



**Canal &
River Trust**

Making life better by water

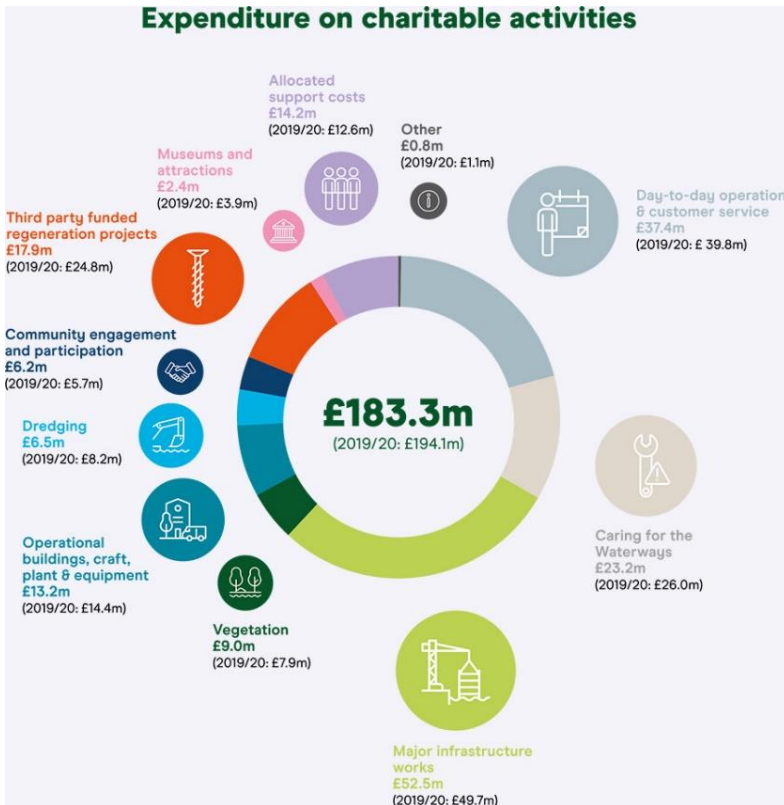
Canal and River Trust Rushcliffe Borough Council

Grantham Canal Contract Agreement

January 2022

Covering April 2021 – March 2022

Introduction to the Canal and River Trust



The Canal and River Trust was formed in 2012 in the largest ever transfer of public assets to the voluntary sector. The purpose of the Trust is to protect, manage and improve the nation's canals and river navigations for the millions who enjoy them. We look after and bring to life 2,000 miles of waterways and thousands of listed structures, with over 8 million people in England and Wales living within a few minutes' walk of our network. For this reason, we are uniquely placed to bring communities together and offer health and wellbeing opportunities that are both free to access and on the doorstep.

Looking after such a large and historic network is costly – in the financial year 2020 to 2021 we spent around £183.3 Million on charitable activities. Whilst overall spend on charitable activities decreased year-on-year, underlying expenditure on core maintenance, repairs and infrastructure works continued to grow with over half of this total spent on asset maintenance, major works, and day to day operations.

The Trust in the East Midlands

In the East Midlands we are responsible for 475km of waterways, which are split roughly 50/50 between canals and river navigations. There are around 3,300 licensed boats in the region at any given time, and we receive 61 million visits to our waterways and towpaths annually.

