

# YOUNG VOLUNTEERS AND WATERWAY RESTORATION

*Engaging the Next Generation*



**Canal &  
River Trust**  
Making life better by water



**INLAND  
WATERWAYS**  
ASSOCIATION

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# INTRODUCTION

## Why should you involve young people in your project?

Young people are already making positive impacts across communities throughout the UK. #IWill shows that 4 in 10 young people aged between 10-20 are already taking part in youth social action so there is a huge opportunity for the waterways restoration sector to engage with young people and build stronger, more sustainable organisations.

There is still a perception that young people may not have the skills, maturity or experience to get involved in all aspects of waterway restoration, however, young people have so much to offer and can bring energy, new perspectives and different experiences to your organisation. Engagement with young people does not need to be limited to practical skills on site, involving young people in decision making could bring a diversity of perspective that really benefits your organisation.

This guidance note seeks to give you the confidence and ideas to start out on your journey of engaging young volunteers, with a particular focus on partnership working.



# BUILDING AN ATTRACTIVE PROPOSITION

As well as making sure that a young volunteer is the right fit for a role, you should consider whether your group or organisation is right for them. As a sector we need to make sure any offer to young people is accessible and relevant and our organisations are inclusive to allow for meaningful engagement which is beneficial to both sides.

When developing any youth volunteering, consider not just the benefits to your organisation (community engagement, extra funding, and more volunteers) but also the benefits that young people can gain. Meeting new people and making friends, giving something back to the community, having fun, being challenged and achieving personal goals are important benefits volunteering can give young people in the short term. Longer term it helps with confidence building, improves mental health, and develops a young person's potential through personal and practical skills.

There are often barriers which prevent young people from engaging in waterway restoration volunteering. At the planning stage, you should consider why young people might not volunteer for your organisation and look at ways to adapt your offer to make it more accessible.

## Here are a few things to consider:

- **Time:** You may need to tailor the timing of your volunteering opportunity to fit with the time constraints and other commitments of young people. Flexi or micro volunteering might be a better approach to engage with young people who have to study, work or socialize rather than requiring someone to turn up every Tuesday morning.
- **Location of the volunteering:** Many young people do not have access to a car and rely on public transport or lifts to get to locations. Volunteering opportunities that do not have easy access may act as a barrier and prevent engagement.
- **Information:** Make sure the information you put out about the volunteering opportunity is clear and outlines the benefits of getting involved. Taking the step to get involved in a new organisation takes courage – try and give young people examples of how they can make a real impact in your organisation and that they will be valued.
- **Perception of your organisation:** Remember volunteering is meant to be fun and not boring! Creating volunteering opportunities that are engaging and fun will encourage young people to return.



# HOW TO INVOLVE YOUNG PEOPLE

In this guidance note, we focus on working in partnership and adding value to existing youth action programmes, as we believe this will be the most successful route for organisations who don't have the internal resources to set up new programmes of engagement. Working with new and existing partners and young people will help you develop activities that remove barriers to participation – opening your organisation to the next generation of volunteers. Working in collaboration with groups experienced in the delivery of youth action allows you to create more high quality experiences. There are lots of organisations and groups that encourage young people to get involved with volunteering such as Scouts, Duke of Edinburgh's Award and local outreach organisations.

In this series of case studies, we demonstrate how working in partnership with a youth organisation is a good first step for any group or organisation starting out on their youth engagement journey. Adding value to an existing youth programme, building sustainable, lasting relationships with these groups, and developing relationships with, influencers of young people, such as parents and youth leaders, will help you develop a structured long-term programme of engagement.





## CVQO Schools Partnership Project on the towpath



The Change to Cadet Vocational Qualification Organisation (CVQO), founded in 2001, is a charity that provides vocational qualifications to members of youth groups and their adult volunteer instructors. They work with a range of uniformed groups, schools and colleges in areas such as public services, music, teamwork, leadership and management. The Canal & River Trust partnered with CVQO and a local school in the West Midlands region to help the students achieve part of their BTEC Level 1 qualification.

### **Aim of Project:**

The aim was to reconnect and motivate the young people involved, helping them to perform to their full potential and to ensure they were no longer at risk from disengagement.

### **Target Participants:**

This initiative was designed for demotivated or disengaged young people between 13 years and 15 years old.

### **Activities Delivered:**

In partnership with the Canal & River Trust, students from four local high schools volunteered to improve a section of towpath in Knowle, West Midlands.

Each school spent a day on site helping with the clearance and re-development of the towpath. This activity helped to complete part of the volunteering requirement of their CVQO-led BTEC Level 1 in Teamwork, personal skills and citizenship.

### **Outcomes:**

Young people learnt a variety of skills and competencies including teamwork, citizenship, volunteering and self-reliance. They received a BTEC Level 1, Personal Skills after completion of a 12 week course.

