



**Canal &
River Trust**

Making life better by water

Find out about...

Nature on Your Doorstep



canalrivertrust.org.uk

A biodiversity crisis – taking action

Biodiversity is the name given to all life on earth – all the different species, habitats and ecosystems across the planet.



Biodiversity is essential for human life and for nature to flourish, but alarmingly, an estimated 1 million animal and plant species are now threatened with extinction.

The UK is experiencing a crippling biodiversity crisis. With over half our species in decline, we are among the most nature-depleted countries in the world. This biodiversity crisis poses as much danger to life on earth as climate change and we need to take action.



Reversing the biodiversity crisis

Our networks of canals and rivers have a major role to play in reversing the biodiversity crisis. Not only in providing an environment where nature can thrive, but also an opportunity for us all to get involved and make a difference to this global issue, right on our doorstep. Our community projects include ecological wildlife and conservation events, training in wildlife identification, species mapping, biodiversity recording and lots more.

Our waterways have never been so important for nature...

As habitats disappear, inland waterways are becoming increasingly important because of the diversity of wildlife habitats they provide. In just a 10-15m width they offer woodland or scrub, reed fringe, open water and aquatic plants, grassland, hedgerows and trees.

The waterways create blue green corridors that run over 2,000 miles across England and Wales through countryside, towns and cities, providing a ready-made biodiversity network connecting isolated natural sites and habitats, so wildlife can spread and recover again.

...or for us

Being outside, in nature, is associated with better mental health and wellbeing and can significantly enhance quality of life and help bring communities together.

Having access to green and blue spaces really matters for our health, yet green spaces are continually under threat from urbanisation as populations grow. Those living in the most economically deprived areas may have reduced access to personal outdoor space or gardens, but may benefit more from living in greener communities.

Canals and rivers bring the wonders of nature to our doorsteps. They are free to access, open green and blue spaces for everyone to enjoy, even in the most urban, densely populated. 50% of people in England and Wales live within just 5 miles of a canal or river, and 8 million people live less than 1km away! No other UK wildlife charity has reserves or sites so close to so many people.

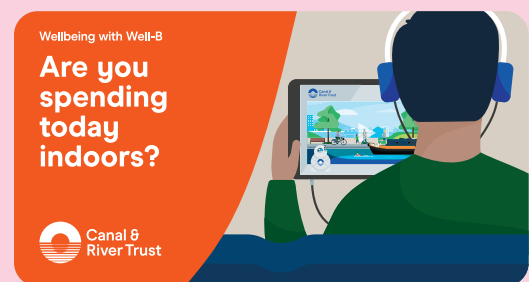




Make a positive difference

Volunteering and Social Action and Skills Development/Employability are the other key strands of our youth engagement work. Every year, more and more young people are giving their time to the Trust and making a positive difference in their community.

Visit our [Youth Engagement pages](https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/youth-engagement) to see the range of projects and activities on offer and find out how you can get involved. canalrivertrust.org.uk/youth-engagement



About this pack

In this pack you'll learn about the work we do to **protect** nature on our doorstep, **improve** habitats, **promote** the benefits of spending time in nature, and look at ways in which our waterways can help us protect against and **adapt** to climate change.

You can **Watch and Read** about all the wildlife and plants that live in, on and around our waterways, and why all our work is carefully managed around their needs.

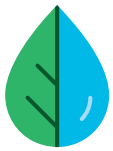
There's a host of things to **Create and Do** (on your own, with friends or in the wider community), to support and get closer to nature. And we'll help you take your **Next Steps** if you'd like to get involved in community projects to maintain our waterways and protect nature on your doorstep.



Getting it right for everyone

One of our biggest challenges is to balance the needs of people and nature. We have to find ways to protect wildlife and manage the natural habitats around our waterways, but at the same time keep them navigable and safe for boating and other uses such as walking, angling and cycling.

Our environment team works tirelessly to protect nature and make sure canals and rivers are such special places to visit. Whether they're creating new habitats, caring for fish, plants and other wildlife while we're fixing up our canals, improving water quality or providing education, they are involved in everything we do.



