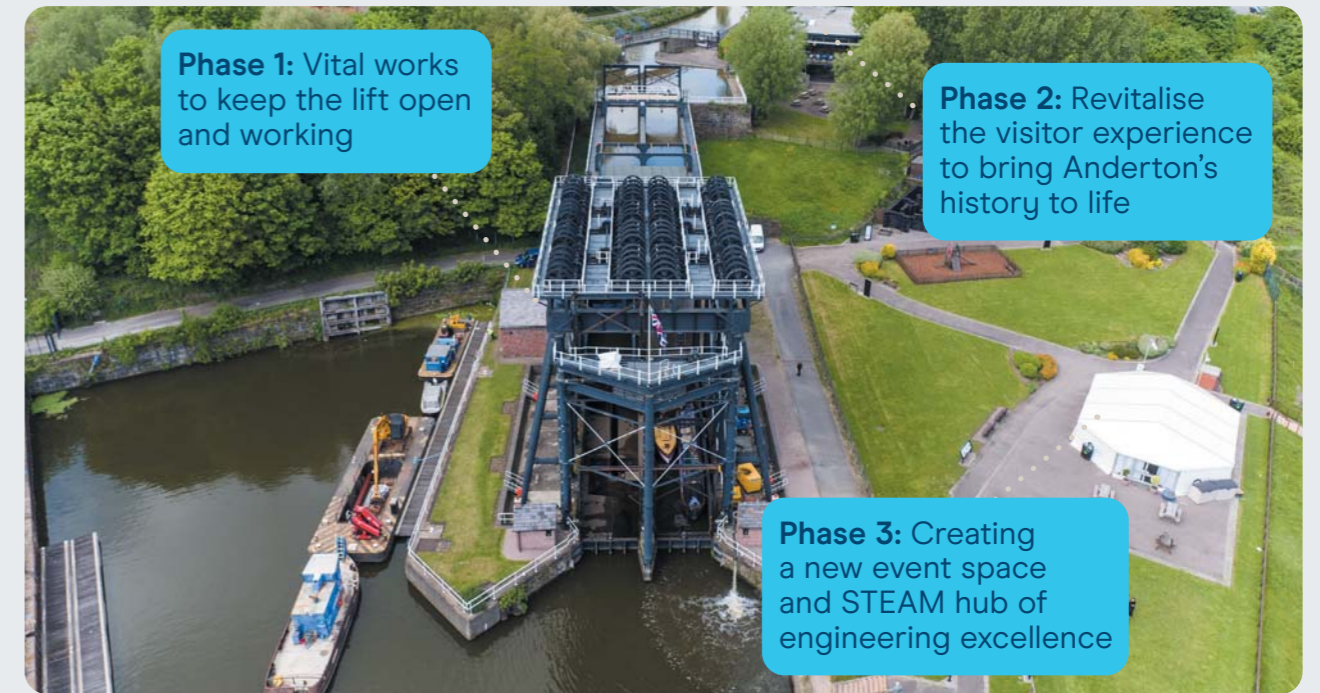
Historic Parks and Gardens

4

World Heritage Sites



Stewardship of our iconic and everyday heritage



Case study: Anderton Boat Lift, near Northwich

Cheshire's 'Cathedral of Canals' Anderton Boat Lift was the world's first major commercial boat lift. Opened in 1875 to connect the Trent & Mersey Canal with the River Weaver Navigation 50 feet below, it is now a protected Scheduled Monument and recognised as one of the Seven Wonders of the Waterways.

Originally built to transport salt and other goods, today it is a popular tourist attraction, learning and community outreach centre and provides a vital connection for leisure boaters – carrying around 3,000 boats through the lift each year, including the Trust's own Edwin Clark Trip Boat.

Maintaining this historic lift has always been a challenge. In the early 1900s, saltwater caused corrosion of the ironwork. This led to its conversion to an electric pulley system in 1908. In 1983, it was declared unsafe and shut down for nearly 20 years before a major restoration project brought it back to life in 2002. Now, two decades on, the lift needs further attention to keep it operational.

An interim emergency £450,000 repair package was carried out over the winter of 2022/23 to replace the gate safety systems and refurbish the two giant hydraulic rams. We are currently developing a major £13.5 million project to upgrade the lift and wider visitor experience.

In December 2022, we were awarded a £574,000 grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund to support the project's development phase and we are looking to launch a public appeal and secure further funding from a variety of sources, including trusts, foundations, and a further Lottery application to #KeepAndertonBoatLiftAlive.



Keeping heritage alive and supporting active travel in London

Dead Dog Basin Footbridge on Regent's Canal in Camden, London

Funding from the players of People's Postcode Lottery has supported 37 improvement projects on our canals including a programme of repairs to the Grade II Listed Interchange Basin Towpath Bridge, more commonly known as 'Dead Dog Basin' Bridge, on the Regent's Canal in Camden. Built in 1846, it is the busiest canal footbridge in the country, with over one million feet or wheels crossing it each year.

Cultural and Environmental Assets

Gallows Lane lock gate replacement

Originally built in 1779 Gallows Lane Lock is one of 14 locks on the 15-mile-long Erewash Canal. In 2023 we spent £204,000 improving this 244-year-old structure, safeguarding its future. Work included installing new bottom lock gates, repairing brickwork in the lock chamber, modifying the ladder and repairing the paddle. During this extensive work we installed a viewing platform allowing visitors to view the empty lock and watch the repair work.



Repairing bridge strikes

Hump-back bridges are synonymous with Britain's canal network and were built to allow horse-drawn carts to cross the canal. Every year there are around 175 bridge strikes from vehicles, costing us approximately £1 million in repair work per year. Most accidents are 'hit and run', leaving us unable to recoup the cost of the damage and diverting vital funds away from our work to conserve our historic network.



Come walk this way

A poem by Roy McFarlane

Returning to the paths
well known, trodden and overrun, they welcome me
and say, come walk this way.

I'm 'dancin in September'
with Earth Wind and Fire
and the equinox beckons me,
to come walk this way.

And the trees that will begin their transitions,
sing in colours of gold, rain auburn and red
ay a path that says,
come walk this way.

The buddleia plant from Caribbean seas
have found a root in towpaths and wastelands
they line these routes, purpled frilled
and wave come walk this way.

A heron who knows the Time of Equal Nights
prepares for the turn to winter and darker nights
perches divinely on the highest branch
and says, come walk this way.

Who knows of the navvies
building by hand who lined the canal
with puddled clay, walking, stomping
and singing come walk this way.

And nearby, the Lost City
where waters depths cover a thousand sins
and a thousand and one tales,
saying come walk this way.

And bridges will bear the stories
take the tags and take us
into the future, as still waters
serenade come walk this way.



'Poetic Waves' project with Roy McFarlane, our canal Poet Laureate

Our diverse community engagement programmes are encouraging people to connect with their local waterway and its rich heritage in a variety of ways. In Tottenham to the Lee Navigation, our Canal Poet Laureate Roy McFarlane worked with local residents to write poetry or creative pieces inspired by their thoughts and observations of their local river.



Watch the film here:
<https://youtu.be/Onc0FuJYayE>

Stewardship of our reservoirs

The Trust operates an interconnected and interdependent system of over 200-year-old waterways infrastructure. This includes over 10,000 national infrastructure assets and the oldest reservoirs in the country with open access.

Our reservoirs store the water which keeps the canals topped up throughout the year. We manage 82 reservoirs of which 71 are large raised reservoirs subject to the Reservoirs Act, from an era before most other reservoirs in the UK were built.