2021 Background

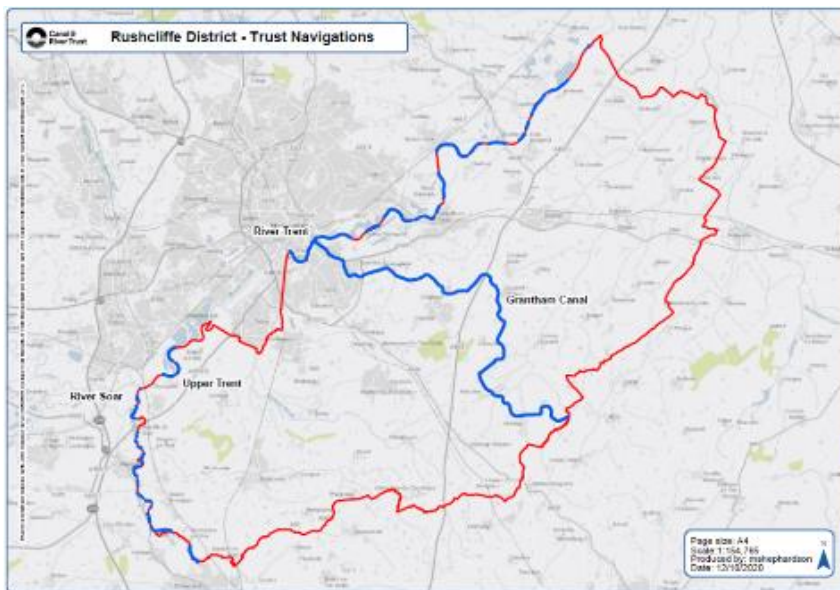
2021 has again been an extraordinary year for the Canal and River Trust and the East Midlands region. We have worked steadily to restart many of the activities brought to a halt by the restrictions put in place earlier in the year and have developed new protocols and ways of working safely. Many of our volunteers are now back in their roles and are able to continue making their important contribution safely. During the period of restrictions starting on 5th January 2021 volunteers who were conducting essential tasks were

able to continue volunteering if they wished. We were able to fully resume volunteering working in accordance with the newly developed safety protocols in the spring of 2021, and saw no new restrictions placed upon volunteering throughout 2021 except for the cancellation of indoor face to face volunteering during December 2021.

Our winter programme of maintenance work is now underway, and we are confident we will be able to deliver on our objectives and strategic priorities in 2022, which include planned notifications such as towpath repairs in Gamston and repairs to Culverts 39 and 42 at end of March.

Rushcliffe Borough

The Canal and River Trust are responsible for the following navigations within the Rushcliffe Borough.



- 1) River Trent
- 2) Upper Trent
- 3) Grantham Canal
- 4) River Soar

Core Work Within Rushcliffe Borough

The Trust delivers core planned and reactive maintenance work along our navigations within Rushcliffe Borough throughout the year. Larger planned maintenance requiring navigation closures (such as lock gate replacement) is usually carried out during the winter months to minimise disruption. Within the East Midlands we spend approx. £2 million on repairs and maintenance of locks, bridges, towpaths, fences, and banks annually. A further £1.3 million is spent on vegetation work, emptying bins, clearing fly tipping, and maintaining our buildings. We carry out a significant amount of this work within Rushcliffe Borough.

Vegetation Work

A large amount of the ongoing maintenance within Rushcliffe Borough is vegetation work. This type of maintenance is vital in order to keep our towpaths and navigations safe and accessible for all. The Trust delivers most of its vegetation work through our mainframe contractors. The work covers grass cutting, arboricultural works, aquatic weed management and cleaning services. A new national contract is about to be issued from April 2022 which will deliver national cost savings for the Trust whilst retaining local knowledge in the ability to deliver contracted work.

The Trust undertake towpath grass cutting, covering 54km of towpath within the Rushcliffe Borough, along with a further 3,000m² of grass cutting at picnic areas at Gamston Lock 2, Cropwell and Hickling Basin nine times per year.

The table below details the frequency of cuts, which is being changed from six to five from April 2022.

Month	April	May	June	July	August	September to November
Current 6 cut regime	Cut	Cut	Cut	Cut	Cut	Full width cut starts
Future 5 cut regime	Cut	Cut	Cut	Cut	Option to start full width cut early, add in addition proactive cut dependant on growing conditions. August is unpredictable regarding growing conditions	

The table below shows the range of specifications which may be used. MR2B and MR3B cover most of the canal in Rushcliffe. MR1 is used at the few specific locations at Gamston, Cropwell and Hickling.