### **Safeguarding/Support/Supervision Measures:**

The activities were managed and planned in advance. The CVQO staff were responsible for the behaviour of the young people and the Canal & River Trust supported with activities. The Trust's safeguarding policy and guidance was adhered to throughout the programme. The Trust worked with CVQO on the risk assessments and health and safety to make sure the activities were appropriate for the young people attending.

*“Ten of our Year 9 students have recently been involved in a ‘Community Action’ project with the Canal & River Trust. The four day project, that involved three other schools from the Midlands area, required our students to work on improving a small area of the canal in Knowle. The students took part in every aspect of the project and gained valuable experience by putting something back into the community as a volunteer. It was a labour-intensive day that they all thoroughly enjoyed. The project aims to develop a variety of skills and competencies including resilience, teamwork and self-discipline. The project has been a massive success and a new group of our Year 9 students will be starting the project in March.”*

**- School teacher**

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*“For pupils who may have faced challenges or difficulties in their personal life, these initiatives run by former armed services personnel can offer a sense of greater aspiration and can help build the skills and confidence they need to go on and get good jobs and successful futures.”*

**- Nicky Morgan MP  
Secretary for State Education**

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*“CVQO has made me more confident when talking in front of others and I’ve worked with people I probably wouldn’t have spoken to before.”*

**- Student  
CVQO programme**

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*“People passing complimented us on our work and thanked us for what we were doing for the community, which made me feel great.”*

**- Student  
CVQO programme**



## Youth wellbeing boat trips and junior lock keeping



The Canal & River Trusts Youth Engagement Framework includes a priority action of working with youth groups so that canals and rivers are more relevant to the younger population. Whilst the Trust were running Explorers education activities within schools, they also had a nationwide priority of engaging more young people between the ages of 11-25.

The Trust recognised that by working in partnership, they would be able to engage new audiences of young people, as well as foster the expertise and resource of others.

## **Aim of Project:**

The aim was to trial canal-based youth engagement with young people who were experiencing challenges in their lives. The Canal & River Trust partnered with Wiltshire Wildlife Trust (WWT) who already ran a Youth Wellbeing programme with groups including Splash! Young Spurgeons, and a local primary school.

### **The Trust were looking for:**

- Levels of interest from organisations to partake in canal-based activities
- Participation from the young people in boating and lock-keeping
- Changes in behaviour by the young people
- Ease of delivery
- Feedback from the young people
- Requests for more activities of this nature

## **Target Participants:**

The target participants were young people between the ages of 9-18 who are experiencing difficulties, disadvantage or vulnerability. The Wiltshire Wildlife Trust, provides conservation and wild play activities designed to create positive changes for some of Wiltshire's most vulnerable young people. Three separate boat trips with related activities were organised over three days.

### **The groups consisted of 10-12 young people per time plus adults, and included:**

- A local primary school where WWT delivered weekly outdoor activities based in and around the natural environment for young pupils who struggle with the formal classroom setting. Age 8-11.
- Young people taking part in school holiday activities through the local Police charity Splash! Together with WWT, they deliver days for young people to learn and have fun within the natural environment. Age 9-15.
- Spurgeons young carers who are involved in the practical and/or emotional care of parents/siblings or other family members. Age 11-18.



The organisations were able to gather feedback to understand the levels of interest among the younger generation and the impact that access to the waterways may have on the health and wellbeing of participants.

Whilst the boat trips were well received and have enabled the Trust to engage successfully with a new audience, there was a cost for boat hire. There was a notable interest in the boat trips and activities, both from partners and the young people themselves.

**By working in partnership, the Trust were able to offer a new activity which fitted in with the youth wellbeing aim of enabling young people to reconnect with nature - fundamental to good physical and mental wellbeing, and help them in:**

- Self-esteem and confidence
- Good social communication skills
- Positive attitude · aspiration
- Resilience to learning through challenges
- A positive student: adult relationship
- Self-regulation
- Intrinsic motivation
- Safe use of tools and controlled risk taking

### Activities Delivered:

The days ran from 10am-3pm, which included a one-way boat trip from Devizes Wharf with junior lock keeping (certificates provided at the end), disembarking at Caen Hill locks for a picnic or BBQ lunch, and time at Jubilee Wood for building dens and wild play activities. The groups then returned on foot along the towpath.

### Outcomes:

- Younger audiences made aware of their local waterway
- New skills gained
- Increased confidence
- Sense of achievement amongst participants
- Working as part of a team (cross-generational)

## Safeguarding/Support/Supervision Measures:

The Trust ensured the activities were properly planned and managed. Wiltshire Wildlife Trust were the staff / leaders responsible for the behaviour of the young people and we supported with activities. Everything was carried out in accordance with the Trust's safeguarding policy and guidance. Both organisations worked together on the risk assessments, health and safety and to make sure the activities were appropriate for the young people attending.

