



MOVEMENT IN BLUE SPACES CASE STUDIES

Supporting Active Partnerships to work together with clubs & strategic organisations in place to grow movement in water for everyone.

CLEAN WATER
SPORTS ALLIANCE



Active
Partnerships



↑ 🌱 ❤️
PLANS WITH PURPOSE

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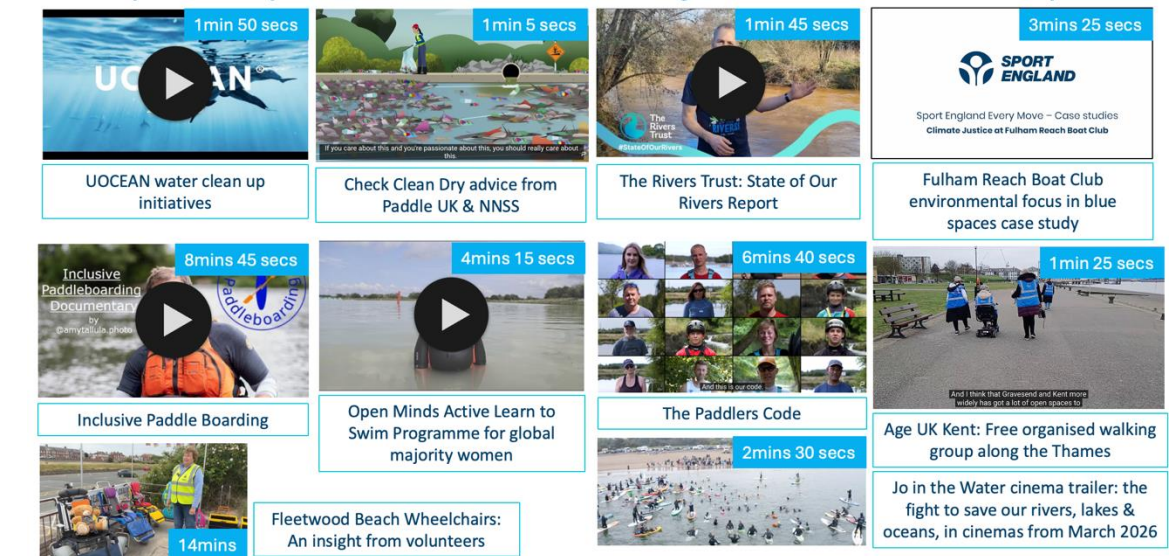
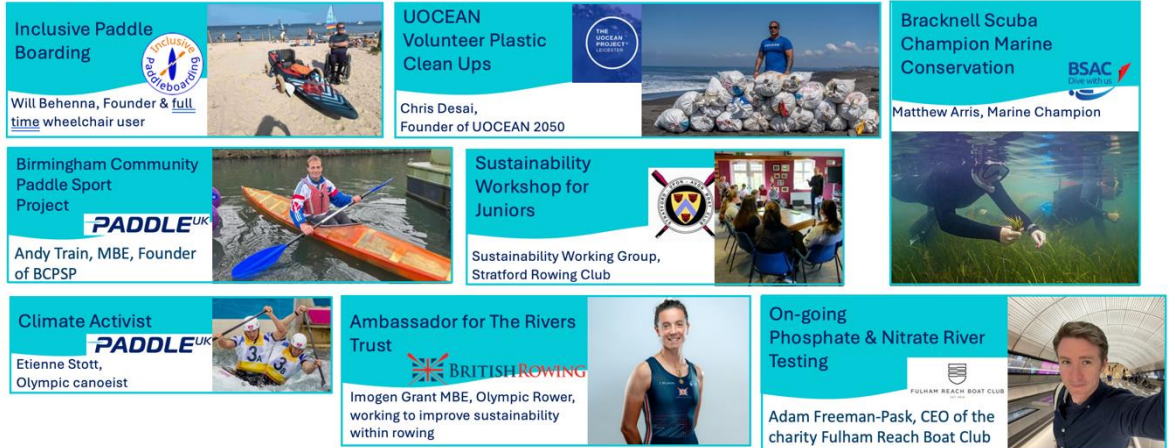
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See more.