Grass Specification	Description	Purpose
MR1	Grass mown at 50mm to create a neat even finish	For use at all Locks & Landing, Formal Moorings or other honeypot sites which require a short well manicured finish.
MR2A	Grass mown at 100mm to water's edge but leaving a rear fringe along a bound surfaced towpath.	For use when the front edge needs removing; either topography to allow sightlines for boaters, either side of bridges, when creating informal moorings, or if the fringe vegetation needs to be managed e.g. excessively tall growth, promote low growing wildflowers.
MR2B	Grass mown at 100mm but leaving a front and rear fringe along a bound surface towpath.	Use to create a habitat fringe along both sides of the towpath but ensuring that a min 1.5m wide path is created for towpath users. Maximum towpath side fringe width 1m.
MR3A	Grass mown at 100mm to water's edge but leaving a rear fringe along an unbound or grass surfaced towpath.	For use when the front edge needs removing; either topography to allow sightlines for boaters, either side of bridges, when creating informal moorings, or if the fringe vegetation needs to be managed e.g. excessively tall growth, promote low growing wildflowers.
MR3B	Grass mown at 100mm but leaving a front and rear fringe along an unbound or grass surfaced towpath.	Use to create a habitat fringe along both sides of the towpath but ensuring that a 1.5m wide path is created for towpath users. Maximum towpath side fringe width 1m.

Mowing Regime MR2B: Front Fringe, Bound Towpath Surfaces

Towpaths

- The purpose of this specification is to create a habitat fringe, however, the priority is still to maintain a 1.5m wide walking area and prevent vegetation encroaching into this walking area.
- For towpaths with a width of 1.5m to 1.6m wide, prioritise leaving the boundary verge over the waterside verge to maintain a suitable walking area.
- For towpaths wider than 1.6m leave a waterside verge and boundary verge either side of the walking area.
- The Trust is trying to achieve a towpath waterside verge fringe with a width of 1m, however, this is not always possible, especially on wide towpaths.
- Where the waterside verge fringe is greater than 1m, the towpath cut width will be increased to create the maximum 1m waterside verge fringe, which is in addition to the 1.5m wide walking area.
- Mow at a constant height of 100mm.
- All grass around benches, picnic tables, signposts, fences, gates, barriers, mile posts, marker posts, bollards, sluice paddles, towpath side assets and other furniture must be cut at constant height of 100 mm, 2m in each direction around the object or to the boundary edge.



Mowing Regime MR3B: Front Fringe, Unbound/Grass Surfaces

Towpaths

- The purpose of this specification is to create a habitat fringe, however, the priority is still to maintain a 1.5m wide walking area and prevent vegetation encroaching into this walking area.
- Mow at a constant height of 100mm a central walking area of 1.5m width, centred on the desire line
- For towpaths with a width of 1.5m to 1.6m wide, prioritise leaving the boundary verge over the waterside verge.
- For towpaths wider than 1.6m leave a waterside verge and boundary verge either side of the walking area.
- The Trust is trying to achieve a towpath waterside verge fringe with a width of 1m, however, this is not always possible, especially on wide towpaths.
- Where the waterside verge fringe is greater than 1m, the towpath cut width will be increased to create the maximum 1m waterside verge fringe, which is in addition to the 1.5m wide walking area.
- All grass around benches, picnic tables, signposts, fences, gates, barriers, mile posts, marker posts, bollards, sluice paddles, towpath side assets and other furniture must be cut at constant height of 100 mm, 2m in each direction around the object or to the boundary edge.



We also undertake hedge maintenance once per year during the winter period, this covers approx. 22km of hedgerow within Rushcliffe Borough.

Additional reactive work includes tree works such as clearance of windblown trees, high priority tree works identified from the bi-annual survey for public safety and high priority notification works (structural issues, repairs etc). We also carry out aquatic weed removal mechanically, to maintain clear open water channels for biodiversity benefit, undertaken when resources allow. If found, terrestrial invasive plants (Giant Hogweed and Japanese Knotweed) are sprayed or injected by specialist contractors. In the case of aquatic invasives – water fern (*azolla*) has been managed using the azolla weevil as biological control.

Grantham Canal

The Grantham Canal from Lock 1, Trent Lock to Smite Aqueduct sits within the Rushcliffe Borough. The items below outline the maintenance responsibilities of the Canal and River Trust, alone and working alongside Rushcliffe Borough Council as established in the agreement signed 4th July 2003. This agreement expires in 2024 and its current value is approx. £40k annually.

Below shows the specific works undertaken by Canal and River Trust during 2021 and the plans for 2022.

Schedule 5 – Maintenance Works to be undertaken by the Trust

1) *The foundations of the Towing Path*

The condition of the towpath along the Grantham Canal is inspected every two months by Canal and River Trust length inspectors. Any structural issues identified by these inspections are assessed for their severity and repairs are scheduled based on this assessment.