Learn: about how we protect nature on our doorsteps



Nature thrives around our canals and rivers. The slow flowing water and surrounding banks provide a diverse range of habitats for hundreds of different trees, plants, birds, butterflies, fish and other wildlife.

From iconic species such as otter, badger and kingfisher, to protected species such as water vole, crayfish and floating plantain.

Our waterways have been recognised for their importance to nature. There are 63 sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSI) and over 1,000 other conservation sites along our waterways. In fact, over 30% of our network has been identified as having special environmental value.

The natural world on our doorstep

Our canals and rivers bring this nature and wildlife to the doorsteps of millions of people across England and Wales. They form important corridors for nature, providing unique access to wildlife and green and blue spaces, even in our most densely populated cities and towns.

We work hard to create a balance that works for both people and wildlife: protecting the natural environment from harm, whilst actively improving urban areas to be enjoyed by local communities, encouraging people to visit and benefit from the opportunity to spend time in nature, close to home.



Waterways for everyone

Right across our network, the many different species of wildlife living around the inland waterways have to share their homes with boaters and many other visitors; from walkers and cyclists to anglers and kayakers.

With all this activity, it's not surprising that having to maintain over 2,000 miles of waterways across England and Wales means we often have to carry out repair or improvement works, addressing issues such as erosion, flooding and improving navigation.

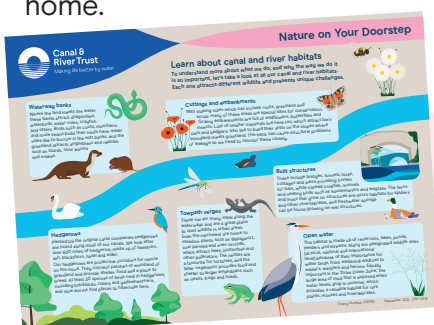
The Trust has a team of in-house ecologists and environmental scientists to make sure all this work is carried out to the highest standard to protect the natural environment, reduce harm to natural habitats, and create new ones to encourage waterway wildlife to thrive.

Maintenance must be planned carefully and work needs to be phased by season to avoid disturbing wildlife. Additional maintenance is designed specifically to help rare, protected species and those identified as priorities for conservation due to rapidly declining populations.

- All birds and their nests are protected through the breeding system
- Bat roosts are protected by law because many species of bat are in decline
- European eels can live to 100 but improvements to water habitats are in place to protect this endangered species
- Wildflower planting is helping to reverse the decline in some species of pollinators
- Banksides are protected from erosion to provide food and shelter for water voles, a species suffering rapid decline.

Our waterways provide a sanctuary for many species affected by urbanisation and loss of habitat. It's essential that we maintain all our canal and river habitats to help nature flourish and start to address the biodiversity crisis.

We'll be helping our waterways to flourish too, making them a better place for people and wildlife to enjoy, so that we can all benefit from these wonderful green and blue spaces – now and in the future.



Learn about canal and river habitats with our colourful poster. Download it at canalrivertrust.org.uk/youth-resources

Create & Do: Ideas to protect nature on our doorsteps

Get spotting!

There is so much wildlife to find by our waterways. The Trust has created a special [Spotters Guide](#) which can be downloaded from its website, but why not make one of your own? We've included names and pictures of some of our favourite animals, fish, butterflies and other insects on the [worksheet](#).

Waterside wildlife bingo

Alternatively, you could create bingo cards featuring a different selection of animals on each card. It's lots of fun to play when you get together, or you can email cards to your friends and play remotely. You could even play in real time as you walk along the waterways!

Include some of the less common species as a way for you and your friends to learn about the enormous variety of wildlife found around our canals, rivers and reservoirs.

See [our worksheet](#) on how to create your own bingo cards.

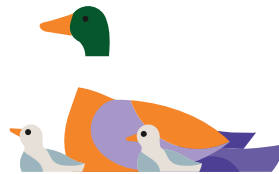


Download our activity sheets at canalrivertrust.org.uk/youth-resources

Pack a picnic for the ducks...