CASE STUDY LIBRARY 32

The Big Paddle Clean Up



Beyond Swim Venue Accreditation



Check, Clean, Dry Programme



The Paddlers Code



Water Safety Programme



Learn to Swim Programme for Global Majority Women



The Wave Project: Surf Therapy for Young People



Inclusive Paddle Boarding



FindOar Blade Matching Service



Fleetwood Beach Wheelchairs



Broxbourne Rowing Club: Floating Pennywort Volunteer Clean Up Day



Northwich Rowing Club: Grant to remove invasive species



Birmingham Community Paddle Sport Project



Holiday Activity Food (HAF) Bell Boat Programme



Stratford Upon Avon Boat Club Sustainability Workshop for Juniors



British Sub-Aqua Clubs Invasive Weeds Volunteering



Fulham Reach Boat Club On-going Phosphate & Nitrate River Testing



British Rowing & River Action Call for Testing



Swimmable Cities Alliance



iDive Marine Champions Coastal Clean Up



Wetwheels Foundation: Barrier-free Boating



Bracknell Scuba Champion Marine Conservation



UOcean Volunteer Plastic Clean Ups



Urban Blue Space Walking



Blue Health Guide for Urban Planners & Designers



Activity Alliance Access For All Guide



Canal & River Trust Accessibility Map



Ramblers Walking on Access Land Guide, including coastal margins



Fulham Reach Boat Club Monthly River Clean Ups



FRBC Rowing Programmes Supporting Under-Represented Groups

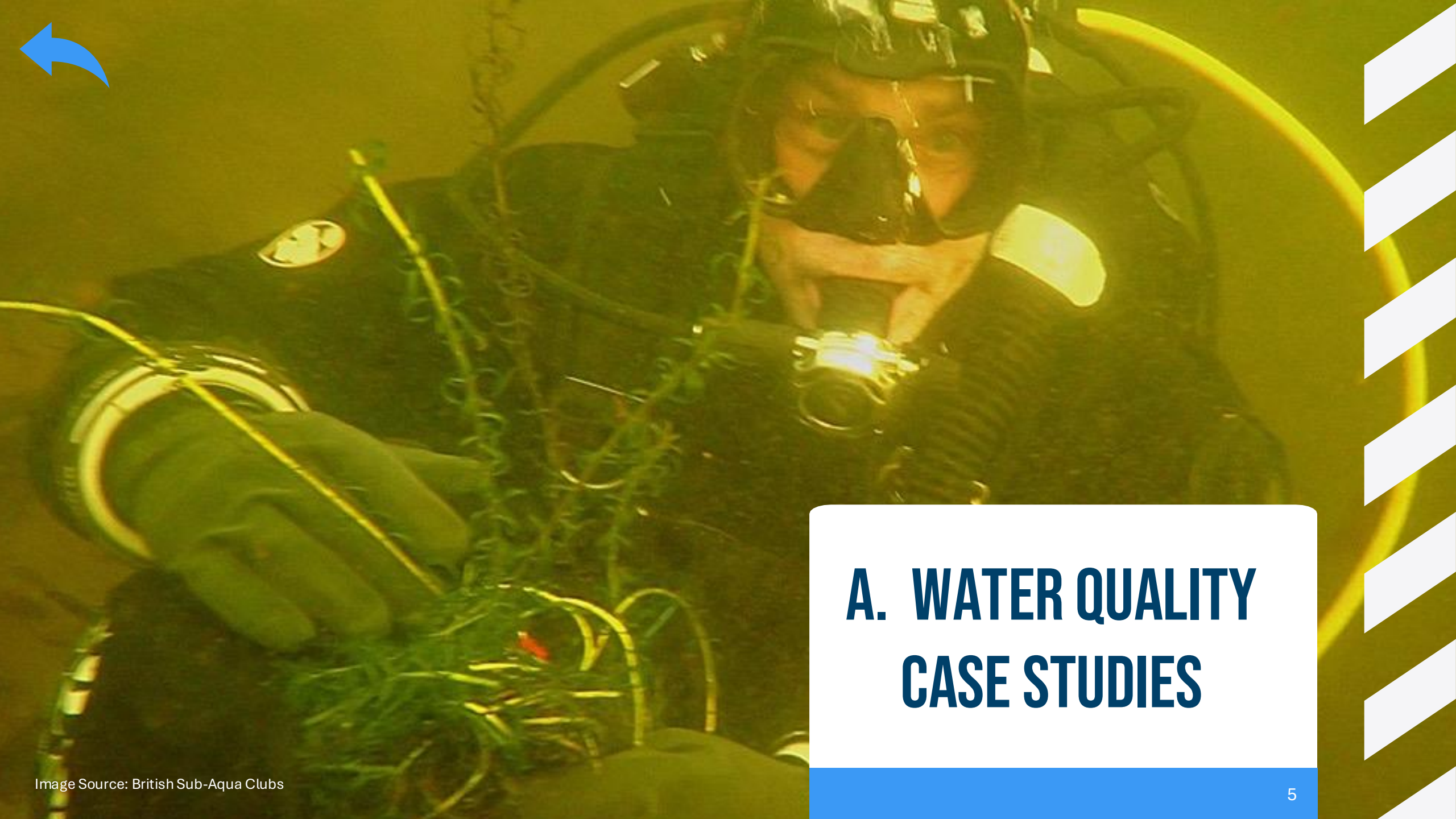


Age UK & Explore Kent: Free River Walking Group



University of Liverpool Collaboration on the well-being potential of urban blue space





A. WATER QUALITY CASE STUDIES



Protecting from
& removing
invasive species

Check, Clean,
Dry Programme



BSAC Clubs
Invasive Weeds
Volunteering



Floating Pennywort
Volunteer
Clean Up day



Grant to remove invasive
species



Sustainability
Workshop for
Juniors



12 WATER QUALITY CASE STUDIES



Volunteer plastic
clean ups

The Big
Paddle
Clean Up



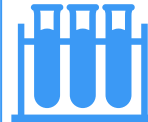
UOCEAN
Volunteer Plastic
Clean Ups



iDive Marine Champions
Coastal Clean
Up



Fulham Reach Boat Club
Monthly River
Clean Ups



Volunteer water
quality testing

On-going
Phosphate & Nitrate River
Testing



British Rowing & River
Action Call for Testing



Nature restoration
& regeneration

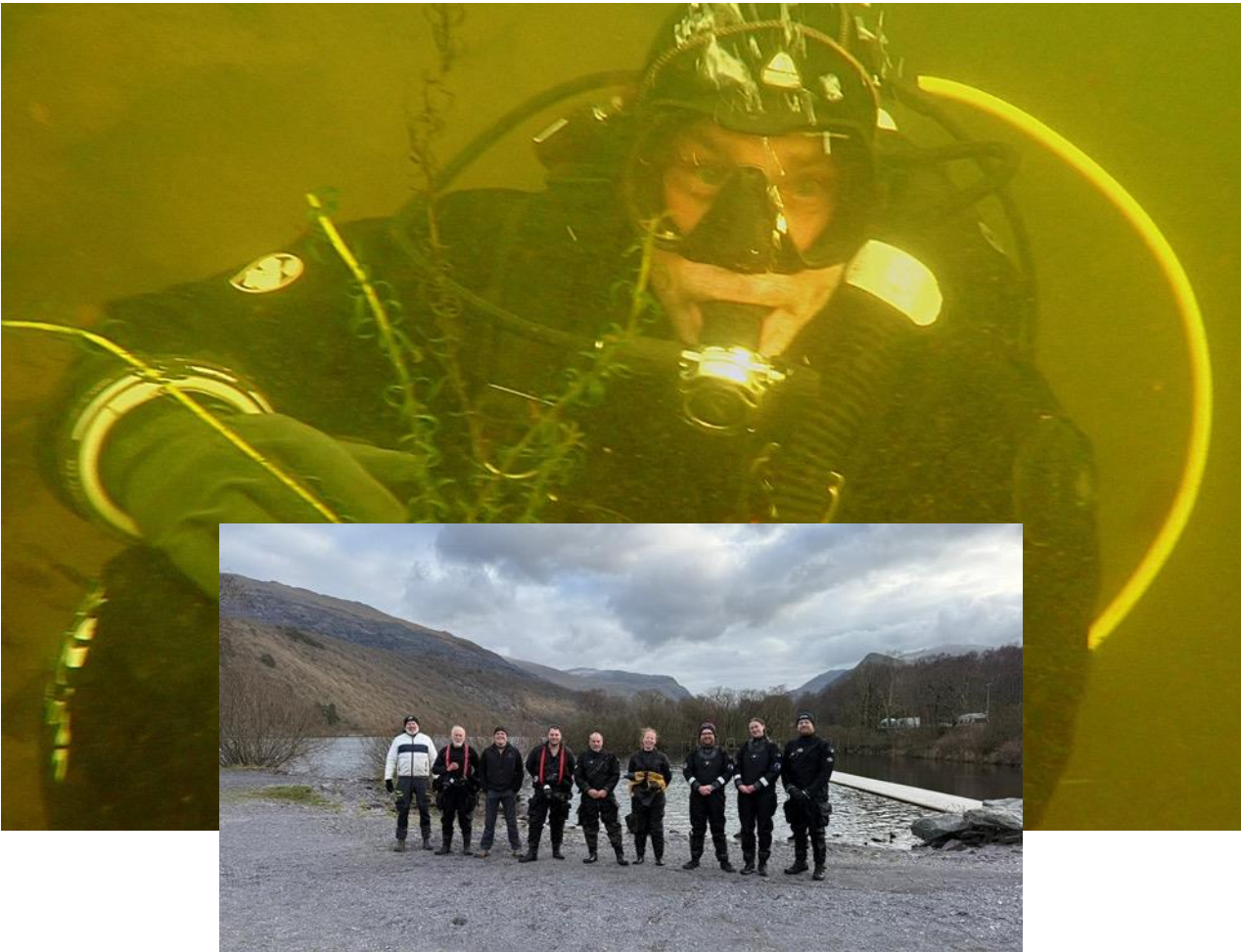
Bracknell Scuba
Champion
Marine Conservation