*"I liked the locks because they let the water through and all of us got to have a go"*

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*"I really liked how I played eye spy with the spotter sheets"*

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*"I didn't understand how the water worked before"*

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*"Liked going up and down in the locks"*

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*"Next time I'd like to do the hill" (Caen Hill flight)*

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*"I wanted to do more locks!"*

- Students



## Gloucestershire College Foundation Studies - “Build a Pond” Project (2019)



In the autumn of 2019 30 students from the Cheltenham and Forest of Dean campuses of Gloucestershire College worked with Trust colleagues on a ‘build a pond’ project, funded by People’s Postcode Lottery. The Steps to Employment groups delivered the project as part of their Princes Trust E3 award, a course designed to increase their understanding of volunteering within their community, as well build on employability skills.

## **Aim of Project:**

To build a new habitat for the Great Crested Newt on the Gloucester & Sharpness canal.

## **Target Participants:**

30 students with additional support needs at Gloucestershire College.

## **Activities Delivered:**

Working at Saul Junction on the Gloucester & Sharpness Canal, they helped to create a new habitat for great crested newts - a protected species. The students, who all have additional support needs, were involved in a wide range of activities including; clearing the site, fence-building, digging the pond out and preparing it for filling. They also planted wildflowers on the surrounding bunds.

Recognising the young peoples' efforts and celebrating their achievements has been an important part of this long-term project, from saying thank you and passing on the positive comments from members of the public to planning a pond filling ceremony for all 30 students to celebrate the completion of the project.

## **Outcomes:**

As well as their Princes Trust Award, the students worked towards a John Muir Discovery Award. The project allowed for continued engagement with the students through a College and has a community adoption from Fretherne bridge to just north of Junction bridge. This provides plenty of future opportunities for them to take on additional roles and responsibilities, maintaining the pond site and helping to develop further activities for their peers and the wider community.

## **Safeguarding/Support/Supervision Measures:**

Covered by the partner organisation (FE College) risk assessment plus the Trust's RA. No students directly supervised by a Trust member of staff as they were supervised by a tutor and 3 learning assistants at each session.



*“We worked together to dig out the pond, we had to work together to dig the pond as deep as the level needed to be. It was hard work but we achieved a lot.”*

*- Student*

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*“I enjoyed the carpentry especially measuring out for the fence and fixing the cross braces. I learnt how to fix hinges on to a gate and how to fix fence panels level using a spirit level.”*

*- Student*

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*“Through this challenging pond project, the students had to listen and follow instructions to work as a team. Without working together, the task could not have been completed. They had built up their resilience as the task at times was really difficult when it rained continuously and was wet and windy. It was at these times that they had to learn to pull together.... It is evident that they have gained a lot from being involved in this special project and they have matured considerably. Linking it to the John Muir award has also made them appreciate the overall purpose of the project, thus gaining an understanding of conservation as they also explored new areas.*

*The Canal and River Trust team have been supportive to all our learners enabling them to work at higher levels to achieve more, whilst stretching and challenging them.”*

*- Employment Development Coordinator  
Gloucestershire College*

Another approach is to involve young people in the creation of any youth engagement programme. Programmes shaped and designed by young people for young people are often more successful in engaging and connecting with their target audiences.

## WRG Family Canal Camps – Volunteering for the whole family



Running since 2017, Family Canal Camps take what makes Waterway Recovery Group's regular Canal Camps so great and turn it into a family friendly opportunity to engage existing volunteers and new ones. Each event is open to 22 individuals and young persons between the ages of 5 – 14. To date 126 individuals have taken part in the events.

## **Aim of Project:**

To re-engage and open up canal restoration activities to a new generation of younger volunteers to raise awareness and develop their skills.

### **The aims and objectives for these events are to:**

- Provide training activities for young people undertaking restoration work to improve skills and knowledge, making a more sustainable Restoration Sector for the future.
- Work closely with the host organisation and provide volunteer assistance in key projects or objectives.
- Teach young persons the importance of volunteering and the importance of our industrial heritage.

## **Target Participants:**

The programme was aimed at families to gain valuable experience and to use skills on an existing project.

## **Activities Delivered:**

WRG Family Camps are a residential weekend volunteer opportunity for families to get out and help restore and maintain waterways across England. Each weekend introduces families to the world of waterway restoration through providing a safe and inclusive environment, led by our experienced volunteers.



## **Outcomes:**

The events' successes were due to our primary focus on providing families a worthwhile and enjoyable experience for parents, carers and children. Through this approach indirect benefits were achieved for the host groups, including publicity, fundraising, partnership working and a template that is used to organise youth events. While it may be too early to tell if any of the young volunteers who attended family camps will get involved in future volunteering, it's hoped that the introduction to canal restoration resonates with them into the future.

## **Safeguarding/Support/Supervision Measures:**

The events follow IWA's Safeguarding Policy with an appointed Safeguarding Officer. All attendees under the age of 18 attended with a parent or a guardian who was responsible for attendees under their care.





