

Appendix 1

Community Roots Project Progress. June 2018 – March 2019

Introduction

Following the announcement that the City of Culture will be in Coventry and the identification by the Canal & River Trust that Coventry is a key strategic location, our Community Roots project has been implemented in the area to improve the canal environment and help it reach its full potential and work alongside the Task & Finish group.

We are now ending our first year of the project and a summary of the project and progress so far are below:

Project Overview

The project takes the form of three phases

Phase 1

- Identification of the communities living on and around the canal and any issues for both the community and Canal and River Trust concerning the canals in the project area are profiled.
- Key partners with wider community links who can be approached are identified and engaged.
- A series of enjoyable fun activities such as days out on the water, talks, community events, visits, walks and easy to achieve tasks that improve the canal are organised and further discussions and meetings can be held in order to prioritise actions for the remainder of the project.

Phase 2

- “Taster” activity days can be organised to give groups a flavour of the kind of activity that would help Canal and River Trust.
- Discussions and planning concerning other sympathetic enhancements to the canal environment are also carried out and planning begun.
- In addition, other groups might be developed to help with further engagement activities such as running their own events on the canal or helping Canal and River Trust plan and deliver events such as Heritage Week or environmental surveys or boating experiences for the wider public.
- Some groups may adopt sections of the canal.

Phase 3

- Canal adoption groups and other volunteer groups are introduced to existing waterway volunteer lead staff and decisions taken about those groups most likely to continue and those groups who will likely not continue after the end of the project.
- Waterway staff continue the logistical support and planning and running of volunteering activity by those groups which are sustainable.
- Further activity is developed by the groups themselves with help from waterway staff

None of these phases are cast in stone. The phasing can be flexible as some groups might prove not to be feasible and other groups may wish to become involved as the project develops. However by year three the bulk of the engagement work should have been done and a legacy developed that can be sustained for as long as possible by existing waterway volunteer lead staff.

Community Roots does not exist as a standalone entity but from the start the engagement officer and any other staff associated are embedded within the regional team. In this way the regional team can become familiar with both project staff and volunteers and the aim of the project.

Engagement

Over the past 9 months several groups and agencies have been engaged with either at events or giving presentations and talks or at meetings. These have ranged from Local Authority Depts, major events teams to local resident’s groups and faith groups. This activity will continue as more partners who can support the regeneration of Coventry canal are identified.

Appendix 1

Groups engaged to date.

- Coventry University Students and volunteering team
- The Peace House
- CVLife
- Coventry City Council, City of Sport team and City of Culture team, local Councillors Parks department, healthy lifestyles team, Culture Coventry, Visit Coventry and Tourism Business forum.
- NHS healthy lifestyles team
- Coventry Primary Schools
- The Hindu Shri Sidhi Vinyagar Devasthanam Temple.
- Swan Lane Wharf
- Mercia Canoe Club
- Coventry Canal Society
- Coventry Basin Society
- Valley Cruises Boating Business
- The Longford Active Citizens Group
- Residents at Hawkesberry Junction (Sutton stop)
- The Probus Society
- Muslim Community Association
- Residents of Longford
- Coventry Motorfest team
- Brink Arts Graffiti and Street Art Collective
- The Tin arts centre
- Local businesses in the Basin including the Latvian supermarket and Café
- Plastic patrol
- British Cycling
- British Canoeing
- Radford Residents Labour Group
- Riley Car Club
- The Ludic rooms
- The Good Gym Coventry

Engagement Activities to date

A number of activities have taken place in order to share plans and spread the message that the Canal and River Trust are focussing attention on improving the Coventry canal over the next 3 years. These have included activity to improve the canal and give potential volunteers a taste of the type of activity we can support. We have also held meetings with national and local partners who can help market the canal and its benefits to their clients and user groups.

- Presentations given to Radford labour Group, Probus, Coventry Basin Society, Shri Sidhi Vinyagar Devasthanam Temple, Coventry Basin Businesses. Coventry University
- Attendance at Coventry Motorfest, to promote the Canal as a venue
- Attendance at CV Business meeting regarding tourism
- Stall at Coventry University Volunteering Event
- Various meetings including British Cycling, Mercia Canoe Club, Residents group meetings,
- Canal trips for schools.
- Plastic Patrol Day
- Attendance at British Cycling meetings and British Canoeing.

Planned Canal and community engagement events.

Several larger events are planned to demonstrate to the public how the canal basin itself can become a destination both for users of the canal but also to the wider population.

- Drifters Open Day April 7th
- Schools week April 9th – 11th
- Possible stand at Godiva Festival July

Appendix 1

- Floating Market and Music festival in the Basin June 29th, 30th
- Stand at Let's Ride Coventry Sept 8th
- Heritage transport weekend in the canal basin September 13th-15th

Canal improvement activity to date.

Considerable effort has already begun by volunteer groups to improve the canal corridor itself. This is in its infancy, but already significant improvements have been recorded. We have also received some good feedback about improvements so far. Please see the following extract:

"I think I should write to tell you of the noticeable improvement of the general condition of the Canal between Swan Lane Wharf and Grendon, a real transformation and in a relatively short time. This trip was void of all the obvious problems of getting stuck, not once on either the outbound or return trips. On top of that, the Atherstone locks are much improved and above all the cutting back of encroaching vegetation has transformed the canal. It was marvellous and a great pleasure. Thank you, your team and Daniel and his volunteers, I don't think you would recognise the difference.

Improvements to date have included

- Hawksbury and Coventry Towpath Task force groups established. Working every two weeks on Access clean ups, litter picking, waterborne litter and canal bed clearance and towpath vegetation management. From Hawksbury Junction to Bridge number 5.
- Leicester Causeway cleaned up.
- Canal Basin Garden cleaned up and some planting.
- Canal Basin Public toilets closed off and cleaned
- Canal Basin paving and cobbles repaired.
- Two voids in the canal side towpath in the Basin repaired and filled.
- Coventry University Students working on litter picking and canal bed clearance at Bridge number 3. Potential to create canal adoption with this group in this location.
- Offside vegetation cleared widening the canal.
- Access cleared at Canal Basin and Drapers Fields

Canal Improvements planned over next few months

In the immediate future several further improvements are planned.

- Signage in Basin and at Hawksbury Junction replaced
- Banners advertising Canal and River Trust and Businesses in the Canal Basin to be installed on Lamp posts
- Towpath task force to continue access clean ups and begin work with other volunteer groups on offside litter clearance
- Dredging planned for Coventry Canal

Summary

We believe good progress has been made on engaging with the relevant agencies, partners and local communities. This effort is ongoing and new contacts are being made month by month.

Several volunteers have already begun working with us and significant improvements have already been achieved.

A programme of events to increase footfall to the basin and use of the canal corridor is well into its planning.

Further improvements will be made both to the environment and the built environment alongside the canal.

Our teams are working with partners to try and develop the basin as a destination.

Appendix 1

Canal and River Trust is focused on the basin and the 5.5 miles of canal corridor and all our local teams are involved in delivering improvement and creating a vibrant, well used and well maintained canal corridor for Coventry.

Nick Cleaver

Community Engagement Coordinator

March 2019