Our East Midlands operations team also investigate any concerns raised by members of the public and either complete the necessary repairs themselves or refer more significant issues to our engineering team for assessment.

We are satisfied that the foundations of the Grantham Canal towpath remain in safe and usable condition and that future issues will be identified quickly.

2) *Such waterway walls as may separate the Towing Path from the navigation.*

As with the above, the waterway walls along the Grantham Canal are inspected every two months and any issues are prioritised for repairs as required.

3) *The hedgerow to the rear of the Towing Path.*

The Canal and River Trust spends approximately £100,000 on vegetation maintenance work along the Grantham Canal each year, with £34,100 of this amount being spent on grass cutting, hedge cutting and feeder maintenance within Rushcliffe. We cut approximately 22km of hedgerow within Rushcliffe Borough each year. This included the hedgerow running to the rear of the towpath. The annual hedge cut for the Grantham Canal takes place between October and March to minimise the disruption to nesting birds.

Any specific issues with the hedgerow reported to us by members of the public are investigated by the East Midlands operations team, with any necessary action or repairs being scheduled alongside other priorities. We are satisfied that the hedgerow running to the rear of the Grantham Canal towpath is maintained to a high standard, with the annual hedge cut ensuring the hedgerow is neat and does not obstruct towpath users.

4) *Fencing to the canal offside between Hoe Hill Swing Bridge & Cropwell Roving Bridge.*

The offside fencing in this location is difficult to inspect from the towpath, especially due to the presence of offside vegetation. However visual inspections have not shown any significant damage to the fence and

adjacent landowners have not reported any damage. Any issues reported by landowners, or the public would be investigated, and repairs scheduled as appropriate. The picture below shows the offside fence in good condition upstream of Bridge 22, Roving Bridge.



Schedule 7 – Maintenance Works to be undertaken jointly by the Council and the Trust.

1. *Cotgrave Skinners Lock Access Road*

A Contractor was commissioned to improve the towpath around Skinners Lock Access Road in Cotgrave



2. *Lady Bay Access points*

During the summer of 2021, the Trust delivered improvements to the access points in Lady Bay with support from Friends of Lady Bay



3. *Gamston Footbridge*



Between Gamston footbridge 6b and lock 3 there are three significant areas of multiple tree root lift damage to the towpath surface, to be repaired by contractors working on behalf of the Trust – delivery by end of March 22.

Other core and reactive maintenance work

The Trust clears vegetation from our structures along the Grantham Canal annually. This consists of clearing vegetation from 31 Bridges, 25 Culverts and 2 Aqueducts. The Trust also conducts hard surface spraying twice per annum throughout the growing season.

We undertake one visit per year to ensure Cotgrave feeder is clear of reeds, using an excavator. We also conduct hand removal of vegetation at the Smite feeder once per year.

While the annual hedge trimming (outlined above) ensures that the towpath is accessible, we have also undertaken work to improve their long-term condition through hedgelaying. In November, training in this craft was provided to Trust volunteers, Grantham Canal Society and Friends of Cotgrave Country Park. This is continuing through the winter with approx. 20m were laid by January 2022.



Hickling Hut

The main structural restoration of the former Lengthsman's Hut in Hickling has been completed, and the structure was formally opened in September 2020.

The restoration project was undertaken by both Trust employees and apprentices, partner volunteers and members of the local community.

As we come out of restrictions this hut can be used as a community resource and could be a visitor attraction for the Hickling basin.

We are working with local volunteers and the Hickling Parish Council to create a community adoption group to work alongside us in completing the restoration work and caring for the hut into the future.

A video celebrating the project is available on Canal and River Trust website



<https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/news-and-views/news/historic-workers-hut-on-the-grantham-canal-brought-back-to-life>

The Trust has been engaging with Hickling Parish Council and Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust on the proposal for designating the canal within the Hickling Parish boundary as a Local Nature Reserve.

Community Engagement, Wellbeing, Education and Carbon Reduction

Throughout 2021 we have worked hard to engage with communities along the Grantham Canal. We have focussed particularly on water management issues in Kinoulton, Hickling and the Lady Bay area. Amongst concerns from local communities about some water shortages during the summer months we have identified some minor bank repairs that are necessary to minimise leakage and will be progressing these works in the coming months. We have spent time communicating the findings to local residents, as well as providing communities with information on hydrology and water management. Leaks at Culvert 13 have been repaired in October 2021 and repairs will be made to Culverts 39 and 42 early spring 2022.

