

A green prescription for Python

The Chesterfield Canal Trust is delighted to announce that it has received a grant from the South Yorkshire and Bassetlaw Integrated Care System as part of its Green Prescribing programme.



The money has been awarded to buy life jackets so that the Trust can continue with its vegetation clearance and maintenance programme along the canal in the knowledge that its volunteers are safe.

Spending time in and connecting with nature is shown to improve people's mood, anxiety levels and physical health, and £400k national and local funding was made available to support local community organisations in Bassetlaw, Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham and Sheffield in improving people's mental and physical health through blue and green social prescribing.

For the last five years, the Chesterfield Canal Trust has used its work boat, Python, as the platform to help the Canal & River Trust to keep the canal safe and looking good for towpath users and boaters. Python is a venerable soul that was built in 1929. It was lovingly restored and refurbished by volunteers from the Trust. It is the ideal vessel for this type of work.

So far this autumn, 38 volunteers have joined in with the work, some coming on several occasions. Jobs undertaken have included litter picking, cutting back overhanging vegetation, tidying up the sides of locks that had become overgrown, clearing bywashes and pulling objects out of the canal.

Python boat manager, Dave Warsop, said: "We love the fantastic variety of people who volunteer to come and help on Python. They are of all ages, races and genders. Some are already very familiar with the canal; others are seeing it for the first time. The common factor is that invariably they leave tired but happy, full of tea & cake and promising to return."

Professor Des Breen, Medical Director for the South Yorkshire and Bassetlaw Integrated Care System, said: "Medicine is not always the best way to improve mental and physical health – green social prescribing supports people to engage in nature-based activities, connecting with the world around them, support groups and members of their community and has been shown to help people with a range of mental and physical health concerns."

Cathy Slater, Head of Development at the Sheffield Wildlife Trust, said: "Spending time outside in nature is good for all of us and we're delighted that these grants will help more people access activities to connect them to nature and help improve their health and wellbeing through green social prescribing."

If you would like to be involved with Python's activities, please email python@chesterfield-canal-trust.org.uk