

PRESS RELEASE

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CANAL CHARITY AND WEST YORKSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

URGE PEOPLE TO STAY SAFE BY WATER THIS SUMMER

As temperatures soar across the country, Canal & River Trust (Yorkshire & North East) is working with West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service (WYFRS) to help reinforce the importance of staying safe by water this summer and ask people to avoid open water swimming in their local canals, rivers and reservoirs.

The waterways and wellbeing charity which looks after 316 miles of waterways and five reservoirs in the region runs regular campaigns to alert people to the dangers of swimming in inland waterways and this year's summer water safety message is supported by West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service.

Sean McGinley, director Yorkshire & North East, said: "We want people to relax and enjoy the health benefits of spending time by water. But as the weather warms up, we are also keen to remind people not to swim in our waterways.

"There may be hidden dangers such as unexpected currents and submerged objects which can quickly cause even the strongest swimmer to get in trouble or cause injury."

The Trust is once again delivering its 'Explorers' water safety summer education programme to help thousands of schoolchildren learn how to enjoy their local canal or river safely. The charity is also continuing to work in partnership with emergency services across the region to help keep the community safe through signage and safety measures in hot spot areas.

West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service is supporting the Trust's campaign, as well as sending out its own messages.

Andy Rose, group manager at WYFRS, said: "Unfortunately, during periods of warm weather we tend to see these figures rise with people entering canals and rivers to cool down and swim.

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“As appealing this may seem there are many hidden dangers that have tragically taken lives and I would urge members of the public to think twice before entering due the potential unseen hazards and risks.

“We are committed to protecting the people of West Yorkshire, and are working with other authorities to implement measures now and in the future to continue to keep people safe.”

WYFRS has highlighted the following risks of open water swimming:

- Cold water shock.
- Submerged obstacles such as tree branches, rubbish, or even vehicles that may not be visible due to the depth or clarity of the water.
- Undercurrents, even though it may appear to be still, static water on the surface, there could potentially be undercurrents that have the ability to pin individuals to the bottom of the riverbed.
- Weirs are to be avoided at all costs. The biggest danger is at the bottom in the form of a ‘stopper.’ Here the recirculating current pulls you back towards the falls and pushes you under the water. In some cases, these are impossible to escape.
- Contamination from unclean/unsafe water leading to illnesses or diseases

The waterway and wellbeing charity Canal & River Trust looks after a total of 2,000 miles of canals and rivers across England and Wales, as well as 72 reservoirs.

To date 125,000 children over the past four years have benefited from the Trust’s water safety Explorers programme, which focuses on children in Key Stage 2 of the National Curriculum. To help with water safety education at home the Explorers team has compiled a range of free activities, resources and games which can be found at

www.canalrivertrust.org.uk/explorers/learning-from-home/water-safety.

To find out more about staying safe near canals and rivers, go to:

<https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/enjoy-the-waterways/safety-on-our-waterways/summer-water-safety>

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Notes to Editors:

The Canal & River Trust cares for and brings to life 2,000 miles of canals and rivers across England & Wales. We believe waterways have the power to make a difference to people's lives and that spending time by water can make us all healthier and happier. By bringing communities together to make a difference to their local waterway, we are creating places and spaces that can be used and enjoyed by everyone, every day www.canalrivertrust.org.uk.

Key Facts - Yorkshire & NE Waterways:

- 316 miles of waterways (16.51% of the network are in this region)
- 1,097,360 people live within 1km of their local waterway
- 19 canals and rivers in the region of the network are:
 1. Stainforth & Keadby Canal
 2. Leeds & Liverpool Canal
 3. New Junction Canal
 4. River Ouse
 5. Ure Navigation
 6. Rochdale Canal
 7. Wakefield Branch (Aire & Calder Navigation)
 8. River Tees
 9. Ripon Canal
 10. Aire & Calder Navigation Main Line
 11. Pocklington Canal
 12. Selby Canal
 13. Huddersfield Narrow Canal
 14. Chesterfield Canal
 15. Calder & Hebble Navigation
 16. Sheffield & Tinsley Canal
 17. River Aire
 18. Sheffield & South Yorkshire Navigations
 19. Huddersfield Broad Canal