We all love to feed the ducks but bread is actually BAD for them, especially white bread. Help the ducks improve their diet by packing some healthy snacks. Here's a list of some of their favourites:

- Chopped vegetable peelings
- Porridge oats
- Defrosted peas
- Chopped lettuce
- Sweetcorn
- Seeds
- Rice



...and for you

Packing healthy snacks for the ducks means you can use the bread to make a picnic for you. There's nothing like your favourite sandwich, but try making these delicious alternatives on our [activity sheet](#) for you and your friends.

Fashion inspired by nature

We've created some waterside wildlife [templates](#). Use them to paint or print your favourite(s) on T-shirts, tote bags, postcards or anything you like! Why not print an eye-catching message too – about saving a species from extinction, or losing a home because of damage to their habitat or the environment.

Canal and river fashion

We have our own fashion brand too! Check out canalrivertrustfashion.co.uk to see our range of zero-plastic clothing and accessories. Everything is made from natural materials in factories powered by renewable energy from the sun and wind. And we only make what is needed, so there is no waste.



Watch and Read

Find out more about nature and wildlife pages at canalrivertrust.org.uk/a-guide-to-wildlife

Find out all about waterway wildlife canalrivertrust.org.uk/wildlife-blogs-and-features

Download and learn how the Trust plans to protect the waterway environment and maintain biodiversity in our waterways and wildlife handbook canalrivertrust.org.uk/media/original/33561-waterways-and-wildlife-managing-our-natural-environment.pdf

Read more about the work of our environment team canalrivertrust.org.uk/caring-for-our-environment



Learn: about how we improve our waterways

We are committed to improving the natural environment of our waterways to make a difference and over 30% of our network has been recognised for its special environmental value.

But this doesn't mean we can sit back and relax! We are always looking for ways to make our sites:

Better – we need to keep our sites in 'Favourable Condition'.

Bigger – this means more joined up to create better corridors for nature.


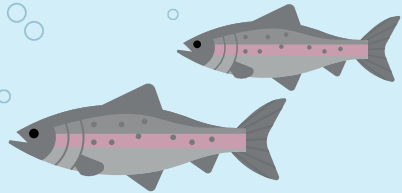


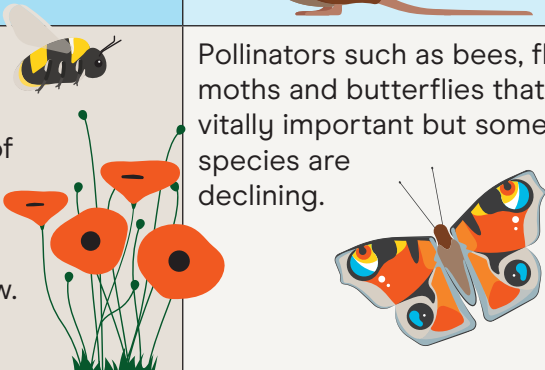
Home to even more wildlife

– by engaging communities in their local environment – from installing bird and bat boxes, to helping improve and maintain local waterways.

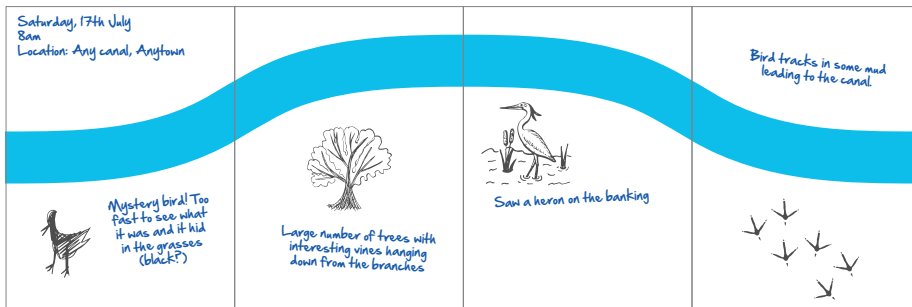
There's even an opportunity for organisations such as youth groups, schools and sports clubs to **adopt** a stretch of our waterway and take part in all sorts of tasks, eg:

- Litter picking
- Planting trees and building community gardens
- Keeping towpaths clean and clear
- Helping improve habitats for local wildlife
- Creating adventure trails
- Organising events to bring local people together

This gives us more time to focus on all the other things we do to make our canals and rivers the best possible home for nature.