PROTECTING FROM & REMOVING INVASIVE SPECIES

BRITISH SUB-AQUA CLUB: VOLUNTEERS HELP REMOVE INVASIVE WEEDS IN SNOWDONIA



- 30+ divers from **7 British Sub-Aqua Clubs** came together in Dec 2025 to clear invasive weed from a lake in **Snowdonia** (Eryri) National Park
- Following a smaller **pilot** earlier in the year, BSAC divers came together for a **full day's clearing**, removing **50 bags** of invasive weed
- The focus of the clean-up was on two specific invasive species, **Lagarosiphon major (curly waterweed)** and **Elodea nuttallii (Nuttall's waterweed)**. Both plants can grow aggressively, threatening the delicate balance of the lake's natural ecosystem.
- The conservation work will now continue throughout the rest of the winter, targeting key areas of the lake, with plans to also **lay jute matting** in order to help prevent regrowth.
- The pilots have shown that diver-led removal of invasive species is possible, effective, and makes a tangible contribution to protecting Llyn Padarn's biodiversity.
- Working together to **combine diving expertise with local knowledge** to benefit both the environment and the community who enjoy the lake.

Find out more: <https://www.bsac.com/news-and-blog/bsac-volunteers-help-remove-invasive-weeds-in-snowdonia/>

BROXBOURNE ROWING CLUB

FLOATING PENNYWORT CLEAN UP DAY



WHY ARE WE HERE?

- To introduce you to Floating Pennywort
- To help you recognise the problem
- To let you know what you can do about it
- To provide you with resources you can use
- To show you where to go if you see it
- Questions at the end

WHAT YOU CAN DO ABOUT IT



- Make one of your club events a '**Floating Pennywort Clean Up Day**'
- **Start at the top of the river**, working from upstream to downstream to save recontamination
- Find a safe spot to work from with **permission from landowners** to deposit the weed on side of bank
- **Safety brief** all the participants and do a **risk assessment**
- Launch craft from side of bank with volunteers breaking free the FP on the water by "**Cut and Float**" method to transport to side bank volunteers who pull up weed in small sections
- Always **wash and clean equipment** at the end of the session
- **Raise awareness** of the problem in your club with available resources & the Check, Clean, Dry message to stop further invasion & spreading
- **Inspect** your river regularly

Find out more: https://www.britishrowing.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/British-Rowing-Floating-Pennywort-Webinar_Jan-2025.pdf

CHECK CLEAN DRY CAMPAIGN



Check

Check your equipment, boat, and clothing after leaving the water for mud, aquatic animals or plant material. Remove anything you find and leave it at the site.



Clean

Clean everything thoroughly as soon as you can, paying attention to areas that are damp or hard to access. Use hot water if possible.



Dry

Dry everything for as long as you can before using elsewhere as some invasive plants and animals can survive for over two weeks in damp conditions.

Check Clean Dry Campaign

- Run by the **GB Non-Native Species Secretariat (NSS)**
- Invasive species can be small and hard to spot so are easily spread on damp equipment and clothing. You can help protect the environment and activities you enjoy by keeping your kit free of invasive plants and animals, whenever you leave the water remember to: **Check Clean Dry**
- **Detailed guidance is available** for Anglers, Boaters & Rowers, Paddlers & SUPs, Field Workers, Clubs & Managers of Waterbodies & Event Organisers
- Posters, leaflets, stickers & video resources available free online
- Opportunities to join **local action groups**
- Look out for & record Invasive Non-Native Species online via **iRecord**
- **Free on-line training** for identification, recording & biosecurity

Find out more:

<https://www.nonnativespecies.org/what-can-i-do/check-clean-dry>



NORTHWICH ROWING CLUB

GRANT TO REMOVE INVASIVE SPECIES



- **British Rowing Thriving Waters Scheme** offering grants in 2025 for
 - Water testing
 - Litter clean-ups
 - Invasive species management/removal
 - Installation of water butts and buckets to assist with boat cleaning
- As part of this initiative, Northwich Rowing Club was given a **£350 grant** for a **Floating Pennywort Clear Up Kit**
- **Northwich River Management Team** that go out weekly to manage the riverbank and pennywort
- They have been working from a launch and from the bank to cut back overhanging branches and brambles - the clearer the water's edge is, the less the pennywort will have to cling on to.

Find out more: <https://www.britishrowing.org/2025/09/british-rowing-launches-second-year-of-the-thriving-waters-scheme-supported-by-delphis-eco/>

STRATFORD ROWING CLUB: SUSTAINABILITY WORKSHOP FOR JUNIORS



- 15 athletes from **U13 to U17 squads** volunteered to take part
- Organised by the new **Club sustainability working group**
- **Workshopping** questions together like “What does sustainability mean to you?” and “What are the consequences if we don’t act sustainably?”
- Two **short films** were shown from the international and national rowing bodies
- Severn Trent River Rangers **demonstrated water testing for ammonia** – toxic to fish & other aquatic life
- In the final section, the athletes **discussed** how their club could be more sustainable and suggested **ideas** for a more sustainable regatta.
- **Suggestions to reduce the event’s carbon footprint** included: encouraging lift shares, not purchasing single use plastic, sourcing local and homemade food, choosing to support local businesses, separating food waste collection, improving signage around waste and recycling, choosing recycled glass for prizes and selling reusable cups
- To wrap up the session, a representative from British Rowing, talked about the **importance of using communications** to create dialogue with members & the wider community on the environment to build momentum for change

Harriet Froom, J17 athlete said, “The workshop helped to explain how things can’t just happen straight away. Even though we may be a small Club, just doing our bit for the river or local environment, even though it may seem as if it has little impact, it does add up to something bigger when a lot of places do similar things.”

Find out more: <https://www.stratford-rowing.co.uk/news/stratford-boat-club-takes-steps-to-becoming-a-more-sustainable-club-fit-for-the-future/>





2. VOLUNTEER PLASTIC CLEAN UPS

FULHAM REACH BOAT CLUB: MONTHLY RIVER CLEAN UPS



FULHAM REACH BOAT CLUB
EST. 2014



- **327 people** participated and **1,416kg of waste** collected in river clean-ups so far
- The Club organises **regular river clean ups** for the **local community** and as a **corporate volunteering activity**.
- They have found it to have multiple benefits: as **an accessible entry point to engage new people with the river**, and an important task as the Club is located at the river bench where rubbish naturally accumulates
- **Fulham Reach Boat Club** is a charity – and a Sport for Good Centre of Excellence – that uses rowing to tackle social inequalities while caring for the Thames environment
- Their approach proves that **environmental action and community development** go hand in hand
- The charity's mission is simple: **transform lives by making rowing accessible and inclusive for everyone, especially people from underserved backgrounds**
- Their motto captures their philosophy perfectly: **"The health of our space, that's the place for our health."**
- As a rowing club based on the Thames, **environmental stewardship** was a clear responsibility. Rowing is inseparable from the natural environment, and the charity feels a duty to act where the sport intersects with climate and environmental challenges.
- They identified an injustice: there was **poor access to nature in their local area, with some residents not even aware the river – and opportunities to enjoy it – existed nearby**.
- This unequal access reflects wider environmental and social inequalities, presenting both a challenge and an opportunity – to engage the local community with their environment while supporting health and wellbeing.



