

## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **‘STOP THE SPREAD OF HARMFUL WATERWAY PLANTS AND ANIMALS’ – CANAL CHARITY LAUNCHES NEW CAMPAIGN**

‘Please stop the spread of harmful waterway plants and animals’ – this is the plea from the Canal & River Trust charity as it launches a major new awareness campaign in support of National Invasive Species Week (24-30 May).

Non-native plants and animals can cause serious damage. They out-compete native wildlife, damage eco-systems and spread disease. They can also block waterways, forming a thick green carpet which restricts navigation, clogs up propellers and damages boats.

The Trust, a waterways and wellbeing charity which cares for 2,000 miles of waterways and 72 reservoirs, spends hundreds of thousands of pounds every year clearing away unwanted vegetation and managing these delicate eco systems.

To stop the spread, everyone who uses the waterways, either for work or leisure, is asked to follow DEFRA guidelines to ‘check, clean and dry’ all their equipment and personal clothing every time they move between different stretches of a canal, river or lake.

To help explain this important message, the Trust has produced three films aimed at giving detailed top tips to waterway workers, boatyards and marinas, as well as leisure users, such as boaters, rowers, paddle boarders, canoeists, anglers and walkers.

Canal & River Trust ecologist Tom King [insert regional ecologist] said: “The covid lockdown has resulted in many people discovering the delights of our waterways. However, with this use comes the extra challenge of making sure the problem of invasive species doesn’t become an even bigger problem.



“Plants like floating pennywort or curly waterweed grow so quickly and thickly – up to 20cm a day – they block the water. This makes it hard for powered boats, sailing boats and even paddle sports to move. Himalayan balsam, Japanese knotweed and giant hogweed can take over riverbanks in the summer and crowd out other plants, often dying back in the autumn, leaving riverbanks bare and exposed to erosion and flooding.

“Underwater, North American signal crayfish and small invertebrates, like freshwater shrimp, zebra mussels and quagga mussels, can cause enormous damage to local biodiversity. The mussels grow inside pipes and water-cooled engines, which then results in big costs and inconvenience to clear them out.

“Quagga mussels have even been found in an isolated Anglian Water reservoir in Lincolnshire. The nearest other known place with quagga mussels is London - over 140 miles away. They must have hitch-hiked on a person, their equipment, tools or machinery. Some species can survive for up to a week in damp equipment.

“Please come and enjoy our wonderful blue spaces, but do your bit to stop the spread of non-native plants and animals. Whether you’re a boater, angler, canoeist, paddle boarder or walker, please follow the three simple steps of ‘check, clean, dry’ every time you move between waterways.”

Find out more on the Canal & River Trust website about how you can stop the spread of invasive species:

<https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/specialist-teams/maintaining-our-waterways/vegetation-management/invasive-species-control>

There is also more information on the GB Non-Native Species Secretariat website, supported by DEFRA. <http://www.nonnativespecies.org>. #INNSweek.

## **ENDS**

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## **Notes to Editors**

The Canal & River Trust cares for and brings to life 2,000 miles of canals and river navigations 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](http://www.canalrivertrust.org.uk) @CanalRiverTrust

## **'CHECK, CLEAN, DRY' – TOP TIPS FOR WATERWAY USERS**

There are three simple steps to remember - Check, Clean, Dry. They should be done before you leave a waterway, even if you are moving to another spot on the same waterway, a number of miles away.

The first step is to CHECK any clothing, tools or equipment that have come into contact with the water, or even mud around water. If you find any non-native plant fragments or animals, remove them and leave them at the site. Ideally, bin them, but always make sure they can't get back into the water.

Second step is to CLEAN your clothing, tools or equipment. Ideally with hot water, but a good rinse with clean cold water will also dislodge bits of plants and young animals that you can't see. Use a bottle of fresh water if you have one handy, or wash things down with a hose. Ideally we don't want drips flowing back into the water you've just left, and definitely not into another waterbody. So try and do it on a surface where the water can drain into the ground.

The last step is to DRY everything completely - ideally in the sun, leaving no damp patches. This is obviously not possible with large boats. But anything on your boat that comes into contact with water, and can be removed and allowed to dry, should be. Don't forget about clothes as well, things like wet suits, waders and boots. Small invertebrates can live for days in damp folds in clothing and seeds can get stuck in the tread of muddy boots.

