

PRESS RELEASE

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CHESHIRE'S OVER 55s INVITED TO BEAT WINTER LOCKDOWN BLUES BY JOINING WATERWAYS 'WELLBEING AT HOME' PROGRAMME

Waterways and wellbeing charity, the Canal & River Trust is launching a new 12 week 'Wellbeing at Home' programme for Cheshire residents.

Starting in early February, the charity's Active Waterways Cheshire team invites the county's residents aged over 55 to join a free weekly one hour health and fitness session delivered direct into people's homes.



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The aim is to help participants beat the winter lockdown blues, improving their mental and physical health by joining in gentle exercise, mindfulness and relaxation activities, experience virtual canal and river walks, plus an opportunity to meet new people and learn more about the county's rich waterway heritage.

The online series builds on previous successful guided walking programmes organised around Northwich, Macclesfield, Chester, Nantwich and Ellesmere Port which helped to connect people over 55 to others in their community, explore their local area, get fit and make new friends.

Over 65% of those taking part thought the face-to-face sessions had encouraged them to become more active. Many discovered picturesque new local walks and a few have decided they would like to take their involvement further by volunteering with the Canal & River Trust.

Anika Neill, Active Waterways project manager with the Canal & River Trust, said: "We are thrilled with the success of earlier programmes and the difference they have made to so many people's lives. We recognise many older people have lost confidence in going out and about as a result of the coronavirus pandemic.

"Many of our participants are experiencing loneliness, having been forced to isolate from friends and family. The group activities have been designed to bring people under similar circumstances together.

"Sadly due to this current lockdown we can't get out onto our beautiful Cheshire canals and rivers at the moment, so our focus will be on experiencing virtual walks instead and then encouraging participants to discover outdoor walks on their own doorstep.

"Research shows us that life truly is better by water so we would encourage anyone who wants to improve their health and wellbeing to get in touch and join us on these weekly online wellbeing sessions."

Retired teacher Anne Hales took part in an Active Waterways programme a few months ago. Anne said: "Being new to the area, I joined the programme looking for something to help me explore the area. I'm a diabetic and overweight but needed to exercise for my physical health but I led a sedentary lifestyle after retiring.

"Taking part in this programme has enabled me to make friends with a group of like-minded walking companions from the local area. Getting out and about after Covid restrictions was also good for my mental health. It's helped me discover my local

waterways and I've now taken an active role in continuing the group walks beyond the programme, at Anderton Boat Lift."

Supported by £222,000 of National Lottery funding from Sport England, Active Waterways Cheshire is a key initiative within Sport England's plan 'Towards an Active Nation', and focuses on the county's many beautiful waterways – part of the 2,000 miles of canals and rivers cared for by the Trust.

Sport England research shows that inactivity among people over 55 is responsible for just as many deaths as smoking. In Cheshire and Warrington just over 40 % of the population (c.370,000 people) are over 55 and of these 53% (nearly 200,000) do less than two and a half hours of gentle exercise per week.

This latest online 'Wellbeing at Home' programme begins the week of 8 February 2021. Prebooking is essential by registering on the website: www.canalrivertrust.org.uk/activewaterways . For enquiries please call 07990 612700.

For more information or to get involved, please go the Canal & River Trust website www.canalrivertrust.org.uk/activewaterways or email the Active Waterways team on activewaterways@canalrivertrust.org.uk.

Ends

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.

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