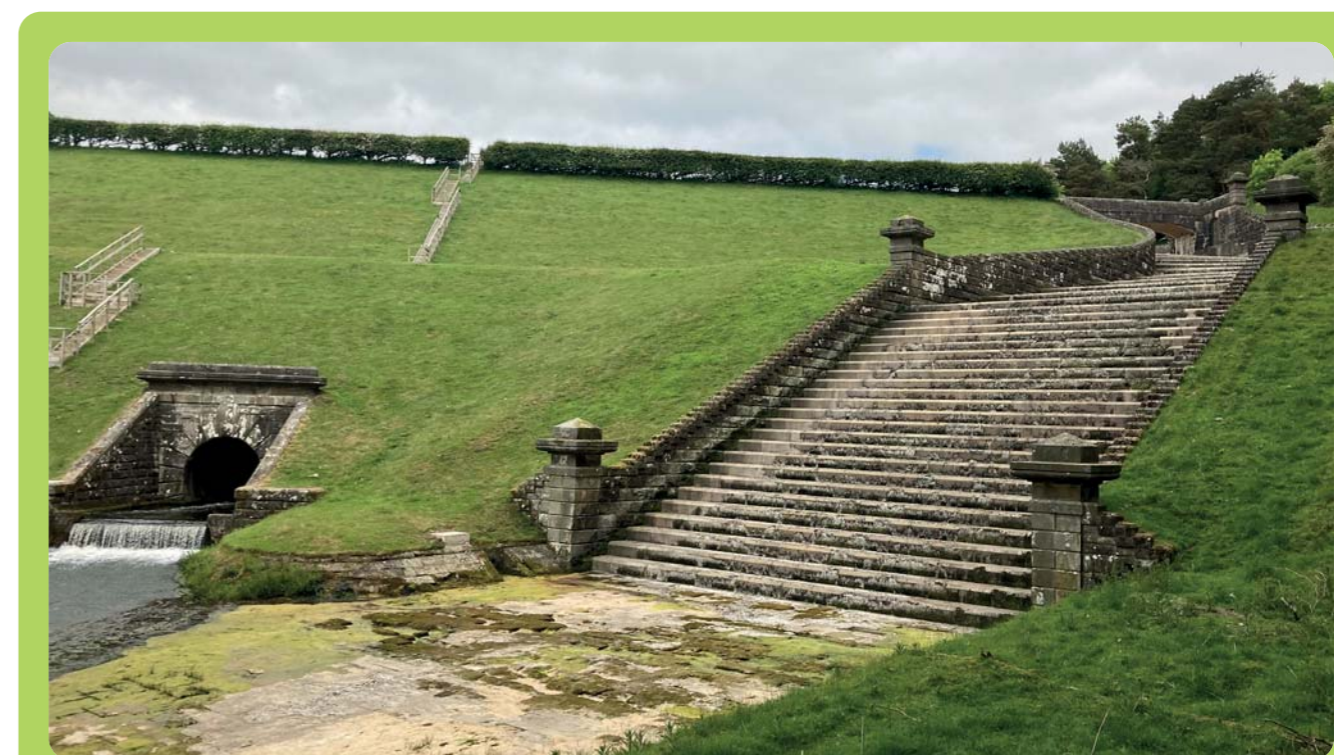
To ensure that our reservoirs stay resilient to climate change and comply with legislation, we are undertaking a major investment programme. Since 2020, we have spent £50million+ safeguarding these structures with a further £30million investment is planned for 2023/24.

Case study: New Spillway & Outflow Channel at Hartshill Reservoir, near Worksop

Situated between Sheffield and Worksop, Harthill Reservoir was constructed more than 200 years ago to supply water to the Chesterfield Canal.

The reservoir is used and enjoyed by people in the local area for walks, fishing and sailing. In 2023 we completed a £5 million safety and resilience improvement project,

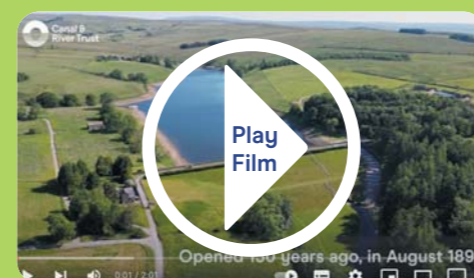
creating a new spillway and outflow channel. The scheme also included installing new fishing platforms specially designed to cope with fluctuating water levels.



Repair of Winterburn Reservoir, North Yorkshire

At 180 metres long and 25 metres high, Winterburn Reservoir in North Yorkshire, is the Trust's highest dam. Completed in 1893, and now listed at Grade II, it is still used to supply water to the Leeds & Liverpool Canal – the UK's longest single canal – as well as providing valuable open space for people and wildlife. In 2023, as part of our legal obligations to ensure its continued safe use and to preserve the unique reservoir heritage for the future, we undertook essential repairs to the spillway.

With funding from the players of the People's Postcode Lottery, we removed vegetation, deteriorated masonry and grouting from the spillway, and replaced and repointed stonework. These works carefully balanced environmental, and conservation demands, using traditional techniques that would have been used when the reservoir was constructed 130 years ago. We also lowered the carbon footprint and reduced onsite disruption by using clamp-on platforms to carry out the works instead of scaffolding, and solar-powered welfare units.



Watch the film here:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ju9BvM7fYAQ>



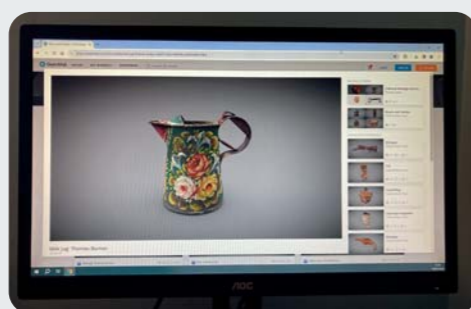
Case study: Making our collections accessible – Photogrammetry Project

We want more people to be able to see, experience and enjoy our heritage objects and artefacts. With support from the players of People’s Postcode Lottery, we delivered a Photogrammetry Project featuring 3D digital models and better digital content, improving access to this nationally important collection.

A new dedicated studio has been created and a training programme delivered for our colleagues and volunteers to operate new hardware and software.

Through this project we have:

- created digital models, which are now exhibited online enabling more people to connect with the collection and explore objects in new and dynamic ways
- built robust digital records of these museum objects for conservation care
- designed and delivered STEM-linked learning activities which give school children access to the photogrammetry equipment
- compiled a comprehensive handbook for the Museum and Heritage Sector, to increase awareness of photogrammetry and how it can benefit other museums and their audiences.



Computer 3D modelling in action – 3D model of a Thomas Burton milk jug featuring Roses and Castles design.



Photographing objects, under the direction of Arden, our expert consultant.



“The studio open days have had a positive impact on the public by raising an awareness of our collection and increasing an understanding of photogrammetry and its uses. Most visitors have no prior knowledge of photogrammetry before their visit but display a great level of interest once we explain and demonstrate the process. The events have opened a dialogue between ourselves and the wider public, allowing them to share their own ideas about how photogrammetry can be used.”

Georgina Wilson-Williams, our Collections Officer & project lead, described the public’s reaction when the studio opened to the public



Open Store Project at Ellesmere Port Museum

During 2023 we sorted, cleaned, catalogued and displayed thousands of objects that had not been seen by the public for many years. We have also made the space more accessible to the public, organised public tours

of the open store and developed our interactive learning offer. We have introduced QR codes at key spots in the store. Using their mobile phone, visitors can find out more about the stories behind the objects.