## Canal & River Trust Youth Panel for the Year of Green Action (2019)



For the 2019 Year of Green Action, the Canal & River Trust partnered with the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and the #IWill4nature campaign. The Year of Green Action was a year long campaign about connecting people, of all ages, from all walks of life and from all across the country with nature and showing how we can all take positive action.

## **Aim of Project:**

The wider project involved a partnership between 25 environment and youth sector organisations, including the Canal & River Trust. A focus of this partnership was to appoint young ambassadors to drive environmental action in their communities and encourage environmental volunteering such as litter picking, planting pollinator-friendly flowers or fundraising to maintain or enhance green spaces. As part of the campaign, having recognised the need for the voices of young people to be heard, the Canal & River Trust launched their first national youth panel.

## **Target Participants:**

Representing all six of our regions across England and Wales, the panel was made up of 16-24 year olds from a wide range of backgrounds, all with a shared interest in the environment.

## **Activities Delivered:**

The group helped to shape and lead campaigns, acted as ambassadors for green action at the Trust, and worked closely with teams across the country. They even had the opportunity to meet and lead a session with the council, trustees, chairs of the regional boards and members of the exec team – highlighting the role young people could and should play in protecting and promoting our canals, now and in the future. To ensure the group was as inclusive and representative as possible, the Trust took a flexible approach to engagement with some young people sharing ideas and feedback over the phone and via email, some attending face to face meetings and some leading practical sessions and workshops. Members were provided with a menu of events and opportunities and could choose the ones of most interest to them. The Trust created an online forum so the members could get to know each other and have their voices heard even if they weren't able to make meetings in person.



## Outcomes:

- A first step for the Trust to begin co-creating opportunities for young people to get involved and have their say at local, regional and national levels.
- Successfully engaged a group of passionate younger people with waterways and their importance to our environment, wellbeing and national heritage.

## Safeguarding/Support/Supervision Measures:

The Trust carried out all Youth Panel activities following our Mandatory Safeguarding Policy. You can find a copy of this policy in the resources section.

*“I hope to be able to make a difference in how our canals and rivers are perceived, especially by young people.”*

- Alex  
Youth Panel member

*“Young people’s opinions, although important, are underrepresented. The youth panel enables our voices to be heard, and hopefully encourages other young people to speak out as well.”*

- Youth Panel member

*“Young people from the youth panel have made a fantastic contribution at key events and meetings for the Trust. It has been really exciting to have young people ‘in the room’ when we have been having quite high-level or technical discussions to give their ideas and opinions. From talking to the young people involved they always felt included and listened to by colleagues and volunteers, and this made a big difference in making them feel comfortable. We were really conscious about getting the mood and environment right for young people to take part in meetings and workshops, and it was great to see how people from across the Trust embraced this.”*

**- James Long  
Urban Engagement Manager  
Canal & River Trust**

# HEALTH & SAFETY

There is no legal reason why young people under 18 can't volunteer with your organisation, provided the work is properly assessed and suitable controls are in place. However young people are more likely to be new to the canal restoration environment and could be facing unfamiliar risks. This means you should carefully consider what their role could and will involve. For example, there are some roles that would be unsuitable for young people such as lone working and operating heavy machinery. Whilst a young person is probably more tech savvy than many organisations, if the role involves social media you should make sure you have safeguarding measures in place, that they are well supported and know how to deal with any difficult questions.





## **Risk Assessments & Method Statements:**

If you are involving young people in your organisation you have a responsibility to ensure they are not exposed to risk due to lack of experience, being unaware of existing or potential risks and/ or lack of maturity. You must therefore carry out a risk assessment, assessing the activity, age and experience of their volunteers to help put appropriate supervision and plans in place to ensure everyone has a safe and enjoyable experience. You should include safeguarding explicitly in your risk assessment.

## **Insurance:**

Make sure you check your insurance before organising activities for young people. Some insurance cover does not automatically cover people under 16, so it is important to check there is no lower age limit in your policy.

## **Induction & Training:**

All volunteers should be given an induction and training regardless of age and experience. A good induction is vital and should clearly explain what they have to do/ what they can't do and any other essential information. You may need to tailor your standard induction for young people so that it is accessible for them and covers any additional requirements/ questions they may have.

It is also important to make sure young people are given the opportunity to ask questions at any time – sometimes peer pressure will mean they are afraid to say they don't understand so give them space to stop and ask. It is important to get the balance right between monitoring progress and allowing space to learn, but providing support throughout is essential, especially if a young person is starting out on their volunteering journey with you to prevent a situation where they could make a mistake and lose their confidence.