"Engaging with the environment is often an easier sell than taking up a sport," the FRBC team explain. "Once engaged, confidence grows and people start to engage in the sport and get healthier from it."

Find out more: <https://www.sportengland.org/guidance-and-support/facilities-and-planning/sustainability/fulham-reach-boat-club>

IDIVE MARINE CHAMPIONS COASTAL CLEAN UP - SUFFOLK



- Ipswich-based iDive recently nominated a **Marine Champion** for the Club: Glenn King
- One of his first actions was to co-ordinate a **shoreline litter pick** on the Suffolk coast
- **8 iDive members** took to the beach at near Felixstowe to litter pick
- The team reported that the litter collected from the beach was 'almost exclusively **plastic**'
- The team **borrowed their litter pickers & hoops** from East Suffolk Council Litter Heroes

Find out more: <https://www.bsac.com/news-and-blog/idive-marine-champions-clean-up-the-suffolk-coastline/>

THE BIG PADDLE CLEAN UP



- The Big Paddle Cleanup 2026 will take place between **23 May and 7 June**
- In 2025, individuals, clubs, delivery partners and community groups:
 - 4,228 **volunteers**
 - 2,129 **sacks of rubbish from canals & rivers**
 - 8,130 hours spent on our precious **waterways** across the country
- Sponsored by **Decathlon** with £5 reward vouchers

Find out more: <https://paddleuk.org.uk/big-paddle-cleanup/>

UOCEAN: VOLUNTEER PLASTIC CLEAN UPS OF BLUE SPACES



Initiatives in the UK

 **Kayak & Boat Clean-Ups** – Volunteers take to the water, using kayaks and boats to remove plastic pollution from the UK's canals and rivers, protecting wildlife and reducing urban waste.

 **Inner-City Plastic Clean-Ups** – Tackling plastic pollution in urban areas, ensuring streets, canals, and rivers are free from plastic waste. We focus on engaging marginalised communities to create both environmental and social change.

 **School Art Projects Using Ocean Plastics** – Partnering with schools to transform recovered plastics into **eco-art**, educating children about sustainability while fostering creativity and environmental awareness.

 **Engaging Disadvantaged & Marginalised Communities** – Providing opportunities for those most affected by environmental and social issues to **join conservation efforts, gain skills, and make a tangible impact.**

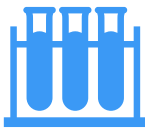
- UOCEAN UK is fighting plastic pollution in Britain's **rivers, canals, and urban waterways**, to help ensure **cleaner cities and healthier ecosystems**
- They aim to **empower disadvantaged & marginalised communities** to take ownership of their environment, creating social impact while tackling plastic waste
- Through **kayak and boat clean-ups**, inner-city conservation projects, and school initiatives, they are turning plastic waste into something meaningful, from **public awareness** to stunning pieces of eco-art

Find out more: <https://uocean.org/uk-site-uocean-leicester>

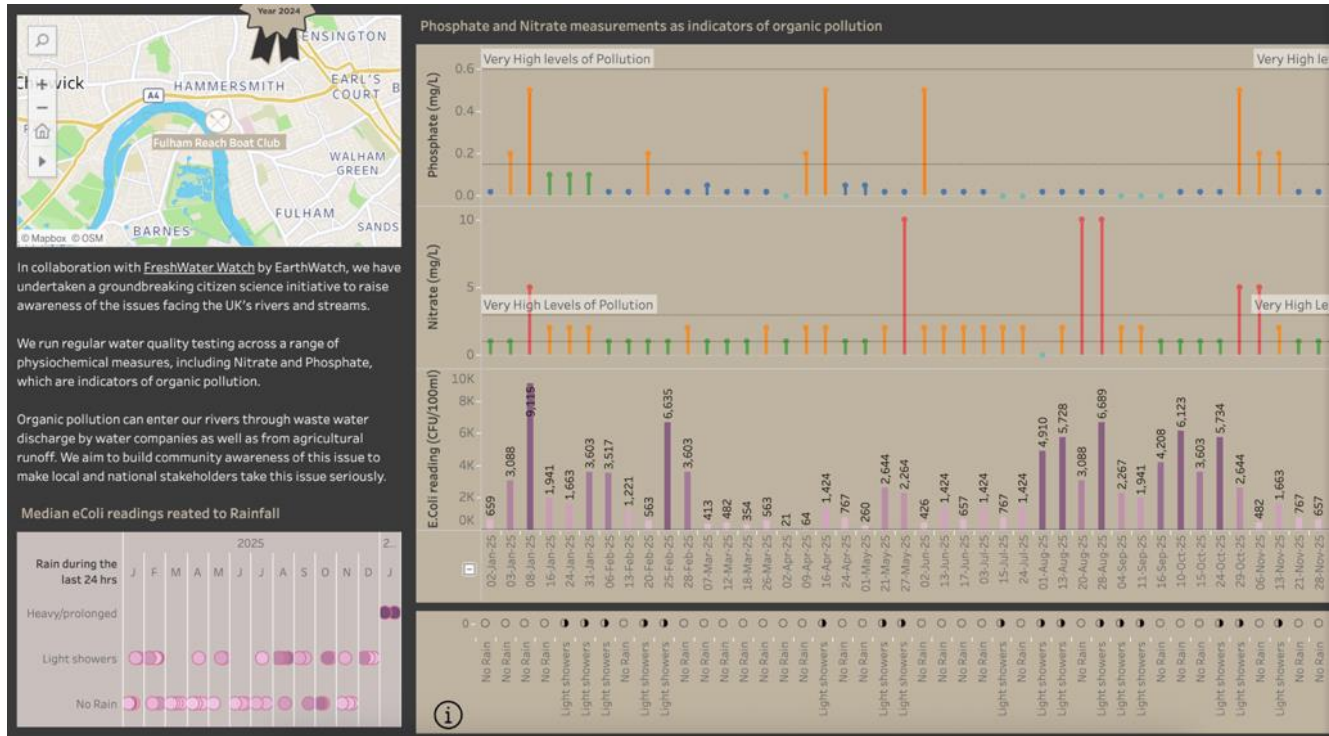


3. VOLUNTEER WATER QUALITY TESTING

FULHAM REACH BOAT CLUB: ON-GOING PHOSPHATE & NITRATE TESTING



FULHAM REACH BOAT CLUB
EST. 2014



- Fulham Reach Boat Club partners with **Fresh Water Watch & River Action UK** to conduct innovative **citizen science water quality testing** for nitrate, phosphate and e.coli levels.
- The club openly shares findings from their regular testing on their **environmental impact dashboard** to raise awareness of the dire state of the UK's rivers & attracting global attention in the run up to the 2024 Boat Race.
- CEO Adam Freeman Pask** says, "We have engaged over **230 people** in testing and have supported several rowing clubs such as Putney Town RC and Eton Excelsior RC **to foster a deeper understanding of the importance of water quality and the need for collective action.**"

Find out more:
https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/fulham.reach.boat.club/viz/FRBCFreshWaterWatch_17116616886720/eColi

BRITISH ROWING: ON-GOING PHOSPHATE & NITRATE TESTING

Testing for Phosphates & Nitrates

How rowing clubs can help monitor nutrients

Citizen science can be an important way to help us understand the health of our rivers and identify pollution sources. The data you gather is most useful when the testing takes place regularly, and the information gathered is shared with a wider group. This way, your data can become part of a nationwide picture of river water quality, and feed in to wider conservation and monitoring plans.



