

Keeping our waterways clean and safe

Water pollution can have a devastating effect on wildlife, so protecting the region's rivers, streams and canals from harmful run-off is a job in which many of the region's farmers have an important role to play.

Custodian of 2,000 miles of canals and navigable rivers in England and Wales is the Canal & River Trust charity. In the North West it cares for such waterways as the Leeds & Liverpool Canal, River Weaver Navigation, the Lancaster Canal and the Rochdale, Ashton and Huddersfield Narrow canals in Greater Manchester.

Although few farmers will have one of these great waterways running across their land, many will have streams or brooks that feed into them, so ensuring that all fertiliser and manure is not harmful to humans or animals is incredibly important.

Britain's canal network was originally constructed more than two centuries ago to serve the Industrial Revolution. Today canals have been re-invented as an important leisure destination, providing amazing opportunities for walking, cycling, fishing, boating, canoeing and jogging.

As the water quality has improved, our waterways have also become havens for a vast array of wildlife from swans and herons to otters, water voles and fresh water fish.

To help farmers protect this important natural environment, the Government has published "*Rules for farmers and land managers to prevent water pollution*" (April 2018) <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/rules-for-farmers-and-land-managers-to-prevent-water-pollution>). This document contains information about applying fertiliser, storing or using manure and managing livestock. These rules are enforced by the Environment Agency, although the Canal & River Trust would also be involved if one of our waterways was adversely impacted.

An interesting development is the Government's new Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS), in which farmers and other land managers may be paid for delivering environmental improvements such as clean and plentiful water, thriving plants and wildlife, protection from environmental hazards and engagement with the environment.

The Trust is very keen to work with landowners along our network to improve water quality and develop new partnerships to bring wider environmental enhancements. To get in touch with our team of environmental scientists and ecologists, please email enquiries.northwest@canalrivertrust.org.uk.