Working in Partnership

Across our entire Network we work with nearly 400 voluntary and community groups each year, groups who are independent of us and separate to our volunteer teams. These groups add a great deal to the waterways and over half the volunteering on Trust land is undertaken by groups working in partnership with us. We call these our Partner Groups. We welcome these partnerships as they deliver both their aims and the Trust's, achieving more together and both bringing different facets to the relationship. The range is vast, from Scout groups to private companies, from canal focuses societies to national disability support charities, from local residents' groups to local authorities. We support our partner groups by providing safety management, working together to plan activities, providing site information to the partner group participants, and finally providing agreed levels of supervision and support for the activities undertaken by the partner group.

A local paddle group in Lady Bay volunteered to collect fly tipping from the canal.



Within the Rushcliffe Borough, the Canal and River Trust support a number of these partner groups, including Tiny Talkers Day Nursery and Friends and the Friends of Lady Bay who have both adopted a stretch of the Grantham Canal. Tiny Talkers Day Nursery and Friends brings together children from the Day Nursery and residents from Lark Hill retirement village to care for a small stretch of the Grantham Canal and to improve the look and feel of the canal side for the local community. The Friends of Lady Bay is a local resident's group from the Lady Bay area who have adopted a longer stretch of the Grantham Canal and are committed to improving the canal for the community. Their work includes vegetation management, ensuring the water is able to flow through the navigation, general improvements to the towpath and a number of other improvements. The Friends of Cotgrave Country Park is working in partnership with the Trust to undertake hedge laying activities along the Grantham Canal. Hedgelaying is a country skill that has been practised for centuries. By laying a hedge you not only create a living fence, but you also help to encourage new growth, making it an excellent way of regenerating an old, overgrown hedge without replacing it. The Friends of Cotgrave Country Park is supporting the Trust to ensure the hedges that border the canal are presented in the best possible condition, whilst encouraging new growth and providing safe habitation for wildlife.

In Kinoulton, Parkside Angling Club has adopted a stretch of the Grantham Canal. This adoption is in partnership with the fisheries department and ensures that they have a section for the angling club to fish. Parkside Angling Club also ensure the area around their adoption is kept in an excellent condition so that it can be enjoyed by everyone in the local community.

We also support the Grantham Canal Society who, whilst based primarily in Woolsthorpe in Belvoir, have a number of their Grantham Canal Society Rangers volunteering along the Grantham Canal in Rushcliffe. The Grantham Canal Society Rangers seek to develop a wide sense of community involvement and ownership of the canal, their Rangers engage in conversation with canal users informing them of any upcoming events, listen to any concerns and provide information. They also report any issues along the canal, initiate contacts with the local community and generally act as a friendly face on the canal.

Volunteer lock keepers support the Trust and our boating customers at all our locks along the River Trent, including Holme Pierrepont, Stoke Woods, Gunthorpe and Hazleford. Our volunteer lock keepers welcome and assist all visitors to the sites they volunteer their time at, they assist boaters at locks and engage with members of the public. They also undertake light maintenance tasks, encourage water conservation and act as an ambassador for the Trust whilst promoting the wellbeing benefits of spending time by water. During 2021 over 8,500 hours were gifted by volunteers to support volunteer lock keeping at these sites along the River Trent.

The team have met with Ian Wilson from Holme Pierrepont to discuss walks from there and surrounding areas. Running course with a local run leader have been booked to start in the Rushcliffe area. These will both start in April 2022. Another programme to start in April is a cycling initiative in partnership with Ridewise, giving people the confidence to ride safely along towpaths and green spaces. To support cyclists, we are improving towpaths and following an audit have improved signage. We have a national programme supporting cyclist and walkers called Share the Space which will connect with and support these plans.

We will be starting a wellbeing group at Hazelford Lock, a beautiful island just outside of the Rushcliffe boundary. A group of men from surrounding areas, including Rushcliffe, will be brought over in a minibus to help to keep the vegetation under control and do maintenance jobs on the island. This will be set up by the wellbeing coordinator and supported by a volunteer who has supported the Trust on similar wellbeing projects in other parts of the region.