“Jim has been invaluable and ever present since the museum opened in 1976, both as a member of staff and a volunteer. Jim’s passion and knowledge of the museum is an inspiration. Jim is always willing to help wherever he can, whether engaging visitors with his extensive knowledge of the collection, or helping colleagues with his well-founded operational knowledge, Jim’s devotion to the museum is clear to see.”

Jim McKeown was awarded Impact Volunteer of the Year, at the 2023 Northwest Marsh awards.

Making places and cultural heritage accessible

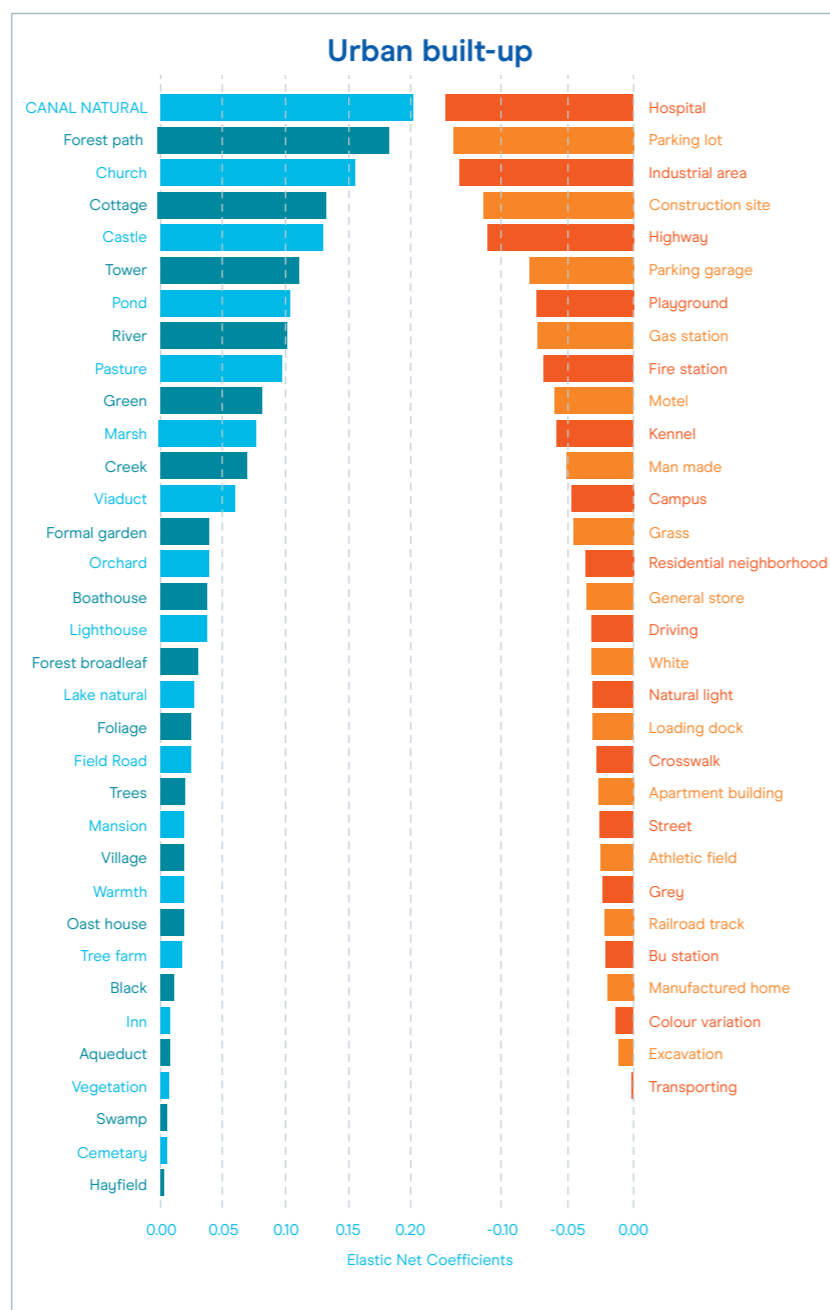
Our research

The science of scenic beauty by water

Research published by Warwick Business School indicated that, in urban areas, the presence of the ‘canal natural’ feature was the strongest predictor of scenic quality.

To gain a standardised understanding of the level of scenic beauty provided by our network of canals, other waterways and waterspaces in different regions, the Trust worked with Professors Suzy Moat and Tobias Preis at Warwick Business School to develop a Citizen Science programme. Using an online game, ‘Rate this Scene’, visitors to our website rated a series of canal and river images on a scale from 1 to 10; and uploaded their own images for rating. The game resulted in over 1.6 million votes and thousands of new images submitted and gained support from several celebrities including Grayson Perry, who shared his own images, Jo Brand, Chris Packham and Gaby Roslin.

The breadth of data collected from this game gave us valuable insights as to the specific elements of our network that people find most beautiful – old bridges, locks and reflections. Over time, the model will be refined to make the scenic artificial intelligence even better at finding particularly beautiful canals and rivers in new photographs that have not yet been rated.



Living heritage – a working museum without doors

Our working network of canals, river navigations and docks are still used daily by a wide range of boats including unpowered craft. This network forms part of a uniquely accessible cultural heritage which is valued and enjoyed by local communities and visitors alike.

Our waterways, museums and other attractions provide out-of-classroom learning and skills development

opportunities for all, notably children and young people.





Case study: Bringing new life to Grade II* listed Roundhouse building in Birmingham

In partnership with the National Trust, we have revived the Roundhouse in Birmingham into a vibrant visitor destination and community facility.

Originally designed and built in 1874 by Birmingham-based architect W. H. Ward as stabling and stores for the Public Works Department, the Grade II* listed building was on Historic England’s national Heritage at Risk Register.

Thanks to support from the National Lottery Heritage Fund and ten other organisations, we secured over £3 million in funding to create a vibrant hub and reinstate access to the canal. The building, which reopened in 2021, now offers office space for local businesses and a visitor hub for exploring the city and the region’s historic canals, with the Roundhouse Distillery also open next door.

Since opening, approximately 20,000 people have visited the Roundhouse with a further 6,000 taking part in tours around the hub and from the hub out across the city canals and streets. Over 100 active volunteers have supported these events, contributing approximately 4,000 hours of their time. Several activities, such as the ‘Paddling with Pride’ event with over 60 paddlers on the water, have been hosted to build awareness of the Roundhouse and develop links with the local community in Ladywood.

Volunteer feedback has been very positive, particularly for outdoor activities, heritage research, welcome and events. Many participants note a sense of pride, enjoy supporting something unique in the city, and sharing stories with people.

Heritage working boats – bringing canal history alive

Our collection of historic working boats is carefully maintained by a group of dedicated volunteers – the Heritage Working Boats Group. These volunteers help to showcase the history of our canals at events, and as part of our educational outreach programmes, giving visitors a glimpse as to what life would have been like aboard these boats around the turn of the 20th Century.

The current fleet comprises the 72’ Grand Union Carrying Co. narrowboat ‘Scorpio’, paired with the 71’ unpowered butty ‘Leo’, the 71’ Cowburn and Cowpar narrowboat ‘Swift’ and the 42’ tug ‘Nansen’.



George’s story

George explains why volunteering with the Trust’s Heritage Working Boat Group is such an important part of his life.

“For as long as I can remember I have been around the canals. I went on my Nan and Grandpa’s boat when I was about three months old and canals and boats have just always been present in my life.

