

**NATURAL ENVIRONMENT POLICY**

*This Policy covers our approach to the natural environment of the waterway corridor (water; habitats; wildlife; and issues that affect people’s enjoyment of the waterways) and associated legislation; as distinct from our built and cultural heritage (see Heritage Policy); and our efforts to reduce the wider negative environmental/social/economic impacts of our activities and improve the sustainability of our operations (see Green Plan).*

The Canal & River Trust recognise the natural environment of our waterways as an essential component of our Vision of “*Living waterways, transform places and enrich lives*”.

1. We will continue to care for the natural environment of our waterways and will ensure that this is evident in everything the Trust does.

Our Strategy commits us to look after and improve the natural environment of our canals and rivers for people to enjoy – now and in the future. We recognise that the quality of the environment and access to wildlife are some of the many reasons why people visit our waterways and so environmental condition is an integral part of our asset management approach.

2. We will define, achieve and maintain the best practicable condition for the natural environment and landscape of our waterways, taking into account other uses and pressures. We will set targets and indicators to reflect this and report on progress annually, publishing the results on our website.

The natural environment of our waterways has a very real and significant value for people and has an important part to play in national strategies for biodiversity and climate change adaptation. Inland waterways provide a wide range of ecosystem services and the natural environment we manage underpins the economic and social benefits of the waterways as well.

3. We will ensure that waterways are a vital part of the UK’s wider green infrastructure, contributing to our health, well-being and economy and with a key role in helping adaptation to climate change.

Our environmental management challenges are unusual in that we are not just focused on our own impacts but also on managing the impact on the environment of the activities of our visitors, users and neighbours to deliver appropriate growth in the natural capital of our waterways.

4. We will manage impacts on the natural environment of the waterways from the activities of our visitors, users and neighbours, as well as our own, using the most appropriate means. We will invest in our staff, contractors and volunteers to ensure that everyone involved in managing our waterways have the appropriate level of awareness and skills to do this.

Simple legal compliance by us and others is not sufficient to protect and enhance the natural environment of our waterways.

5. We will work to ensure our wildlife flourishes and for waterways to provide havens that people can enjoy;

6. We will work with regulators for effective and efficient regulation that delivers the intended outcomes of environmental protection and improvement;

7. We will promote and champion the natural environment of our waterways; influencing others, raising awareness and educating to encourage support and delivery by others of environmental enhancements.

8. We will work in strategic partnerships with others who share our vision to help deliver protection and improvement of the natural environment of our waterways; and we see the engagement of increasing numbers of environmentally-aware volunteers as essential to our success.

Approved by the Board 12 July 2017