# SAFEGUARDING

Organisations should create safe environments in which young people can feel comfortable and secure whilst engaged in any activity. Creating a safeguarding policy is a good way to outline everyone's roles and responsibilities and sets standards of behaviours and is an essential document if you intend to work with young people. Example safeguarding policies from Canal & River Trust and the Inland Waterways Association can be found in the resources section. Remember safeguarding is for everyone – it's as much about safeguarding your existing volunteers and colleagues as it is about children and young people.



## **Do I need a Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) check?**

Your organisations safeguarding policy and guidance should outline who needs to have a DBS check. If you work regularly with young people you will be required to undertake a DBS check. The Inland Waterways Association can undertake free basic DBS checks for volunteers. If you or one of your volunteers requires a DBS check please contact [safeguarding@waterways.org.uk](mailto:safeguarding@waterways.org.uk). When working with partnership groups such as Scouts or Cubs, you should confirm their leaders have a valid DBS check for activities where they are supervising.

## **Do I need any additional training?**

Anyone working with young people should have read and understood the organisations safeguarding policy and any other supporting guidance such as a code of conduct, dealing with allegations, reporting a safeguarding concern or what to do if a young person goes missing.

## **Make sure you have the right level of supervision:**

Appropriate supervision ratios must be assessed in relation to the task and duration of the activity. When working in partnership with other organisations i.e. Scouts, the activity leader must clarify that they are responsible for the suitable numbers of supervising adults to take responsibility of their young people. The NSPCC recommends a series of ratios on their website, however you would need to assess ratios in relation to high risk activities.

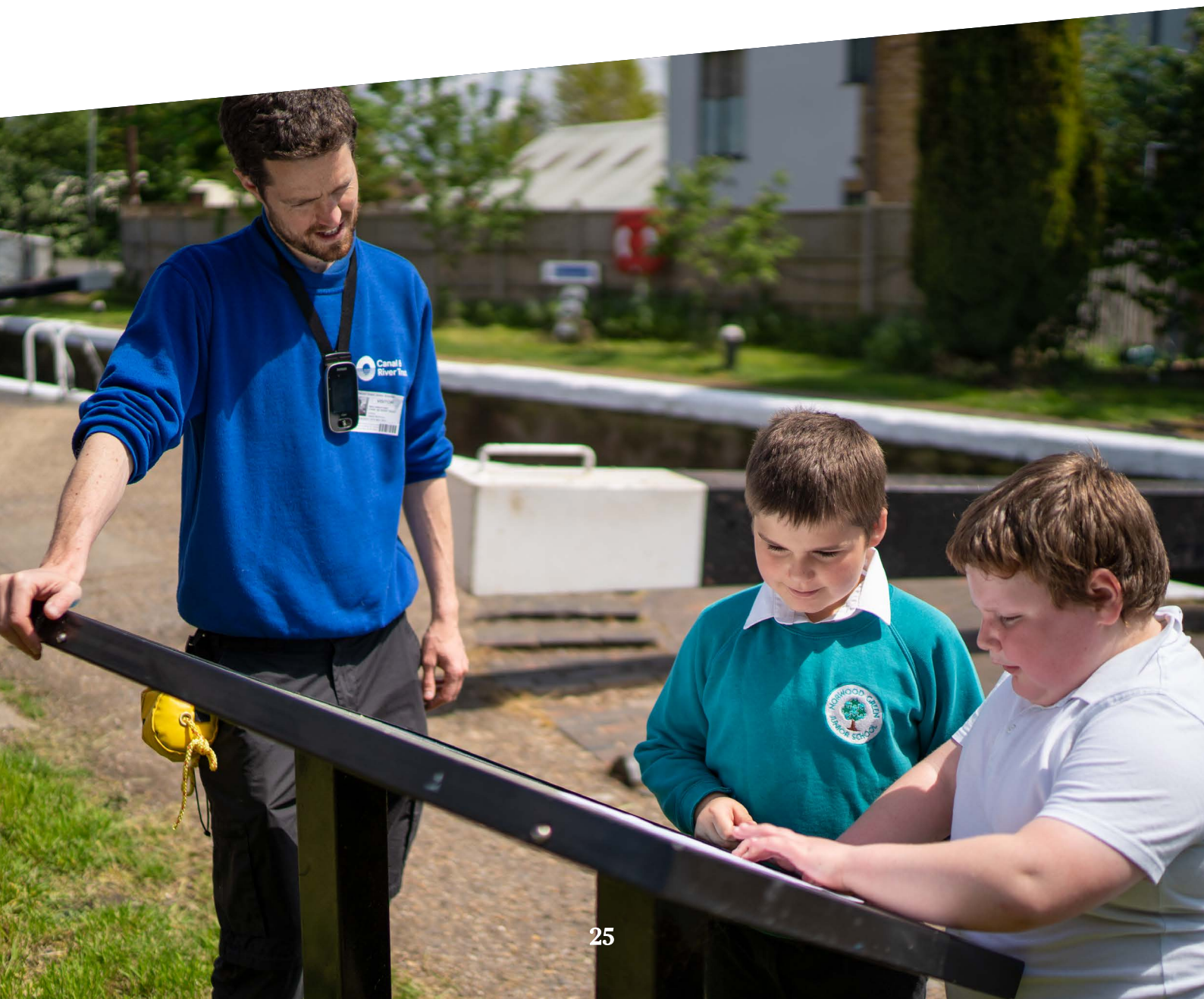
## **Taking photos of young people:**

Be sensitive about taking photos and films of activities. It is best practice to gain written consent from the participant and, if under 18, from their parent or guardian before taking any photos. Participants should also be made aware of the possible uses of such photos and where they may be featured or published. An example photography and filming consent form can be found in the resources section.

