

# PRESS RELEASE

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Issued: 22 November 2021

## **IMPROVING THE MACCLESFIELD CANAL FOR PEOPLE AND WILDLIFE**

Staff from pharmaceutical firm AstraZeneca in Cheshire are just a few of the dozens of volunteers working with the Canal & River Trust, national waterways and wellbeing charity, this autumn and winter to improve the Macclesfield Canal for both people and wildlife.

More than 60 employees have so far carried out a range of outdoor tasks as part of the company's corporate volunteering initiative and further work is planned for December. Over the next few months, Trust staff and many other volunteers will be devoting hundreds of hours to upgrading towpaths, planting trees, mending hedgerows and removing unwanted vegetation.

At Bosley Reservoir, which supplies water to the canal, the Trust is working in partnership with the Prince Albert Angling Society and the Angling Trust to deal with an invasion of the non-native New Zealand pygmy weed, which is out-competing existing native plants and destroying habitats for insects and nesting birds.

On Bosley's famous 12 lock flight, just over a mile of muddy, sloping towpath has been upgraded with a new all-weather, hard surface of stone chippings – a waste bi-product from Welsh slate quarries. Eroded canal banks around the lock chambers and gates have also been repaired, making it safer for boaters alighting to operate lock gates.

A water-logged towpath near Bridge 87 at Scholar Green has been greatly improved, thanks to a major project to reinforce the soggy ground conditions with more than 40 tonnes of waste slate.

And all along the 26 mile canal route, staff and volunteers will be planting trees, removing overhanging vegetation and improving hedgerows and wildlife corridors.

Phil Smith, local area operations manager with the Canal & River Trust, said: "All our volunteers are doing a fantastic job. A few years ago the Macclesfield Canal became the first canal in the country to gain a coveted Green Flag Award, endorsing it as a quality green space, offering visitors a first class experience. It's vitally important to keep this historic canal in good condition and we are very grateful to everyone who is working with us to do that.

Canal & River Trust

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Patron: H.R.H. The Prince of Wales. Canal & River Trust is a charitable company limited by guarantee, registered in England and Wales with company number 7807276 and registered charity number 1146792, registered office address: National Waterways Museum, South Pier Road, Ellesmere Port, CH65 4FW.

“Although the canals were originally built to transport coal and other goods during the Industrial Revolution, they have now been reinvented as leisure destinations. During the coronavirus lockdowns particularly, people have noticed how waterways offer an amazing, tranquil space to re-energise and enjoy walking, cycling, angling and jogging, and appreciate nature.”

Tom King, ecologist with the Trust, added: “Our canals and reservoirs are incredibly important for wildlife and we’re doing everything we can to enhance habitats and promote biodiversity. Planting trees and keeping hedgerows in good condition gives a vital boost to preserve habitats for small mammals, birds and insects.

“We are also particularly pleased to find a fantastic new use for the waste stone from Welsh slate mines. This is a win-win both for the environment and everyone who enjoys using the wonderful waterway towpaths.

“At Bosley Reservoir, the New Zealand pygmy weed is giving us a major challenge and over the next few months we’ll be working with our angling colleagues to spray and clear the weed as much as we can. Now the non-native invasive species has taken hold, it will sadly be almost impossible to eradicate, which is why it’s so important for everyone to take extreme care not to spread the plant elsewhere on their shoes, clothing or equipment. Always follow the government’s guidelines to ‘check, clean, dry’.”

To join the army of volunteers improving the environment around the Macclesfield Canal, please contact the Trust’s local volunteer coordinator Jason Lock. Email:

[jason.lock@canalrivertrust.org.uk](mailto:jason.lock@canalrivertrust.org.uk).

For more information on the Canal & River Trust’s winter waterway repair programme, visit [www.canalrivertrust.org.uk](http://www.canalrivertrust.org.uk).

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**Photos show: 1. Volunteers from the Angling Trust and Prince Albert Angling Society join the Canal & River Trust mission to reduce invasive New Zealand pygmy weed at Bosley Reservoir, near Macclesfield. 2. Bosley Reservoir. 3. Volunteers from Macclesfield Canal Roving Group use a Trust work boat to help remove unwanted vegetation from the canal bank.**

**For further media requests please contact:**

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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.

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