“My volunteering journey started at around eight years old. Getting to be with the heritage boats is something I love as a hobby. Something that is uniquely mine. It’s something that I’ve always enjoyed. When I was younger it was the sense of escapism I got



from spending summers on the boat and exploring parts of the country in different ways from the water.

“Volunteering with the heritage boats allows me to showcase their history. I like knowing that people have learnt something and have engaged with the canal. One of the main reasons volunteering is special to me is because I get to share it with my Grandpa. It’s a passion that we both share giving us quality time together.

“Volunteering with the Canal & River Trust has truly been one of the most important parts of my life as I have developed into a young adult. It has given me many transferable skills including public speaking. It has also taught me the importance of health and safety when working as part of a team, as well as taking responsibility for my personal safety.”



Enhancing biodiversity & the nature recovery network

The biodiversity and nature conservation value of our network of canals, navigable rivers, docks and reservoirs is considerable, with 68 Sites of Special Scientific Interest and approximately 1,000 Wildlife Conservation Sites.

This 2,000-mile long wildlife corridor is a vital part of the nation's nature recovery network, providing a home for iconic and protected species and everyday wildlife, often in areas with very limited biodiversity. Connecting isolated habitats, they give wildlife room to flourish.

46% of our network is designated for wildlife. Our network forms important linear wildlife routes, bringing wildlife into metropolitan and urban areas.

They function as 'stepping stones' that are essential for the migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of plants.

By their nature, canals incorporate a range of habitats which can be important, not only in their own right but as connecting corridors and the bankside and these aquatic ecosystems contribute to the wider ecosystem.

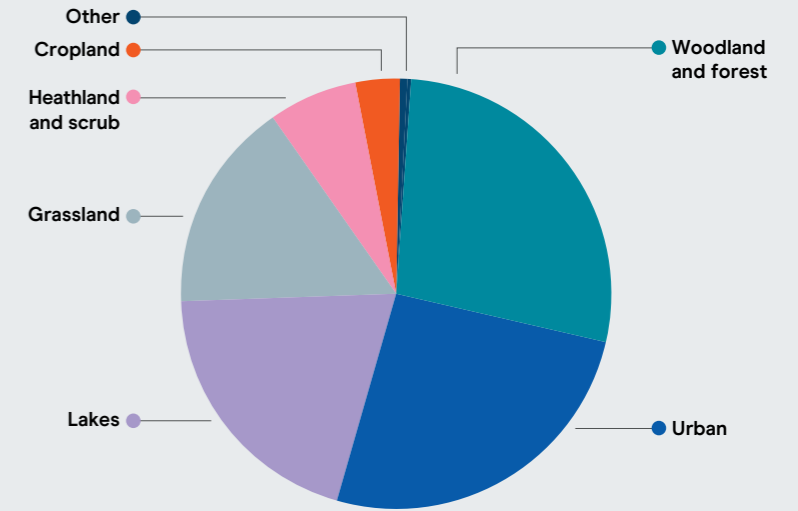


Case study: Mapping our ecological footprint

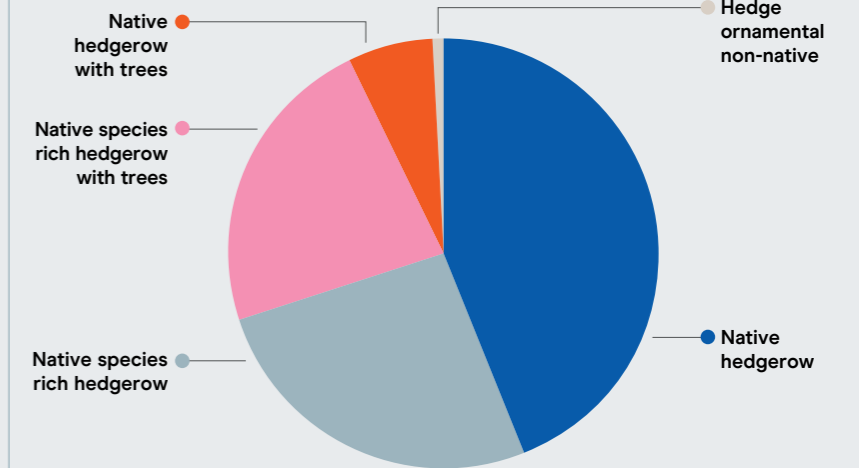
To fully understand the contribution that our network of canals, river navigations, docks and reservoirs make to the green infrastructure of the country, we have been mapping the different habitat types and conditions found within our corridors since 2022.

We have worked with leading design and environmental consultancy, FPCR, to develop a model of the habitat type and quality found on our network. This evidence will feed into Local Nature Recovery Strategies being prepared by local authorities. They will provide the starting point for the Trust, developers and local authorities to identify Biodiversity Net Gain opportunities on our canals, rivers, reservoirs and associated habitats.