Here's just some of what we do	and who benefits...
<p>Improving water quality</p> <p>Reducing levels of phosphorus and removing algae, weed cutting and dredging to remove silt and polluted sediment, and even the release of weevils who will eat water fern that blocks light.</p>	<p>Water plants, fish, otters, and aquatic invertebrates such as limpets, mussels and crayfish.</p> 
<p>Improving connectivity of water</p> <p>Special passes have been built to help fish navigate weirs and other built structures. Without these, some species are unable to reach traditional breeding grounds and could become extinct.</p>	<p>Fish, including the endangered European Eel and Twaite Shad.</p> 
<p>Improving hedgerows</p> <p>Planting new hedgerows, maintaining the old and filling gaps to create better corridors for wildlife to travel along.</p>	<p>Amphibians and reptiles, birds and bats.</p> 
<p>Improving bankside habitats</p> <p>Protecting banks against erosion, planting new vegetation and improving soft reed/fringe.</p>	<p>Otters and especially water voles who are now classed as a priority for conservation.</p> 
<p>Improving flower rich habitats</p> <p>Planting and seeding of native flowers and reducing grass cutting to allow tussocky grass to grow.</p> 	<p>Pollinators such as bees, flies, moths and butterflies that are vitally important but some species are declining.</p>

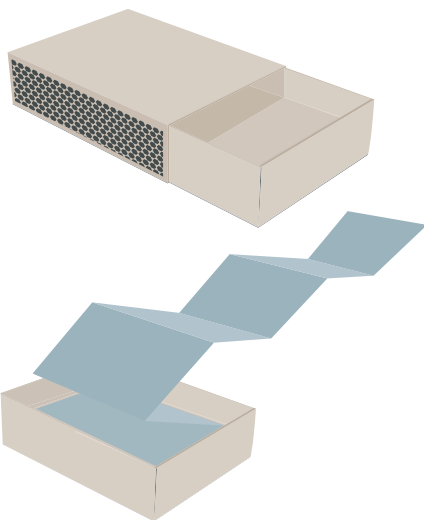
Create & Do: Ideas to support waterway improvement



Map in a matchbox

There's so much to see when you visit the inland waterways and if you look closely you'll always spot something new: a plant you haven't seen before, footprints left by an animal, or a butterfly or bird you don't recognise.

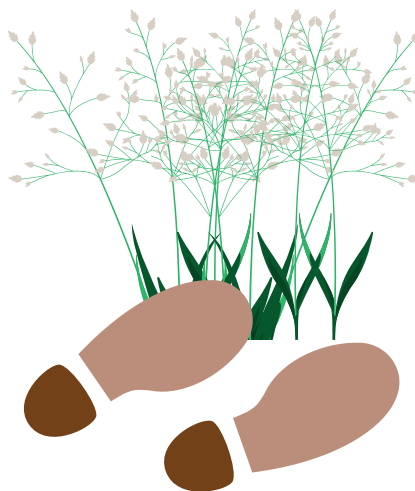
Why not capture the things you discover on your visit by creating a kind of walking map of pictures, sketches or notes and interesting facts. Take a look at the [worksheet](#) to find out how to make a map that fits into a matchbox or cardholder!



Download our activity sheets at canalrivertrust.org.uk/youth-resources

Grow your own canal

Canals provide important habitats for nature, in urban and rural locations, and are much needed corridors for wildlife on the move. But it's not just fish and other creatures that move along these corridors. Plants also travel from one place to another and spread along the canals. Download our [activity sheet](#) and try our grow your own canal experiment to see which plants spread most easily.