When partnering with a youth organisation to deliver an activity, it is important to collaborate closely with them to draw up health and safety procedures. They will likely have worked with other organisations previously and therefore will have vital experience in this area. They know their group and you know your work.



Be clear on who is responsible for what and whose policies and procedures should be followed so that everyone understands their role in terms of planning and delivering activities. For example, you may be responsible for writing risk assessments and method statements for the activity and providing practical instruction on the day, whilst the partner organisation takes responsibility for gaining parental consent for the group, supervising behaviour and providing pastoral care.





# PROMOTING YOUR OPPORTUNITY

Word of mouth is one of the biggest ways that young people get into volunteering. If you don't have young people already involved in your organisation then start making links with the key influencers of young people – such as youth leaders, parents and teachers. Combining this with traditional methods such as social media, posters and adverts in relevant local magazines will give you the widest reach.





### **The following top tips have been provided by Canal & River Trust:**

- **Use different methods:** “If you always do what you’ve always done, you’ll always get what you’ve always got.” Henry Ford. Social media is great, but it is not a golden bullet! Some methods suit some audiences better than others. There’s social media like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn. There are also free websites specifically advertising volunteering opportunities for young people. Why not also use local press and media? How can you make it interesting? Are there photo opportunities? Keep it short and sweet!
- **Get out there:** Freshers Fairs, libraries, community centres, cafes, volunteer centres and youth centres. There’s also local universities, colleges or schools with 6th forms. Why not contact departments and course tutors to promote your opportunity? Many have found their volunteer opportunities through their religious groups, clubs, friends, family or just independently. Extracurricular activities such as sports and music also result in high levels of volunteering.
- **Be creative, think outside of the box:** Create exciting volunteer titles. Identify what skills and abilities they need for the opportunity. What will they get out of it? How could it help them develop? Have open days. Offer taster sessions at different venues. Invite youth volunteers to recruitment events. Peer led delivery is one of the best ways to attract young people. Make it fun and interesting!
- **Application forms:** Ensure that the applications aren’t long and boring. Also, can young people apply in different ways such as electronically or by video? Do they cater for young people with learning differences and disabilities e.g. those with visual impairments?
- **Make good links:** Make the most of your organisation’s marketing and communications skills. Make sure your website is updated regularly with new content. Social media is also a good way to reach out to new volunteers and share information. Other volunteers can also act as great ambassadors so encourage them to share opportunities with their networks and on their own social accounts.

- **Engage the community:** Do you know the community groups in your areas? Who are the local contacts you already have? Think about how they might be able to help you spread the word. Make sure you connect with them and make the most of existing networks. Maybe even ask them to help you put posters up and share your opportunities online! They may have no idea about all the exciting opportunities you have to offer.
- **Be flexible:** If you offer different kinds of volunteering opportunities at various times, days and periods i.e. short term or long term, then you will attract different types of volunteers. There's been a huge rise in micro, remote and digital volunteering. These are convenient and easy ways to get involved as opportunities can often be done anytime, anywhere making them perfect for busy young people pushed for time. Also, for those who have mobility issues, disability or who are housebound they might find it suits, as they can do it somewhere that works for them. For example, a young person could spend 30 minutes taking part in a Citizen Science project, writing a blog post or joining in with a nature survey
- **Recognise their contribution:** Consider offering certificates, accreditations and awards or arranging a celebration event, BBQ or fun reward activity for young people. Like everyone else they love incentives like water bottles, hoodies, tote bags sweets and branded t-shirts. But this doesn't have to be about costly merchandising - don't forget the importance of saying thank you - showing appreciation and highlighting how the young person's efforts are making a positive difference to your organisation and their community can be a great motivator.
- **Promote how they will make a difference:** It's important that young people know that they're doing something that can make a difference, whether it's short or long term. It's a huge benefit for them to know that they're doing interesting things that can go on their UCAS forms/C.V. What opportunities, paths and jobs can it lead to? Is there room for progression and to use their strengths? Think about how they can benefit in terms of skills for life and work and making friends, as well as how your organisation can benefit and the positive impacts for nature and the environment.
- **Youth led, fun and social:** Having friends who volunteer regularly is a primary reason young people get involved. Young people also want to have fun, have new experiences and meet new people! Ensure that when you're recruiting this is emphasized and demonstrated.