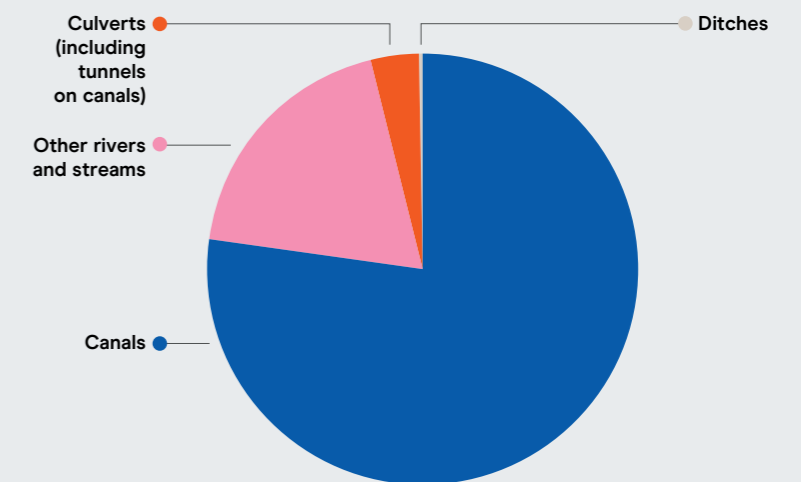
Area Habitats



Hedgerow Habitats



Waterway Habitats



Case study: 'Bioblitz' project on the Grand Union Canal in Leicester

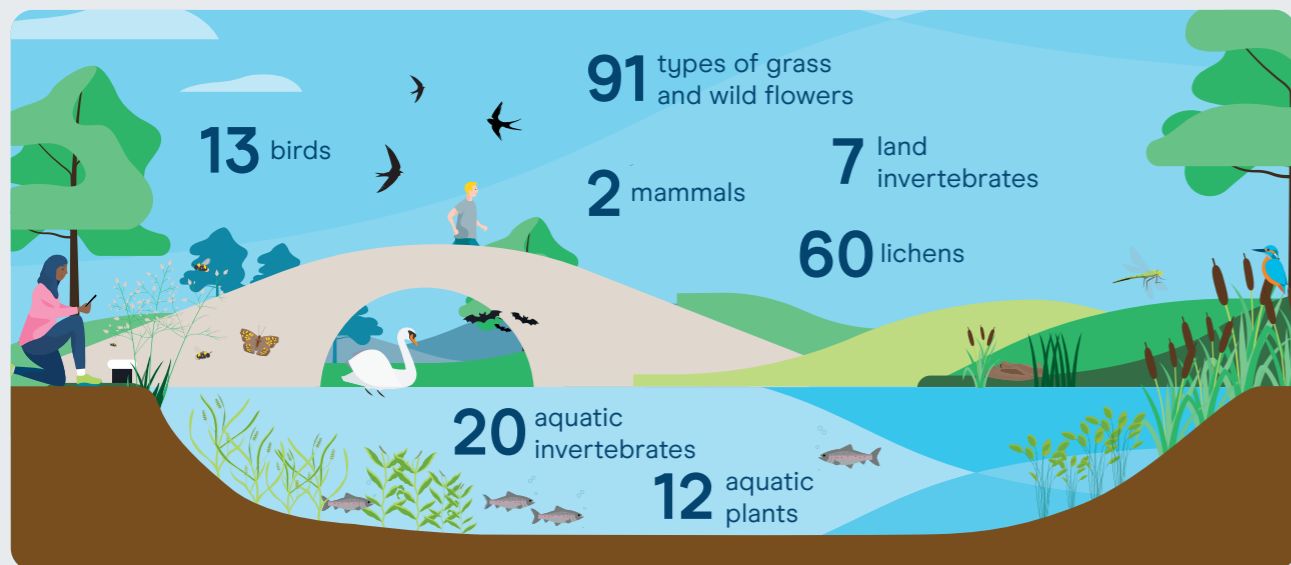
During 2023 we worked with Biological Science and Environmental Science undergraduates from the University of Leicester, sustainability volunteers from DeMontfort University and conservation officers from Leicester City Council on a pilot biodiversity mapping service, to better understand the biodiversity of the canal in Leicester.



“This was a great opportunity for our students to collaborate with professionals and volunteers to learn how to identify the variety of wildlife that use canals and rivers across the UK. Our students were really excited to learn how canals and the adjacent vegetation act as ecological corridors for many species of bat. They were also amazed to see the diversity of aquatic invertebrates in the canal and learn how these can be used as indicators of water quality.”

Dr Moya Burns, School of Biological Sciences and the Institute for Environmental Futures at the University of Leicester

This 'Bioblitz' project, aimed to identify as many species as possible within one day, and was carried out on the Grand Union Canal at Aylestone Meadows in Leicester. It found:



Case study: Tackling invasive species in partnership with Severn Trent

Invasive non-native species are one of the biggest threats to biodiversity. Our Canal & River Invasive Species Eradication Project (CRISEP), funded by Severn Trent Water's Great Big Nature Boost scheme, won the Chartered Institute of Ecology & Environmental Management's NGO Impact Award 2022.



CRISEP aims to significantly reduce and eradicate four invasive plant species on our network: Himalayan balsam, floating pennywort, Japanese knotweed and water fern. In its first two years, the project has successfully treated over 260 km of waterways.

We have worked with Leicester City Council and the Rothen Group to remove 1,250 tonnes of floating pennywort from over 35 km of the River Soar, using specialist weed conveyor boats. Floating pennywort, which grows up to 20cm per day, can smother habitats, block water flow, crowd out native plants and take oxygen from fish and insects. It causes major problems for boaters and other craft users.

Mechanical removal of the plant is expensive. Following the successful release of the North American weevil to control water fern on the Northern Birmingham Canal Navigations, we have continued

“Leicester City Council has a biodiversity action plan and the targets are specifically looking at creating better space for wildlife to thrive in the city environment. That can only be achieved by managing and improving the habitat. Working in partnership with the Canal & River Trust, with funding from Severn Trent Water, helps us to meet our targets.”

John Bristow, senior nature conservation officer, Leicester City Council

working with CABI UK and started licenced trials to use South American weevils to feed and breed across the floating pennywort foliage, in the hope of reducing it over the coming years.

In addition to biological control, we have researched the complex relationships between invasive plant growth and nutrient availability in our canals. Through the CRISEP project, we have undertaken complex biochemical testing of the Wyrley and Essington canal over a 12-month period. This project is now providing valuable insights into nutrient run off into the network.