To set your club up to deliver ongoing phosphate and nitrate (P/N) testing, and to access guidance, support and testing equipment, consider joining Earthwatch's FreshWater Watch (freshwaterwatch.org). The membership typically costs £400 and includes access to their nationwide database, an online portal and app for recording your results, support from their in-house scientists and a testing kit for checking nutrient levels and turbidity. If you are interested in occasional testing, join the Great UK WaterBlitz (earthwatch.org.uk/greatukwaterblitz/) to receive free N/P phosphate tests (events run every Spring and Autumn).

Why is P/N testing important?

Phosphate and nitrate are found in agricultural fertiliser, animal waste, and sewage. Fertiliser run-off and leaking sewage pipes mean that dangerously high nutrient levels are an increasing occurrence across British rivers and waterways.

Identifying the presence of high phosphate and nitrate levels is an essential start to preventing their catastrophic effects on rivers, allowing us to locate sources of pollution.



Blue Green Algae. Credit: Jeff Hunt Nottinghamshire County Rowing Association

Phosphates and nitrates are important nutrients in rivers, used by plants and wildlife to build proteins and photosynthesise. However, in large amounts, these nutrients have detrimental effects on water quality and ecosystem health.

High nutrient levels can lead to vast algal blooms. These algal blooms produce toxins, as well as use up the available oxygen and block out sunlight to choke the other flora and fauna in the river – a process known as eutrophication. Consequently, these nutrients can be a threat to entire river ecosystems.



water@earthwatch.org.uk - info@riveraction.com - info@theriverstrust.org



- British Rowing has partnered with **River Action, the Rivers Trust and Aquascope** to empower rowers to conduct **extensive water quality testing** & calling for more **Citizen Science testing**
- British Rowing recommend joining **Earthwatch's Fresh Water Watch** on an on-going basis if funds are available to support
- Membership of FreshWaterWatch.org costs around **£400**
- This enables access to a **nationwide database**, an **online portal** and app for recording your results, support from their **in-house scientists** and a **testing kit** for checking nutrient levels and turbidity
- Testing is more impactful when data is collected **regularly** and the information gathered is shared with a wider group
- **Fertiliser run-off and leaking sewage** pipes mean that dangerously high levels of **phosphates & nitrates** are an increasing occurrence across British rivers and waterways
- High nutrient levels can lead to vast **algal blooms**, producing **toxins**, as well as using up the available oxygen and blocking out sunlight to choke the other flora and fauna in the river – ultimately causing **eutrophication**
- If you are interested in occasional testing, join the **Great UK WaterBlitz** (earthwatch.org.uk/greatukwaterblitz/) to receive free Nitrates & Phosphates tests (events run every Spring and Autumn)

Find out more: <https://www.britishrowing.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/British-Rowing-Phosphate-and-Nitrate-Water-Testing-Guide.pdf>





4. NATURE RESTORATION & REGENERATION

BRACKNELL SCUBA CHAMPION MARINE CONSERVATION



- During the summer of 2025, Bracknell Sub Aqua Club members took part in two **marine conservation projects** along the south coast.
- Led by Bracknell's **Marine Champion**, Matthew Arris
- 11 members joined a **seagrass seed collection day** in Hampshire run by **Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust**
- Volunteers were briefed on **identifying and collecting seed pods**
- Working in pairs with wetsuits and snorkels, hundreds of seeds were gathered & taken to Portsmouth University marine labs for processing. The seeds will be replanted in spring 2026 **to help restore this vital habitat.**



Find out more: <https://www.bsac.com/news-and-blog/bracknell-bsac-champions-citizen-science-with-two-marine/>



B. ACCESS CASE STUDIES



Guidance & safety

Water Safety Programme



Learn to Swim Programme for Global Majority Women



Beyond Swim venue accreditation



The Paddlers Code



Activity Alliance Access For All Guide



Canal & River Trust Accessibility Map



Ramblers Walking on Access Land Guide, including coastal margins





Inclusion first blue spaces

Surf Therapy for Young People



Wetwheels Foundation: Barrier-free Boating



Inclusive Paddle Boarding



Fleetwood Beach Wheelchairs



Birmingham Community Paddle Sport Project



HAF Bell Boat Programme



Rowing programmes supporting under-represented groups



Age UK & Explore Kent: Free River Walking Group



20 ACCESS CASE STUDIES



Urban Access

Swimmable Cities Alliance



Urban Blue Space `Walking

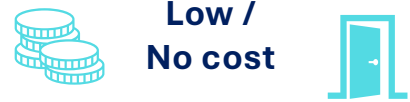


Blue Health Guide for Urban Planners & Designers



University of Liverpool Collaboration on the well-being potential of urban blue space





Low / No cost

FindOar Blade Matching Service







5. GUIDANCE & SAFETY

ACTIVE BLACK COUNTRY WATER SAFETY PROGRAMME



Learning how to float



Learning about beach flags



Identifying hazards around rivers



Demonstrating how to reach & rescue



Learning how to stay SAFE



Exploring what could be used to aid flotation

Active Black Country Water Safety Programme

- 80% of people in the Black Country live **within a mile of open water**
- Nearly 8,000 primary school leavers in the Black Country are **NOT able to demonstrate safe self-rescue**
- Programme designed to support families, carers, community groups and educators to **talk about water safety with children**
- With the right water safety education, accidental drownings are preventable – everyone can **enjoy water safely**
- The Black Country **Water Safety Resource Hub** provides a range of lesson plans, practical activities and interactive videos to support the delivery of water safety education
- Active Black Country in partnership with the **Royal Life Saving Society UK, the Canal and River Trust and Swim England**

Find out more:

<https://www.activeblackcountry.co.uk/water-safety-programme/>

ACTIVITY ALLIANCE: ACCESS FOR ALL GUIDE



Find out more: <https://www.activityalliance.org.uk/how-we-help/resources/66-access-for-all-creating-accessible-places-and-spaces>

**activity
alliance**
disability
inclusion
sport



Accessible outdoor spaces



Green and blue spaces

- Path width and length
- Softer ground
- Outside lighting
- External level changes
- Hazards
- Handrails
- Waterside
- Access and route information



External signage

- Signs and waymarkers
- Technology



Play, spectating and rest areas

- Play areas
- Viewing areas
- External seating and shelter
- Terraces and decking

Top tip! Engaging disabled people early and throughout the process ensures the diverse needs of your audiences are met.