Natural arts and crafts

Natural materials make great tools for art projects. When you next go for a walk collect fallen twigs, leaves, feathers and seed heads to use in your creations. Here's a few examples of what to collect. It's up to you how you use them and how creative you want to be in your designs.

Bark – remove bark from a twig, crush one end and use it as a paintbrush!

Feather – do things the old-fashioned way and try using a feather and ink to draw with



Seed heads – Dip seed heads in paint and print or brush across the paper

Sticks – try drawing with a stick that has been dipped in embers

Rubbings – place a sheet of paper over leaves, bark and seed pods and use crayons or chalk to rub over the top



Moss – Tie or glue moss to a stick as a different kind of paintbrush

We'd love to see your ideas. Why not share them with us via email or on social media? All the details for how to get in touch are at the back of this pack.

Watch and Read

Read more about our canal and river habitats canalrivertrust.org.uk/canal-habitats

Find out how you can get involved in a project near you canalrivertrust.org.uk/get-involved



Learn: about how we promote our waterways

As a waterways and wellbeing charity we understand the benefits of spending time in nature. Part of our job is to tell others about this, to encourage everyone to visit and to support us in looking after the waterways and all the surrounding habitats and wildlife.

A local approach

We know how much people care about their local environment. We engage with local communities by running stories or campaigns on key issues affecting local wildlife; such as water safety, pollution, fly tipping, dog muck and invasive species which threaten local wildlife.

A wider approach

- We organise nature watches, encouraging everyone across England and Wales to record sightings of wildlife seen on canals, rivers, reservoirs or lakes.
- Our new **Spotters Guide** (see page 5) showcases many of these species, explaining where and why they live along the water, and how the Trust works to protect their habitats. We always like to hear about what you have seen on your visits. If you discover something unusual, take a picture, if you can, and share it with us on Twitter, Facebook or email.
- We work with other charitable organisations and Trusts, for example partnering with Wildlife Trusts to make connections with their nature reserves and help create 'living landscapes' where wildlife habitats are bigger, better managed and more joined-up.



Appealing to everybody

And we find ways to engage different age groups through topics such as water safety, local heritage and wildlife. You may remember our Explorers programme from your primary school days, featuring Otter, Newt and Duck. Or you may have been involved in one of our STEM, careers or employability skills projects for secondary schools and colleges.

Well-B

And the Trust has recently introduced Well-B to help communicate the wellbeing benefits of being by water. There is a wellbeing monitor on Well-B's chest. Well-B's wellbeing levels dip in busy, noisy environments but are completely recharged by spending time by canals and rivers. The wellbeing monitor switches from red to bright blue when this happens, to demonstrate that Well-B feels happier and healthier after spending time by water.

This is Well-B. Say hello!

Well-B is our little canalside friend who enjoys relaxing and recharging by our canals and rivers. Well-B's favourite place is by the water where Well-B spends time with people and animals.

Learn more about Well-B: search '[canal-recharge](#)' now.



Create & Do: Ideas to promote the waterways

Nature News

Take some time to research your local waterways and find out about any conservation work taking place. Are there any issues threatening the plants or wildlife living in, on or around the waterways near you? Could you and your friends, or even your community do anything to help make a difference?

How could you communicate these issues to others? Can you think of ways to encourage them to get involved? Can talking about this issue help you tell them why waterways are so important for wildlife?

- Why not create a post to share on social media – what would you put on Your Story to make everyone sit up and take notice?
- Could you write a poem to help tell your story and create impact?
- Do you have a photograph to share that almost speaks for itself?
- Or could design a poster or infographic? As well as sharing with friends, you could ask a teacher or youth leader if they would be happy to put it on display. Your poster could focus on a simple, strong message, or you could create a series of posters.

We'd love to see all your ideas. Please share them with us via social media or email. All details are provided at the end of this pack.

Download our activity sheets at canalrivertrust.org.uk/youth-resources

Create a 'Nature champion' character or superhero

Well-B is the Trust's latest recruit. Have a go at creating your own character or superhero who could be a champion for nature and encourage people to visit the waterways.