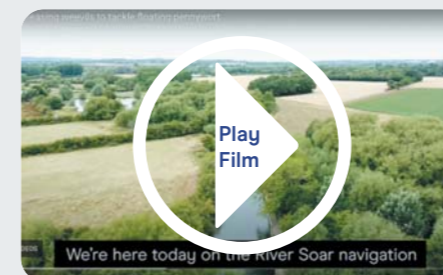
Japanese Knotweed



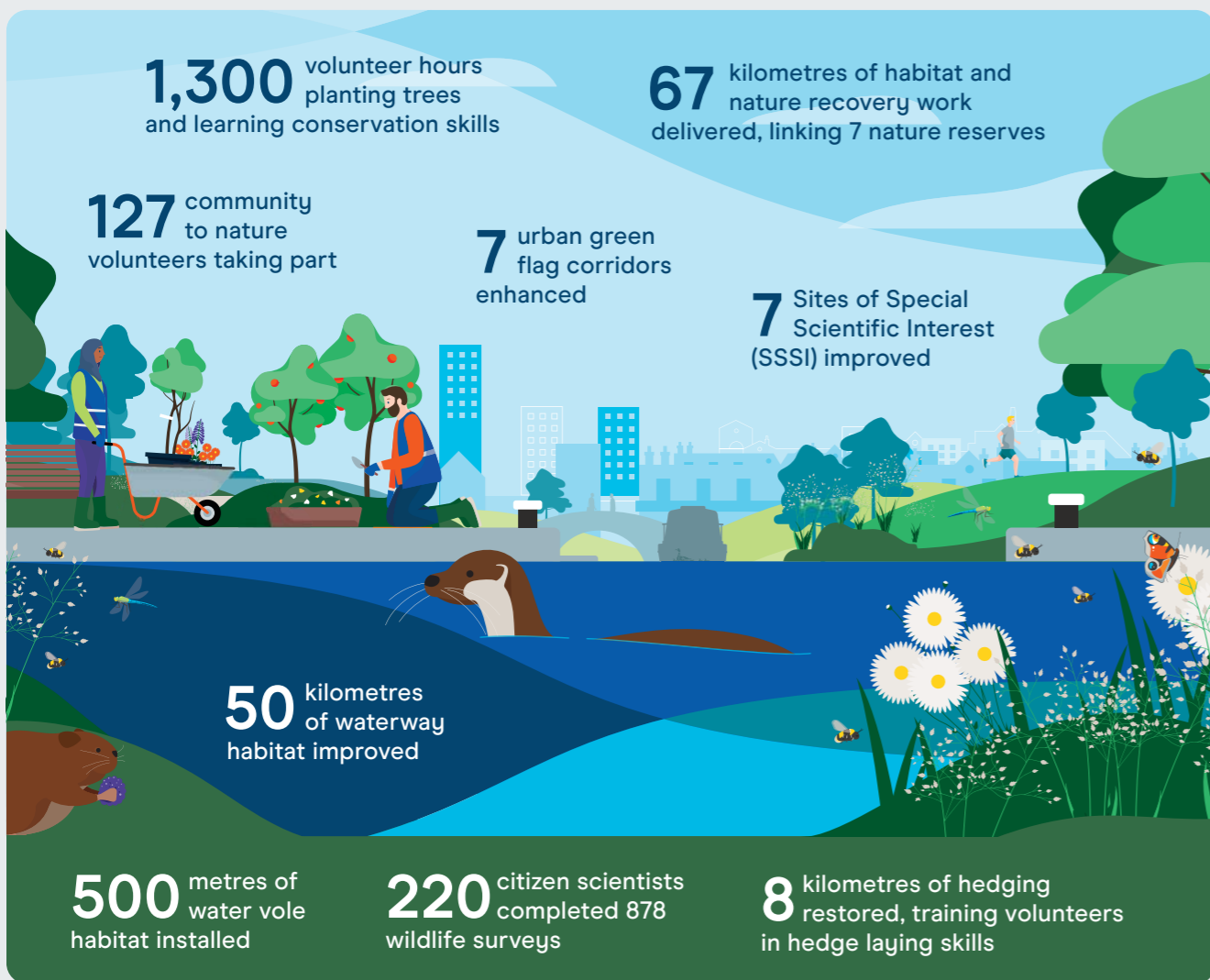
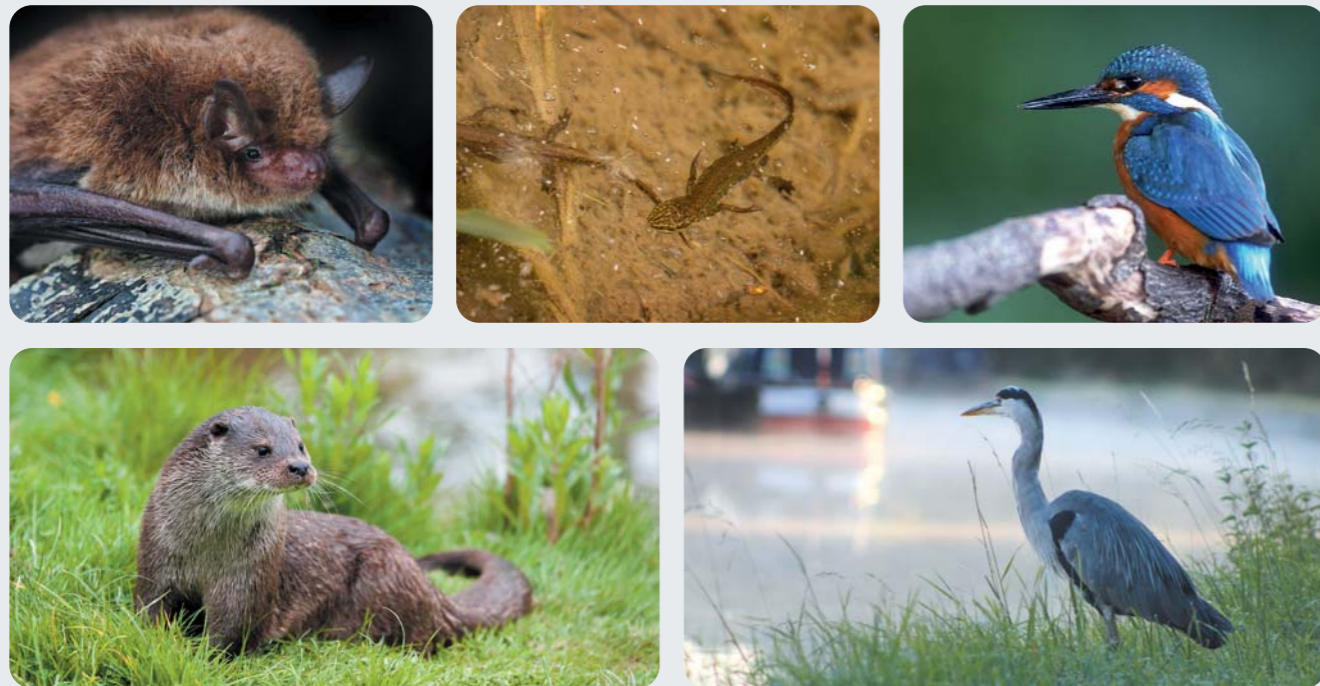
Floating Pennywort



Azolla (Water Fern)



Watch the film here:
<https://youtu.be/e6pglCXRmoU>



Case study: Waterways & Wildlife – Defra’s Green Recovery Challenge Fund

With £1.72 million of funding from Defra’s Green Recovery Challenge Fund, administered by National Lottery Heritage Fund, The Trust worked with key partners including Walsall Council, Worcestershire County Council, City of Wolverhampton Council, Council for Learning Outside the Classroom and University of Derby, to deliver a programme of activities focussing on nature conservation, restoration and nature connectedness across the West Midlands region.

The project enabled us to improve waterway habitat, enhance SSSI sites and achieve urban Green Flag Awards® across the region ready for the Commonwealth Games in 2022, and undertake critical surveys for future recording of species growth.

The project has also contributed to the wider science base by sharing wildlife survey data with regional biological centres to ensure the legacy of the project.

The project recruited and trained local people to become volunteer community champions and citizen scientists, increased their knowledge and appreciation for the nature on their doorstep, and help them to connect with others in their wider communities. Community champions built links between schools and families. Volunteers carried out species and habitat surveys through citizen science projects including Vole Patrol and Pollinator projects.

“Working with the Canal & River Trust in the region on the Green Recovery Fund project was a delight. The team developed into an excellent partnership with Walsall Council which will grow from this project, we are already working on several other potential projects with the regional team. The project was well managed and everyone did an excellent job which we are all really proud to have been a part of. We have forged new relationships on this project and young people were given the opportunity to develop their skills in the green sector and move onto other projects in the region.”

Liz Stuffins, Walsall Council





Improving our sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)

41% of SSSIs across our 701ha landholding are in 'favourable' condition, with a further 27% in 'unfavourable – improving' condition, as assessed by Natural England. We are focused on improving 'unfavourable' sites and have:

- Removed reeds and channel vegetation along 10km of the Grantham Canal, including at Kinoulton Marsh & Canal SSSI to maintain and improve the open water habitat.
- Translocated macrophyte plants to Kilby Foxton SSSI to help improve the condition by adding to submerged and marginal plants in the canal.
- Reprofiled and scraped back bracken roots along an embankment on the Anglesey branch canal to enable future management of a remnant rare heathland in the Chasewater and the Southern Staffordshire Coalfield Heaths SSSI.



Habitat improvements of open water – Grantham Canal

Saving the nations' water voles – A threatened species

Water voles are an endangered species in significant decline in the UK.

However, we have been recording and monitoring populations across our canal network and where we have identified viable populations of these elusive mammals, we have introduced water vole friendly habitats to help ensure their survival. This includes:

- Installing over 250m of pre-planted coir rolls in steps on the Walsall canal to provide soft banks where there was concrete or metal piling to facilitate water vole movement. Works included vegetation management to allow light down to the bank edge.
- Mink trapping (to eradicate an invasive species to support the water vole population to thrive) on the Oxford Canal between Oxford city centre and Kidlington in partnership with the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust's water vole project officer and trained volunteers.
- Over 300m of marginal planting in Oxford city centre in water vole conservation areas by towpath volunteers.



Water vole feeding

Credit: Jack Perks

Water Quality – Dredging

Dredging is essential for maintaining navigation, improving water quality and maintaining the ecological condition of our waterways.

Nationally, we spend approximately £7.4 million on dredging, removing nearly 120,000 tonnes of material from over 16 locations across our network. At Gloucester Docks, using a powerful 'suction dredger', we removed 14,000 cubic metres of silt.



Welsh Environment Report

Glandŵr Cymru, the Canal & River Trust in Wales, cares for 75 miles of canals and their associated habitats including five SSSIs.

As part of our role as a statutory body for the upkeep of these canals, we recently updated our report to Natural Resources Wales covering our achievements for biodiversity. This includes:

- Restoration works on the Montgomery Canal, including the trial of leaky dams to help improve water quality.
- Creation of around 1-2 km of new native species water margin habitat along the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal.
- 18km of weed clearance and cutting by volunteers.
- 56 km of the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal awarded Green Flag® status.
- Approximately 1400m² of invasive weeds cleared.