- Considerations for making blue spaces accessible for all, taken from the Activity Alliance's 'Access For All' Guide
- Creating accessible blue spaces for people with disabilities

Key actions

We have reached the end of this section. Have a look through the list below and ☒ **check the boxes** that apply to your space. Note any areas for improvement.

Green and blue spaces:

- ☐ Have you provided accessible arrival information about the facilities at your locations for visitors who arrive by walking, wheeling or cycling?
- ☐ Have you identified all-weather routes with adequate lighting and clearly marked hazards?

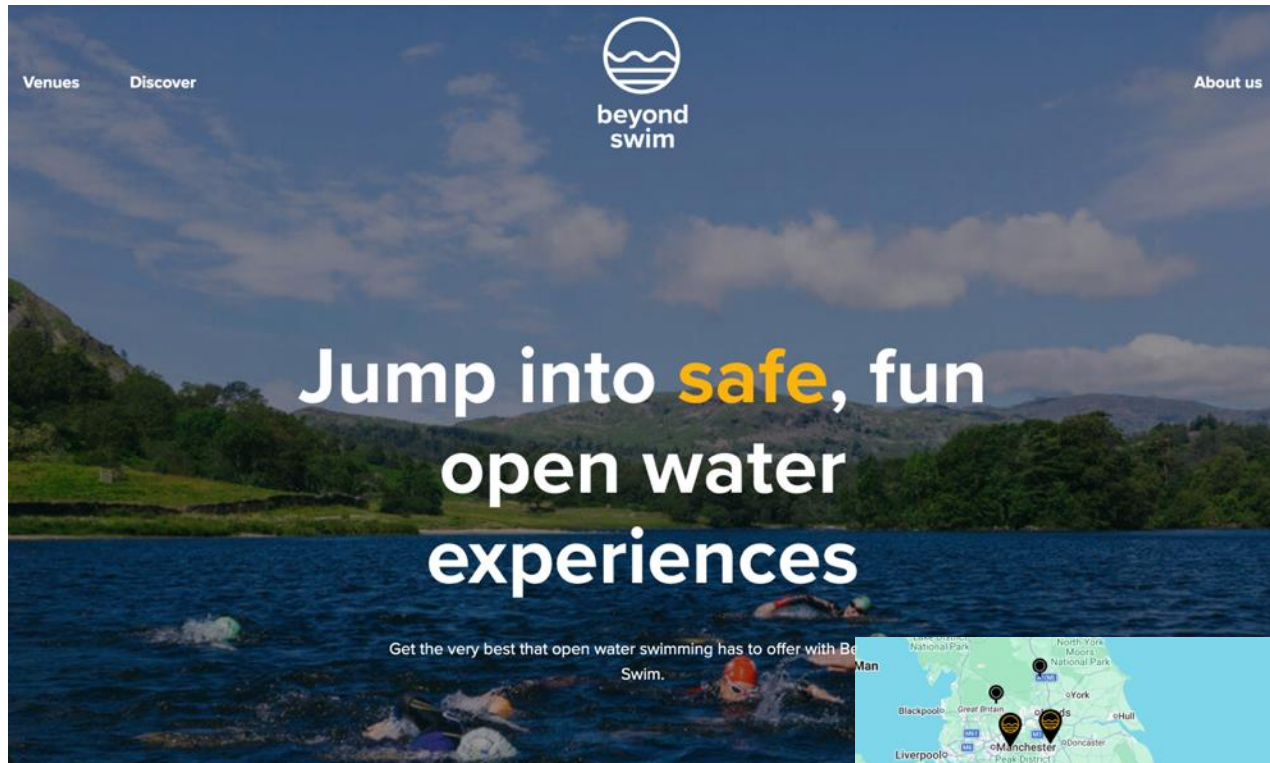
External signage:

- ☐ Is your signage clear, easy to read and understand?
- ☐ Have you tested routes to ensure they are easy to navigate, and informed visitors of any helpful technology that may support them?

Play, spectating and rest areas:

- ☐ Have you provided rest points or shelter? These are really useful along walking routes or in any spectating areas to ensure comfort and accessibility.
- ☐ Are your play areas accessible, inclusive and easy to find?

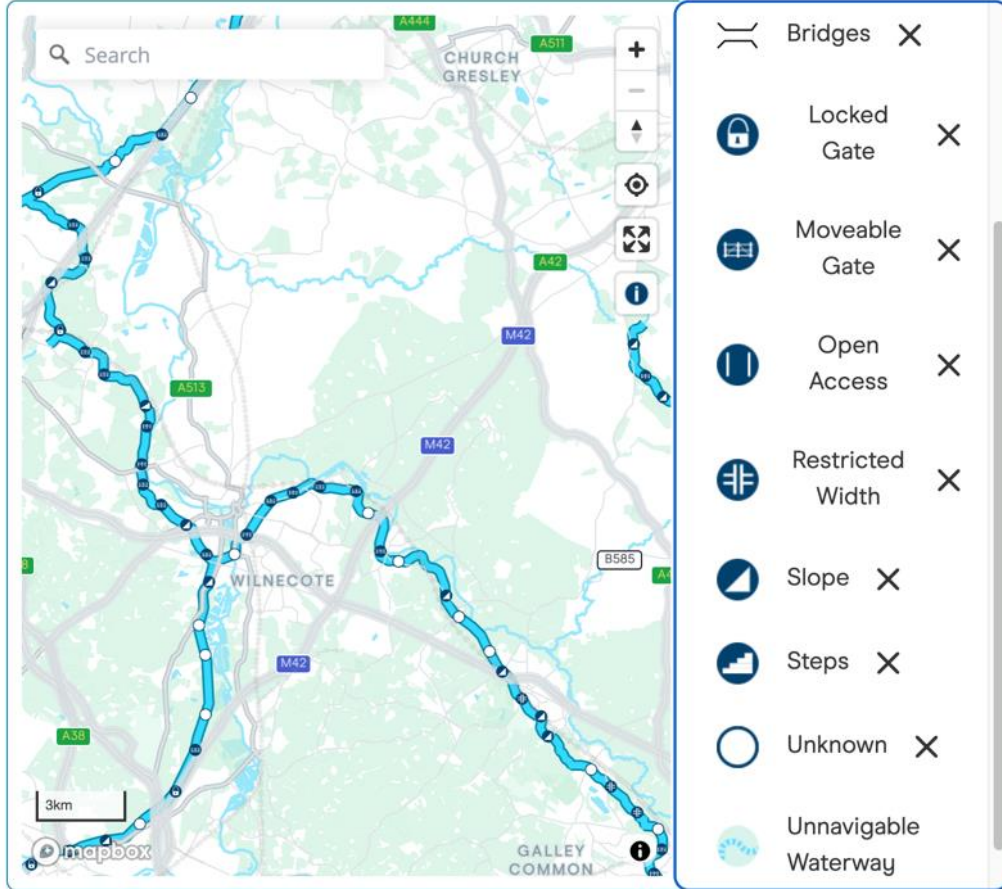
BEYOND SWIM VENUE ACCREDITATION



- 17 UK accredited venues
- Venue completes **Beyond Swim checklist**
- **Beyond Swim team** confirm the venue documentation reaches or exceeds Beyond Swim minimum standards
- Managed by **Triathlon England, Swim England, Swim Wales & Welsh Triathlon**

Find out more:
<https://beyondswim.org>

CANAL & RIVER TRUST: ACCESSIBILITY MAP



- Accessibility Map available from the Canal & River Trust highlighting barriers & enablers to access the UK's **2,000 miles of towpaths**.
- **Canals and rivers** provide year-round opportunities for people to get out and about in the fresh air.
- The Canals & River Trust have gathered information **on towpaths and access points** to make it easier for everyone to discover their local waterway.
- Zoom into the map to find details on **towpath surface, gradient and access points** onto the canal. High accessibility areas are highlighted which may be suited to wheelchairs or pushchairs.
- Please note you will need to fully **zoom in** to see all available information.
- The key can be expanded by clicking the **i icon** on the map.