# SUPPORTING & MENTORING YOUNG PEOPLE

Supporting and mentoring young volunteers is beneficial to all involved – building relationships and improving confidence. The following case studies from the Inland Waterways Association explain that mentoring, support and skills development are really important way of developing your youth engagement programme.





## Ty Banc Canal Group – Cardiff University



A volunteer led group conceived in 2018, Ty Banc Canal Group focused on making the Neath and Tennant Canal a space that everyone can access and enjoy. The Inland Waterways Association has been supporting the group since 2019 offering guidance and support. At the end of 2020 the group were awarded Welsh Government's Coronavirus Recovery Fund for Volunteering, to develop a 'New System' for Ty Banc Canal Group. Ty Banc Canal Group collaborated with the Welsh School of Architecture at Cardiff University proposing to develop a strategy for community partnership in voluntary sector with the Neath Canal Restoration as the catalyst.

## **Aim of Project:**

The aim was to recognise the value of creating partnerships to support and develop a strategy for a community partnership in the voluntary sector using the Neath Canal Restoration as the catalyst.

## **Target Participants:**

The programme was aimed at university students to gain valuable work experience and to use skills on an existing project.

## **Activities Delivered:**

The Group undertook an 8 week work-based live project training programme for 30 students. The students were placed into several different working groups with specific themes. The programme looked specifically at the volunteers restoring a section of the Neath Canal around Resolven with students focusing on many aspects of the restoration such as construction techniques, environmental consideration, health and safety, funding, community engagement, stakeholder support and volunteer involvement. At the end of the project they presented their findings and proposed solutions with both immediate and long-term benefits to the community throughout the canal restoration process.

## **Outcomes:**

At the end of the project each group presented their findings to the project partnership teams including the Neath & Tennant Canal Trust, Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council, Councillors, Resolven Community Participants, students and lecturers at Cardiff University and Inland Waterways Association. Together with the Operational Feasibility (viability) Report for Volunteer Led Canal Restoration, they will further inform decision makers to start being mindful of a holistic and sustainable approach.

The students' proposed the ideology of allowing communities to take ownership and participate in a canal restoration plan that connects all as a Neath Canal Community and be supportive of each other as a resilient community to fully embrace the spirit of the **Wellbeing for Future Generations Act**.



Going forwards the Ty Banc Canal Group will embark on summer work experience for volunteers to continue to develop the various projects started by the university students from inception to fruition for the Neath Canal Community Partnership.

This project highlighted the value of partnering with university students to support the aims of 'learn and share' of voluntary restoration know-how, whilst also providing valuable real life work experience for an ongoing construction programme.

### **Safeguarding/Support/Supervision Measures:**

Covered by the partner organisation (Cardiff University) students adhered to the relevant policies set out by the university when working alongside programme leaders. No students were directly supervised by members of the partnership.

*“Working with the Neath Canal Group on Community DIY over the past months, has been a unique opportunity to gain valuable insights into community projects at the early stages. Being able to engage with groups through debate and discussion not only has widened my knowledge of the multi-disciplinary nature of architecture but improved my personal communication skills. I am thankful for the experiences made and to initiatives like Community DIY that set out to for to empower communities over their public spaces.”*

**- Meylan Fernandez  
BSc/MArch Architecture**

## Waterway Legacy Leaders – Training and Mentorship



The Waterways Legacy Leaders programme provides training and mentoring to 15 candidates, who are interested in becoming involved as a WRG Canal Camp leaders or assistants. The programme provides candidates internal and external training worth up to £1000 to develop skills to improve confidence to lead WRG's Canal Camps.

*This programme is funded by  
Historic England's National  
Capacity Building fund*



Historic England

## **Aim of Project:**

To deliver a comprehensive programme of training to upskill new and existing volunteers to take on more responsibility in canal restoration in the future.

## **Target Participants:**

15 new or existing volunteers that lack experience to currently take the lead on canal restoration projects.

## **Activities Delivered:**

Each participant is offered up to £1000 of external training opportunities from recognised bodies to upskill them in areas they lack experience in, such as CITB SEATS, First Aid and Mental Health Awareness. Each participant is also allocated a WRG mentor to support them through the programme and offer on site practical advice. This is a WRG led project to utilise an existing and committed volunteer workforce to upskill new volunteers to support the next generation of restoration volunteers.

The programme is designed to be as flexible as possible to suit the time requirements for each participant, with each one getting a say in the timing of group events and what training they would like to undertake, that benefits both WRG and themselves. At the end of the programme each participant will be involved in leading or assisting on a weeklong canal camp in 2022.

## **Outcomes:**

This programme aims to put in place the foundations for a more permanent and clearly defined pathway for young and new waterway restoration leaders to follow. It aims to start addressing the issue of succession planning and will help the sector work towards a more sustainable workforce in the future.