PPL funded Tree planting

Supported by players of People's Postcode Lottery, we have been implementing a tree planting programme on Trust land. The two-year programme sought to plant approximately 13ha of trees per year using a combination of volunteer and contractor support. The planting has included a mix of native UK species carefully selected for each site that sought to plug gaps in existing woodland and create connectivity as well as increasing total canopy cover. The programme has resulted in:

- 2022 – 12,585 trees planted in 14 locations, of which 4,040 were planted by volunteers. This included the creation of over 1km of new hedgerow.
- 2023 – 20,090 trees planted in 18 locations, of which 8,325 were planted by volunteers.





Improving canal habitats and water margins

Canals habitats support a wide range of wildlife and our focus has been to improve the plants and habitats alongside canals to encourage the recovery of animal and insect populations. Key highlights include:

- Over 200m of hedges traditionally layed on the Grand Union, Erewash and Grantham Canals.
- 100m² of 'floating ecosystem' marginal aquatic habitat created in central urban locations in Nottingham, funded by Severn Trent Water, Coca Cola Europe Partners and Nottingham City Council Transforming Cities Programme.
- Over 20 bird and bat box installations carried out by volunteers or as part of maintenance programmes at six locations across the London and South East Region.



- Installation of an eel pass at Stoke Weir on the River Trent, funded by EDF Energy in August 2022.
- Soft-bank habitat creation using coir rolls with marginal plants on the Soar in Leicestershire (2023) and Erewash Canal in Derbyshire (2022).

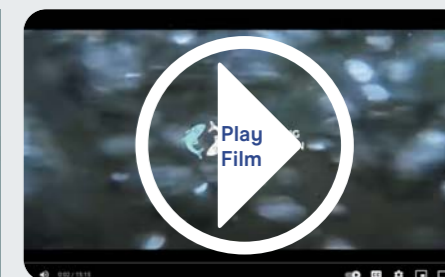
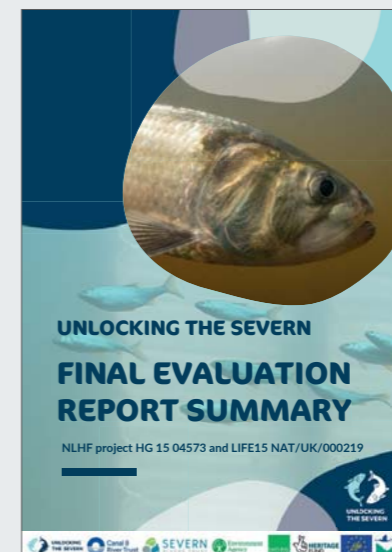
Connecting with nature

Our network of canals, river navigations, docks and reservoirs is the UK's longest linear green-blue space providing nature on the doorstep for 9 million people. 97% felt close to nature during their visit to our network.

Case study: NLHF funded Unlocking the Severn project

'Unlocking the Severn' is a river restoration project, restoring connectivity for twaite shad and other migratory fish species on the UK's longest river and engaging thousands of people with the fascinating natural, cultural, and industrial heritage of the Severn.

Funded by National Lottery Heritage Fund (£11.2 million) and EU LIFE Programme (£6.4 million) and delivered by partners – Canal & River Trust, Environment Agency, Natural England and the Severn Rivers Trust.



Watch the film here:
<https://youtu.be/CsePWhmkeK0>



Summary of Project Outcomes

- ✓ **Upstream passage for migratory fish was restored** with the construction of four major fish passes on the River Severn (the weirs at Diglis, Bever, Holt, and Lincomb) and two easements on the River Teme (the weirs at Powick and Knightsford), providing access to historic spawning habitat for the first time in almost 180 years and reconnecting ecosystems for all river wildlife.
- ✓ **New techniques for tagging, monitoring, and tracing shad** were developed, producing one of the most comprehensive studies of their behaviour anywhere in Europe. Environmental DNA analysis and data from more than **500 tagged shad** provided vital insights which will inform future management and conservation efforts.
- ✓ **An ambitious programme of community engagement** has reached over **93 million people** and generated almost **17,000 hours of volunteering**. Local communities have an increased understanding of the historical, biological, and potential economic values of the shad and the wider river environment, and the extensive benefits of conservation initiatives.
- ✓ **Since Diglis Fish Pass and Viewing Gallery** were officially opened by HRH The Princess Royal on 8th October 2021 over **10,000 members of the public** have visited to take part in tours and other activities.



Diglis Island and Diglis Fish Pass are two fascinating new visitor spaces created through the Unlocking the Severn project thanks to funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund and the European Union LIFE programme – helping to bring learning to life and giving children unique experiences through our school visits programme.

Year 5 pupils at Wilden All Saints Church of England Primary school visited Diglis to view the fish pass and find out how it works.

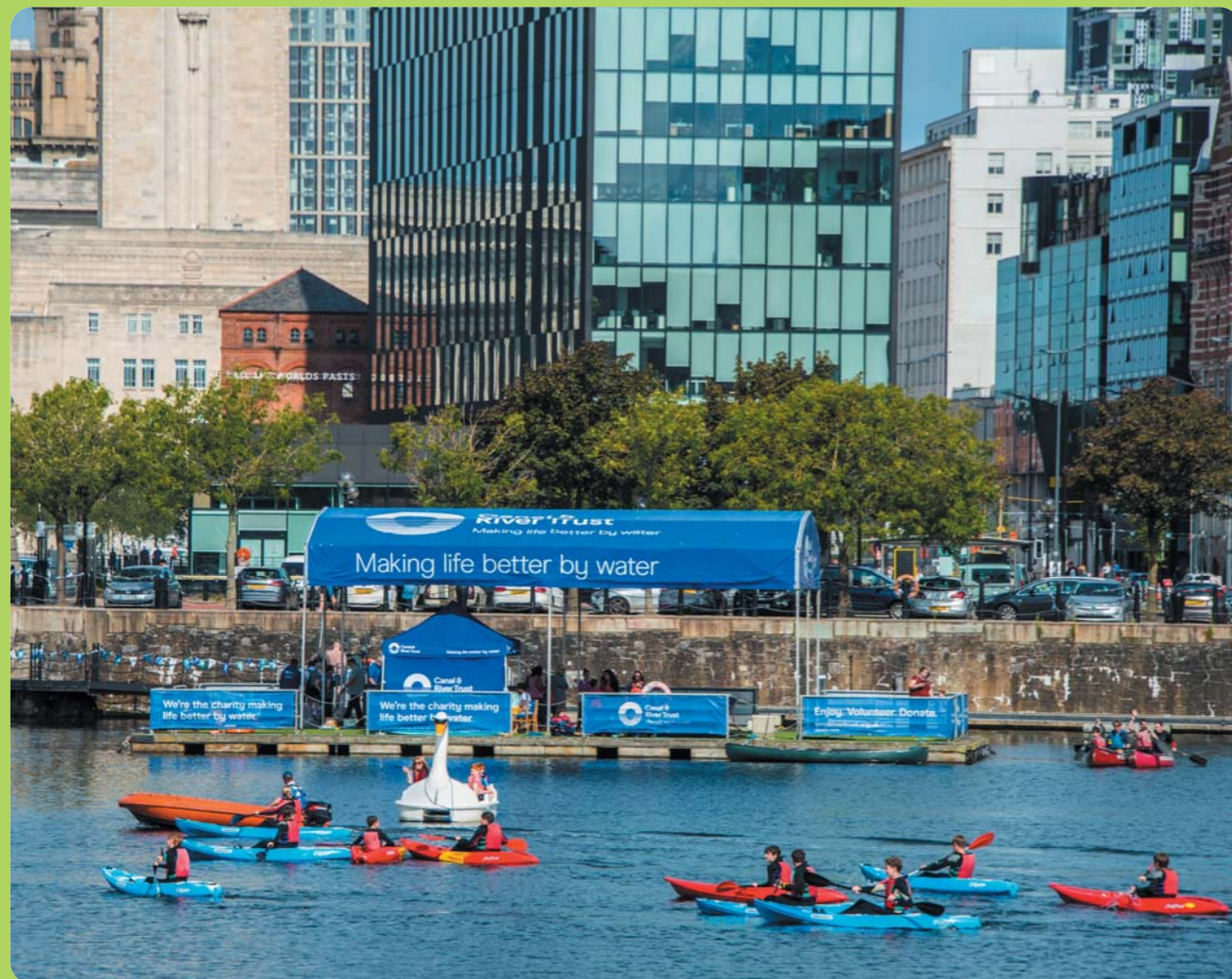
“It’s such an amazing opportunity to tap into locally. Our school is located very close to the River Severn and the canals. We often talk about the canals in the context of Local History and Geography or in studies of the Victorians and the Industrial Revolution, but the trip to Diglis offers even broader curriculum links, particularly across STEM subjects and Geography. That was our focus this time.”
Carole Jones, teacher