- Think about what they could stand for, the messages they give, or a special phrase or a superpower?
- Will they have a specialist subject, are they a protector of all canal and river wildlife, an eco-warrior or a nature champion?
- They could be human, animal, insect, robot or anything else you can think of. Perhaps they are a friend or sidekick of Well-B?

We'd love to see your ideas for characters and hear about what they stand for. You can share your ideas via email or social media using the details given at the end of this pack.

Spread the word: Make a video or vlog

Making a video is a great way to tell everyone about the incredible and diverse wildlife living along our inland waterways, or to raise the profile of particular species that need a helping hand. It's the perfect opportunity to show everyone why canals and rivers are a wonderful place for humans to spend time too!

You could produce a single informative video or create a vlog and post a series of short videos, each with a different theme or focus. If you're thinking of creating a vlog, think about inviting other people to get involved and share their thoughts, experiences and ideas.

Everything you need to know about making a video or vlog and all the equipment you will need is included on the [worksheet](#).

If you don't want to make a video, you could always write a blog instead. Remember to think of a different theme or angle for each of your posts, and include pictures, diagrams, drawing and photos too.

Watch and Read

Read and enjoy the stories of people that live, visit or work on our canals and rivers

canalrivertrust.org.uk/news-and-views/your-stories

Find out more about our Youth Social Action programmes

canalrivertrust.org.uk/youth-social-action

Learn more about canal and river wildlife

canalrivertrust.org.uk/enjoy-the-waterways/canal-and-river-wildlife

Find a local nature walk

canalrivertrust.org.uk/enjoy-the-waterways/walking



Learn: about how we can adapt to climate change impacts

We work hard to find ways to protect our waterways, wildlife, buildings and structures from the effects of climate change; such as extreme weather patterns and flooding.

But we also know that our waterways can be part of the solution to climate change impact. We've drawn up a Climate Change Adaptation Plan and are represented on the Government's National Adaptation Programme Biodiversity and Ecosystems working group.

Here's just some of the reasons why our inland waterways are so important:

- Many habitats have disappeared from the countryside, making our waterways even more valuable to wildlife in both urban and rural environments.
- The waterways make a huge contribution to the nation's biodiversity. The wide variety of habitats found around our canals and rivers, and our corridor style network can help nature adapt to climate change impact.
- The Trust works to maintain and improve its sites in ways that protect wildlife.



- Waterway holidays are a low carbon alternative to going abroad and offer the additional benefit of improved wellbeing that comes from spending time amongst nature, in the natural environment.
- We engage with local communities and encourage them to take part in the work we do to manage and care for the local environment. This encourages wider pro-environmental behaviour and respect for nature.

Watch and Read

Read about climate change and its impact on our canals and river navigations

canalrivertrust.org.uk/climate-change

Watch this videos for suggestions as to how you could adapt your garden or outside space to be a better home for wildlife

www.youtube.com/watch?v=UiRjkuZIJ8

Find out more about our employability work including opportunities for Apprenticeships, and what it's like to work for the Trust and the types of jobs we do

canalrivertrust.org.uk/skills-development-and-employability

canalrivertrust.org.uk/about-us/work-for-us/apprenticeships

canalrivertrust.org.uk/about-us/work-for-us/our-jobs

Create & Do: Ideas to reduce climate change impacts

Create a corridor for Nature at home

Gardens, roof terraces and other outside spaces, even buildings, can easily be adapted to create a home for wildlife, inspired by the many different habitats found by our canals and rivers.

For example, your garden might contain similar hedges and trees, a shed could provide a similar opportunity for nesting, wildflowers might be growing in grassy areas, or you may spot the perfect place to encourage plants and flowers to grow. Our [survey sheet](#) will show you how to map your garden to help you come up with your ideas and designs. Your designs should be inspired by and reflect one or more of the canal and river habitats described earlier in this pack.



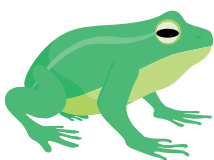
Download our activity sheets at canalrivertrust.org.uk/youth-resources

Build a bug hotel

It can be hard for wildlife to find safe hideaways in gardens. But with a bit of adapting, you can make an outside space much more inviting and provide just the nooks and hollows they might be looking for.