More information

Access points: the location and type of access on to the towpath

- ramp - the access point/routes include a ramp
- steps – the access point/routes include some steps
- fixed gate – kissing gates or similar, possibly restricting wheelchairs or pushchairs
- open access – simple opening mainly level
- movable gate – opening gate or similar
- locked gate – restricted access eg private moorings

Find out more:

<https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/things-to-do/walking/accessibility-map>

OPEN MINDS ACTIVE: LEARN TO SWIM PROGRAMME FOR GLOBAL MAJORITY ADULT WOMEN



- Run by **Open Minds Active**
- Based in **Bristol**
- **3 sessions a week** during term time
- For **beginners to improvers**
- Run by a **diverse team** of swim teachers
- Supported by **Sport England, Comic Relief & Orca**



Find out more:

<https://www.openmindsactive.org/learntoswim>

THE PADDLERS CODE



The
**Paddlers'
Code**



Respect



Protect



Enjoy



Be kind to nature and wildlife.
Be aware of breeding and
nesting seasons. Minimise
noise and keep a distance.



Avoid gravel beds in rivers.
Disturbing spawning grounds
for fish and other species can
be considered a criminal act.



Banks can be sensitive to
erosion or home to vulnerable
species. Try to avoid them by
sticking to established paths.



Avoid dragging or sliding
craft on the bankside. Try to
float your craft for launching
and landing.



Always check, clean, & dry
your kit after each trip.
This is key to helping stop
the spread of invasive,
non-native species.

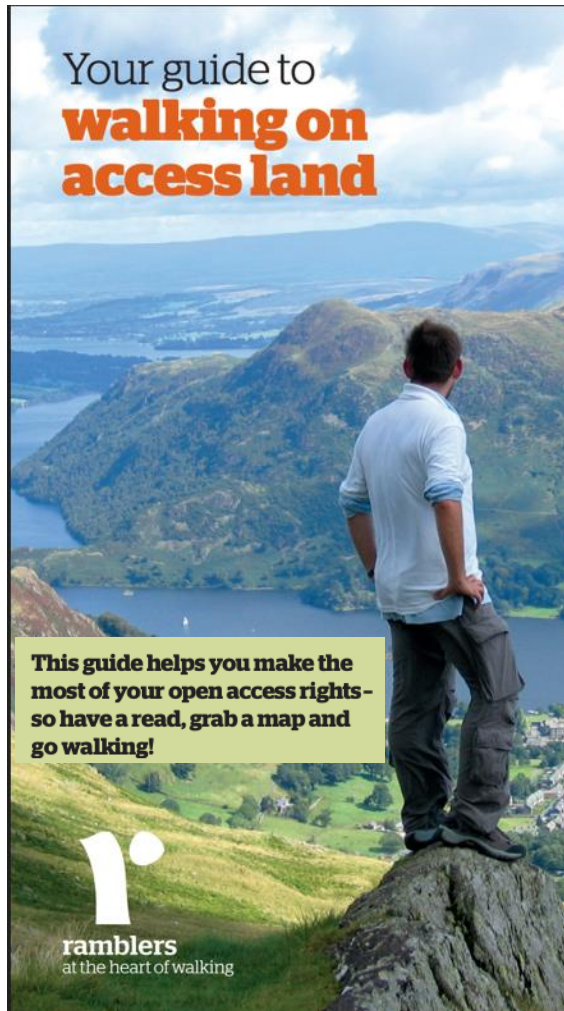
Protect

- **The Countryside Code** provides a useful baseline for promoting responsible access. Despite a recent short term boost in funding, public awareness of their rights and responsibilities in the countryside remains very low.
- Not enough is being done to embed the Code within our culture from an early age.
- Success has been achieved through **activity specific codes**.
- Designed in partnership with **Natural England**, 'The Paddlers' Code' sets out **responsible behaviours for blue space users**.
- The Code has been widely adopted by the **National Trust, The Environment Agency and Canal & Rivers Trust** amongst many others.
- Its messaging is specifically tailored to the environment and activity and has been positioned on signs and online, in places where it receives maximum exposure.

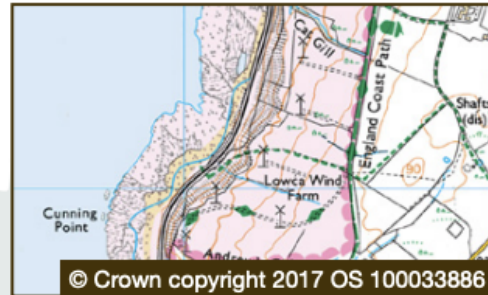


Find out more: <https://paddlerscode.info/#respect>

THE RAMBLERS: WALKING ON ACCESS LAND GUIDE



Coastal margin in England is marked as a magenta wash.



Within these areas you have the right to walk wherever you wish, subject to the exceptions and restrictions outlined in this guide.

You are permitted to climb over walls or fences to get into, out of, or across open access land, as long as you don't damage them.

When you are out walking, open access land is often identified with the access symbol. If you are leaving open access land, you may see the 'no access' symbol, and will need to find a public right of way to continue your walk.



access



no access

- **The England Coast Path**, completed in 2026, is giving us a right of access to many areas between the path and the sea. This area is known as the **coastal margin** and allows people to explore dunes, cliff slopes and beaches, right up to the water's edge.
- This guide helps you make the most of your **open access rights**— so have a read, grab a map and go walking!
- Open access land in England and Wales is marked on **Ordnance Survey maps** as a yellow wash.
- Coastal margin in England is marked as a **magenta wash**.
- Within these areas you have the right to walk wherever you wish, subject to the exceptions and restrictions outlined in the guide.
- The right to walk across open access land or coastal margin can sometimes be restricted. Check for restrictions before you set off and look out for information when out walking.

The England Coast Path, due to be completed in 2020, is giving us a right of access to many areas between the path and the sea. This area is known as the coastal margin and allows people to explore dunes, cliff slopes and beaches, right up to the water's edge.

