



Volunteers keep the canal ship shape

The Chesterfield Canal is looking very tidy this autumn thanks to dozens of volunteers helping to cut back overgrown vegetation. The programme is being organised by the Chesterfield Canal Trust (CCT) working in partnership with the Canal & River Trust (C&RT).

By the end of the programme, the whole of the eastern end of the canal will have been covered – a total of 31 miles, which is owned by C&RT.

The volunteers have used the Chesterfield Canal Trust's 89 year old workboat, *Python*, to reach overhanging branches on the off bank.

The first sessions took place in September and they will run until early December.

Last year, the two Trusts combined for a similar programme, which ran on 17 days. This year, *Python* will be out for 31 days.

Most of the volunteers are members of one of the two Trusts, but a few are members of neither but want to do their bit for a canal that they love. *Python* is always skippered by an experienced crew of CCT members.

All the required kit, including personal protection equipment, has been provided by C&RT. Last year, all the vegetation was cut up and put into huge builders' bags, unloaded at an agreed site and then collected and disposed of by C&RT. This year, C&RT provided a hopper for *Python* to tow with a wood chipper stowed in its hold. They also provided chipper training for key team members, so that everything could be disposed of much more easily in an environmentally sound manner on site.

Interestingly, some volunteers have come from local businesses which see this work as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility. This is an area of volunteering that the Chesterfield Canal Trust will be developing in the coming months across several of its activities.

Jan Warsop, who looks after *Python* for CCT and has coordinated the programme, said: "The arrangement we have with the hopper and chipper is making the vegetation cutting process much more efficient; volunteers are clearing far more than was managed last year. The team is amazing and I have had full confidence in their ability to get the job done in a safe and efficient manner. The volunteer numbers are incredible. The communities along the eastern section of the canal are clearly responding well to seeing some positive CCT activity on their canal."



Martin Carney, C&RT Site Supervisor (Volunteering), said: "The response from volunteers has been fantastic, everyone has enjoyed the experience and feels their contribution is valued. I cannot thank your teams enough for having faith in what we wanted to achieve, and it couldn't have happened without the volunteers. Please pass on my thanks to everyone that has been involved. Hopefully the success of this programme will encourage many to volunteer in the future."