One of the best ways to do this is to build a bug hotel – you never know who might come to stay!

You could find all sorts of wildlife sheltering there; from hedgehogs to toads, solitary bees to bumblebees, and ladybirds to woodlice.



Our bug hotel [worksheet](#) shows you how to make one for yourself. Bug hotels can be all different shapes and sizes depending on space and what you have available.



Here's some other tips:

- Try to use natural materials from the immediate area as this is what your visitors will like best.
- Where you place your hotel will determine who comes to visit. Visitors attracted to a dry sunny spot will be different to those who like to stay somewhere damp!
- Build your hotel a safe distance from any vegetables that might be growing – you don't want to encourage guests to help themselves!
- A planter or seed tray will make a great roof. Sow with wildflower seeds to help attract visitors.



Make a bath for the birds – and the bees!

Keep the birds happy with a bird bath made from old plant pots and saucers. Our [worksheet](#) shows you how to make the bath – you can then decorate it in any style you like!

Did you know?

Honeybees are also frequent visitors to bird baths, as they need water to regulate temperatures within the colony on hot summer days. But they can easily drown in the water, so you will need to place several pebbles or small stones into the bath to help them climb out if they get into difficulty.

...or build a bird feeder

Encourage birds into your garden with your own bird feeder. [Download our worksheet](#) and find out how to make one from an old milk carton.

Next Steps

We've given you lots of information about the Trust's climate change action plan. Now you can share what you have learned with others.

Create a video, blog or vlog

Use our worksheet on producing a video or vlog to help get you started. Digital media is a great place to talk about the importance of wildlife and the natural environment and to communicate key messages about conservation. Don't forget to encourage everyone to play their part too.

Download the [worksheet](https://www.canalrivertrust.org.uk/youth-resources) at [canalrivertrust.org.uk/youth-resources](https://www.canalrivertrust.org.uk/youth-resources)

Make a poster or infographic

If there's a message you feel particularly strongly about a poster or infographic is a very powerful way to communicate this message to others.

Write a letter to someone with a lot of power or influence. Use the letter template at [canalrivertrust.org.uk/youth-resources](https://www.canalrivertrust.org.uk/youth-resources) to invite them to help. For more tips see page 9.

Don't forget to tag us in your social media posts and share your pictures, stories and news on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. Or you can send us all your amazing ideas and creations via email or post.

 [/canalrivertrust](https://www.facebook.com/canalrivertrust)

 [@canalrivertrust](https://twitter.com/canalrivertrust)

 [@canalrivertrust](https://www.instagram.com/canalrivertrust)

Get involved

If you've been inspired by everything you've learned and done we'd love you to get more involved! Contact us to find out about opportunities in your local area.

And please get in touch if you are concerned about the waterways, buildings or other structures near you. We really value your support and would love to hear from you.

Always remember to keep yourself safe online at all times. Speak to your parent, carer, teacher or group leader for advice and check out this guidance from www.thinkuknow.co.uk

Bringing the magic of our waterways to you!

Our towpaths are open for you to exercise and be outdoors, closer to nature. We want you to enjoy your local canal or river, but please follow the government's advice at www.gov.uk/coronavirus on social distancing at all times. Keep your distance from both other people and moored boats, where people may be living aboard and could be self-isolating or shielding.

Events taking part on Trust land will be reviewed on a case by case basis and no event which could put both those attending or our staff and volunteers at risk will be permitted. We will continue to follow the latest government advice and will post updates if the advice changes. Please check individual event details, follow us on social media and sign-up to our email for the latest information.



Canal & River Trust

Making life better by water

0303 040 4040

[canalrivertrust.org.uk](https://www.canalrivertrust.org.uk)



To get involved:

visit: [canalrivertrust.org.uk/volunteer](https://www.canalrivertrust.org.uk/volunteer)

email: volunteer@canalrivertrust.org.uk

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