We have made good connections with Rushcliffe link workers who have a lead and eight link workers, they have been referring people from GP practices in Gamston, Cotgrave and Cropwell Bishop to the activities we have delivered in the city which have included paddle activities, narrowboat experiences and walks. We will support individuals referred to any social prescribing programme who wish to engage with volunteering. We will discuss with potentially interested individuals their own requirements and aspirations and look to provide them with the most appropriate volunteering opportunity.

We continue to work closely with schools in Rushcliffe through our Learning and Skills Coordinator:

- Pierrepont Gamston Primary School - Four water safety session (120 pupils involved) followed by four walks along the Grantham canal investigating its history, how it was built and why and how the Trust manages the canal today.
- A water safety assembly was delivered to the whole school, 310 pupils.
- Jesse Gray Primary school – two water safety session followed by a trip to Trent Lock where the school participated in wellbeing canoeing and pond dipping session – 60 pupils in total.
- Supporting a Duke of Edinburgh student from South Notts Academy to complete their volunteering section of the award with tackling the plastic challenge by litter picking along the Grantham Canal, the River Trent, and Nottingham Beeston Canal.

- The Trust have supported the Holme Pierrepont Canoe Club and Nottingham Kayak Club in their water-based litter picks along the River Trent, Grantham Canal and Nottingham Beeston Canal over the past six months.
- Evening sessions of canoeing from Holme Pierrepont for a group from West Bridgford that had additional needs.

Canal and River Trust Carbon reduction.

We are promoting the ways in which our network contributes to the climate challenge and carbon reduction. As 'doorstep destinations' for many people in Rushcliffe and nearby areas, use of our canal and river towpaths for active travel, supports lower carbon lifestyles.

<https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/enjoy-the-waterways/canal-and-river-wildlife/nine-ways-canals-can-fight-climate-change>

Within Rushcliffe, the opportunity for renewable energy generation has been taken through the hydropower scheme at Holme Lock (shown below during and after construction)- and three further schemes have planning approval along the River Trent.



Summary

The Trust has had an annual maintenance agreement with Rushcliffe Borough Council for £40,000 since 2003. The current agreement expires in 2024 and this report aims to show the value for money that Rushcliffe Borough Council gain from this agreement and the significant added value that the Trust delivers across Rushcliffe.

The Trust undertakes £100,000 of vegetation management per annum in Rushcliffe with £34,100 spent directly on Grantham Canal through 54km of towpath grass cutting, 3,000m² grass cutting at picnic areas and 22km of hedgerow cutting. We continue to manage assets on the waterways across Rushcliffe inspecting bi-monthly: 31 Bridges, 25 Culverts and 2 Aqueducts. Vegetation is cleared annually, and hard surfaces are sprayed twice per annum.

In 2021 the Trust delivered improvements to the towpath around Skinners Lock in Cotgrave through a contractor and access point in Lady Bay with support from Friends of Lady Bay. In 2022 repairs will be made to tree root damaged towpaths in Gamston.

Volunteering has continued to flourish in 2021 despite restrictions with 8,500 hours contributed across Rushcliffe. This includes adoptions, lock keeping, maintenance, repairing leaks at Culverts and laying 20m of new hedges. The Trust continues to work closely in partnership across Rushcliffe with the following community groups and organisations:

- Grantham Canal society
- Friend of Cotgrave County Park
- Hickling Parish Council
- Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust
- Tiny Talkers Day Nursery
- Friends Of Lady Bay
- Parkside Angling Club
- Holme Pierrepont Canoe Club
- Nottingham Kayak Club

Our education team has directly engaged with 490 pupils from Rushcliffe Primary schools where we have provided water safety training.

Wellbeing projects continue to be a vital part of the work we are doing locally with the Trust developing social prescribing with GP practices in Gamston, Cotgrave and Cropwell Bishop. Local people have benefitted from organised walks along the waterway, paddle activities and narrow boat experiences. We are planning to increase our wellbeing offer in 2022 and will be delivering new walks and running courses at Holme Pierrepont and developing a partnership with Ridewise to support cyclists across Rushcliffe.

The Trust hopes to continue and further the strategic partnership with Rushcliffe and in the light of the current agreement coming to an end in the next few years, the Trust would welcome the opportunity to discuss how the ongoing relationship can be continued beyond 2024