Funding has even been set aside for a social mobility grant where individuals from lower income backgrounds can apply for a grant to secure further travel expenses and to support interactions with their mentor.



## **Safeguarding/Support/Supervision Measures:**

The programme follow's IWA's Safeguarding Policy, you can find a copy of this policy in the resources section.





# SAYING THANK YOU / GETTING FEEDBACK

Saying thank you is important to all volunteers regardless of age. Thank you letters, certificates of attendance, thank you days or even cake works well! This should be followed up after the event with a request for feedback. Understanding what worked well and what didn't will help you develop youth volunteering in the future and keep involvement moving in a direction that is mutually beneficial for both parties.



## Keep connected

Have a system in place, which allows you to keep in touch with young volunteers such as a specific mailing list or invite them to follow the organisation on social media. Let them know what is going on, keep them up to date with other events or when you might need one-off help. This approach will help you build longer term relationships.

## Telling the story

Whilst collecting feedback, it is a worthwhile time to consider documenting any youth engagement activities or events as a case study. These could be either event or individual person focused and will help you build up a collection of content suitable for a wide range of uses. Case studies can be used to support funding bids, tell stories across media platforms and as a tool for reflection and to assist your organisation in developing programmes further. It is also a great way to showcase work and engage with existing or potential partners.

Two case study templates, one event and one person focused, can be found in the resources section. These templates will help you collect key information and short, succinct facts that communicates why an event happened and the benefits young people received from it.

## GDPR & image consent

Please remember that GDPR will need to be adhered to like any other collection of personal data. Whenever anyone can be identified in the photos/films/stories you take/make/record you must handle and store their images, words, voice, and personal information in compliance with the Data Protection Act (DPA) and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

### This guidance applies to any:

- Photographs you take on any type of camera (including mobile phones) where anyone is identifiable.
- Moving pictures you take/make/record (including video recordings, video streaming, presentation recordings via Zoom etc.) where anyone is identifiable.
- Words or stories you capture/commission (in writing or as an audio recording) where anyone is identifiable.



You are responsible for getting each person in your photos/films/stories/audio to fill this in before you take their photo or record them on film/in writing/on audio. If you are taking photos or videos of children under the age of 18, you must get consent from their parent or guardian. A parent or guardian has a right to refuse to have a photo/film/story taken/made of their child. Two photography, film and consent form templates can be found in the resources section, one for under 18's and one for over 18's.

### **Top tips for retaining young people from Canal & River Trust :**

- All young people are different; get to know individual young volunteers and what they want from volunteering opportunities. Take time to review this on an ongoing basis as young people's aspirations may change over their time with you.
- Create tasks where young volunteers learn and develop new skills and think about opportunities for awards and accreditation. Volunteering helps boost employability and looks good on applications for future work and study; these are things that matter to young people.
- Give young volunteers opportunities to take the lead in projects and activities to build their confidence and leadership skills. Having a sense of ownership over a project or opportunity is a great motivator and helps keep people engaged.
- Talk about the difference volunteering with you can make; engage young volunteers with the benefits for the wider community and the environment, and get them enthusiastic about your group and work, so they can become ambassadors for you.
- Recognise and celebrate success and achievement; even if this just means saying 'well done'! Everyone loves freebies – think about appropriate rewards that will appeal to young people!
- Make volunteering fun! Give young people interesting and varied tasks that they will find rewarding. Create a positive environment, volunteering should be a social experience, make time in your programme for ice breakers and team building, so young people to get to know each other.
- Encourage young volunteers to think about their personal development

and future opportunities. Think about pathways for young people to progress into youth leadership roles and signpost young people to internal and external opportunities.

- Be understanding: young people may have other commitments away from volunteering with your group such as education or caring responsibilities. Be flexible to support young people.
- Share good news stories about young volunteers; this will raise your profile as an organisation that offers high quality volunteering experiences for young people.
- Give young volunteers supervision; make sure they can talk about any problems or questions about their volunteer role, reflect on success and challenges, and plan for their future.
- Be a role model for young people. Take time to build a rapport with young volunteers and create a volunteering environment where they feel valued, appreciated and supported to thrive.





We hope you have found this toolkit useful to help give you the confidence to start on your youth engagement journey.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to get in touch with IWA and Canal & River Trust restoration teams.

### **Resources are free to download here**

#### **Which includes:**

Safeguarding Policy Template and Example  
Risk Assessment Examples  
Induction example  
Photography, filming and interview consent form  
Case study template  
Example code of conduct (behaviours)  
Are you youth ready checklist  
Canal & River Trust Youth Volunteering Infographic

### **Links**

[IWA/Canal & River Trust Young Trustee Movement Webinar: Diversifying your Board](#)  
[Canal & River Trust STEM Online Hub](#)  
[UK Youth](#)  
[#iwill youth charter](#)

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