“It slows the water down and there are stations where the fish can have a little break. I just thought it was fascinating that someone had built that to help the fish and the fish were actually using it. You can go to the viewing gallery under the water to see the fish. We saw about seven Shad and a few salmon.”
James, year 5 pupil

“There are so many related opportunities, but the main focus was visiting the fish pass and taking part in an ‘Epic Engineering’ activity where students could find out about the science behind the fish pass and explore ways to slow down the flow of water by building a marble run.”

First Blue Flag – Royal Albert & Salthouse Docks

In 2021 our Royal Albert Dock and Salthouse Dock in Liverpool achieved our first Blue Flag award in recognition of outstanding environmental management, safety and boating services. The water quality within the docks is of the highest standard and is home to an array of wildlife, including blue mussels, eels and, during the summer months, moon jellyfish.



Planting the world's longest community orchard in the West Midlands

As a nation, we have lost over 60% of our traditional orchards since the 1950's. Our Great Canal Orchard initiative is seeking to give urban communities the chance to enjoy the delights of fresh fruit picked straight from a tree, or the avenue of spring blossom buzzing with bees on their doorstep.

To support nature recovery in the West Midlands, we have planted native fruit tree saplings and whips to create a 50-mile long community orchard along our canals in the West Midlands – stretching from Wolverhampton to Worcester, via Birmingham. This ten-year project will see 3,000 fruit trees planted, providing fruit for people and wildlife. Over 500 trees were planted during 2022/23 funded by the Defra's Green Recovery Challenge Fund with 660 fruit trees planted to date.

The trees will provide habitat for a wide range of birds, including yellowhammers and bullfinches, song thrushes, redwings and fieldfare. The blossoming trees will also be important for insects such as bees and butterflies.

The project received funding from a number of sources including: Green Recovery Challenge Fund, Tesco's bags of help, Biodiversity Enhancement Area, Peoples Postcode Lottery, and private donations, including the Birmingham Canal Navigation Society.

"Planting the trees was really nice to see and do because it is good for nature. I like it as it's nice for everybody who lives near there because they can eat the fruit and enjoy the view."

Evelyn Crowther aged 9 – volunteer from Tibberton Orchard planting



Watch the film here:
<https://youtu.be/ZyskYsdixVA>

Looking to the Future

Developing our 2035 Strategy – Keeping Our Canals Open & Alive

Our purpose is to achieve a sustainable future for our network of canals, keeping them open and alive, making them resilient and safe; and maximising their value for people, nature and the economy.

Following the Government announcement in July 2023 regarding the reduction in our future funding, combined with the growing impact of the climate on an ageing network, we have undertaken a strategic review. The purpose of this review is to redefine how we will work towards achieving our purpose, with our canals thriving, as living waterways that transform places and enrich lives.

To fully realise the potential benefits to society from our network of canals, river navigations, docks and reservoirs, our strategic direction responds to four overarching external drivers – delivering societal outcomes to help address some of the most significant challenges our nation faces over the next ten years and beyond.

To secure the future and fully unlock the social, economic and environmental impact potential of the network, it is imperative that we attract new funding and investment,

develop new partnerships and build upon our existing relationships and supporter base. This includes UK and Welsh Government and their sponsored bodies, Local Government, statutory funders, lotteries, philanthropy and corporate partners, as well as local businesses and groups. We must collaborate and work with national, regional and local partners, empower our communities and explore opportunities ‘to do things differently’.

We are committed to managing our nationally important infrastructure effectively and efficiently which includes engineering structures, water, environment and heritage. These provide the pathways to societal outcomes. We will strive to deliver a consistently good and rewarding customer and visitor experience, attracting more satisfied users, on and by the water.

Key Drivers of Impact



Resilience & Security

Water Resourcing & Security

Drainage & Flood Protection



Nature

Biodiversity & Nature Recovery Network

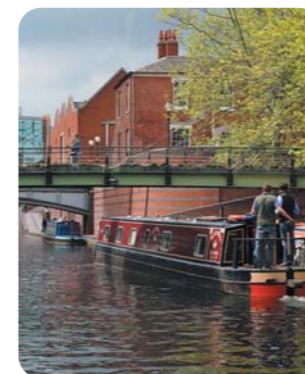
Connecting to Nature



Health & Wellbeing

Active Lives

Improving Mental Wellbeing



Place & Prosperity

Connected Communities & Places

Sustainable Development, Growth & Living

Your Support – Your Impact

Our work would not be possible without our amazing volunteers, partners, funders and donors, friends, supporters and ambassadors. We would like to take this opportunity to say a huge thank you to you all.

Thank you for giving your time, your voice and your money; for your commitment to the Trust and for believing in what we do and the difference we make together.





Our Challenges Ahead...



...Potential to Make A Real Difference

Opportunities to partner with us

If you would like to find out more about our work and how you can support us to continue to make a difference to people, places and nature, please get in touch.

#KeepCanalsAlive





Canal & River Trust

Making life better by water

   canalrivertrust

Enjoy • Take Action • Volunteer • Donate
canalrivertrust.org.uk

We're the UK's largest canals charity, looking after a 2,000 mile network of canals, river navigations, docks and reservoirs across England and Wales.

Together, let's make sure they continue to be here for tomorrow and beyond.

A network of more than 2,000 miles of stunning canals and navigable rivers runs through our landscapes. From our countryside to our bustling cities, canals are a place for everyone to connect with nature and our past.

However you use them, we all deserve open spaces where we can feel happier and healthier, and where wildlife can thrive. But the future of the nation's canals, other inland waterways and waterspaces and the habitat they support is threatened by changing temperatures, unpredictable rainfall and the tests of time.

Together, we can make sure they continue to be here for tomorrow and beyond.

- Become a Friend
- Support an appeal
- Leave a gift in your Will
- Speak up for canals
- Volunteer with us
- Partner and work with us

Join us and let's #KeepCanalsAlive

SUPPORT US



 SCAN ME