Find out more:

<https://cdn.ramblers.org.uk/media/files/ramblers-walking-access-rights-guidefinal0.pdf>





6. INCLUSION FIRST BLUE SPACES

AGE UK & EXPLORE KENT: FREE REGULAR RIVER WALKING GROUP



And I think that Gravesend and Kent more widely has got a lot of open spaces to



try it and give it a go and you might, it might be the best thing that you've

- AGE UK **free walking group**
- Allows individuals to meet new people whilst **getting active** and enjoying **fresh air**
- **Group setting** for people who otherwise might not feel they could go out alone
- A leisurely stroll along the **River Thames** – making the most of what's on your doorstep
- “A really accessible way to improve your health.”
- **Twice monthly**
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Find out more: <https://explorekent.org/walking-groups-in-kent/>

BIRMINGHAM COMMUNITY PADDLE SPORT PROJECT



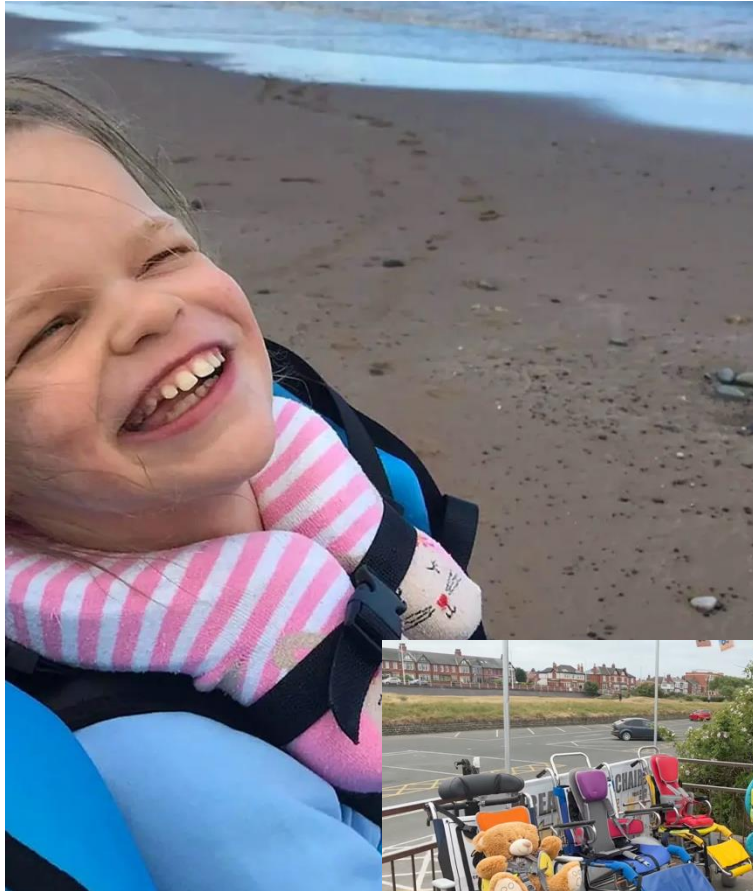
Anisha Begum, 32, said the hubs have helped broaden her horizons: "I was brought up in Sparkhill, so it's not something that was introduced to me, to be part of a team or sport, especially on the water," she said. "It's sort of taboo especially for South Asian women to be part of competitive sport, so I think by having a community that encourages others to push beyond your boundaries is just so inspirational."

- Former Olympian Andy Train MBE has set up **8 paddle hubs** across Birmingham since 2020 with the aim of **encouraging underserved communities** on to Birmingham's canals
- Over the past 25 years, he has been teaching his skills to others and has been the driving force behind the Birmingham Community Paddle Sport Project
- "It just helps you clear your mind, **connects you with nature** and, by the end of a paddling session, you feel calmer in yourself as well," Train said.
- "One of the things people often say to me is – I didn't even realise the canal was here or realised it was here but didn't realise we could use the **canal**."
- "The canals haven't been used and it's an enormous opportunity to use a really **valuable asset**."
- According to Paddle UK more than 70% of those taking part across Birmingham's paddle hubs now come from some of the most underserved areas of the city.
- There are also high numbers of women and from ethnically diverse communities taking part, their statistics revealed.

Alfona Sood is a volunteer who helps lead paddle sessions: "If you were to come here two three years ago you wouldn't see a single person from an ethnic minority paddling on the water," she said. "So we've come a long way."

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FLEETWOOD BEACH WHEELCHAIRS



- Very few places in the UK can claim to have **genuinely accessible beaches for wheelchair users**
- Fleetwood is somewhere that welcomes and supports everyone to enjoy the fabulous coastline
- Fleetwood resident Michael Gray lives close to the Promenade & saw people unable to access the beach and wanted to do something about the issue. Mick is an active member of the Town's Rotary group and they supported and encouraged his idea from the start. He approached Healthier Fleetwood for advice on how to proceed and a steering group including local residents and representatives of Fleetwood Council and Wyre Council was formed to take the idea forward
- It's a free service, funded by donations & run by volunteers

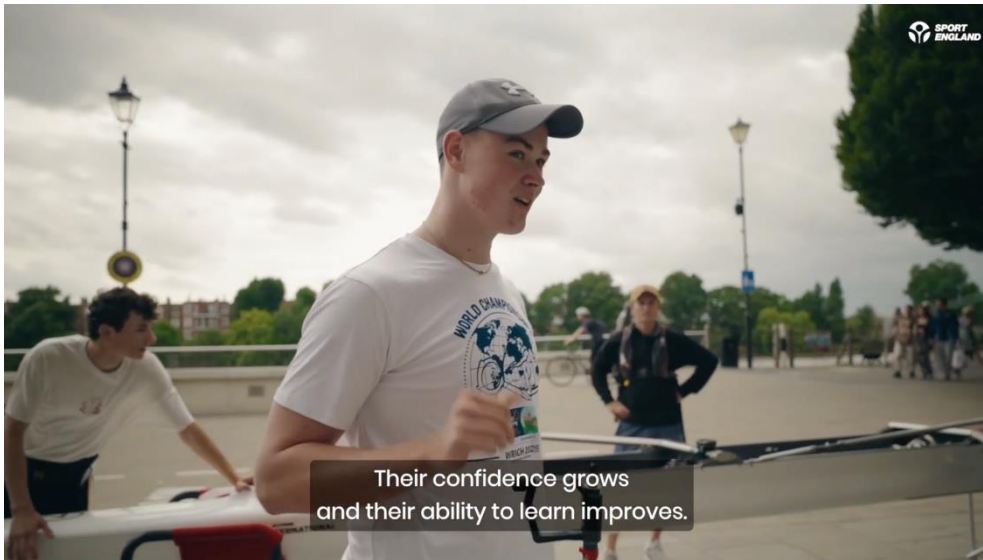
Find out more:

<https://www.fleetwoodbeachwheelchairs.co.uk/about-us>

FULHAM REACH BOAT CLUB: PROVIDING ROWING OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEOPLE FROM UNDERSERVED BACKGROUNDS



FULHAM REACH BOAT CLUB
EST. 2014



Find out more: <https://www.sportengland.org/guidance-and-support/facilities-and-planning/sustainability/fulham-reach-boat-club>

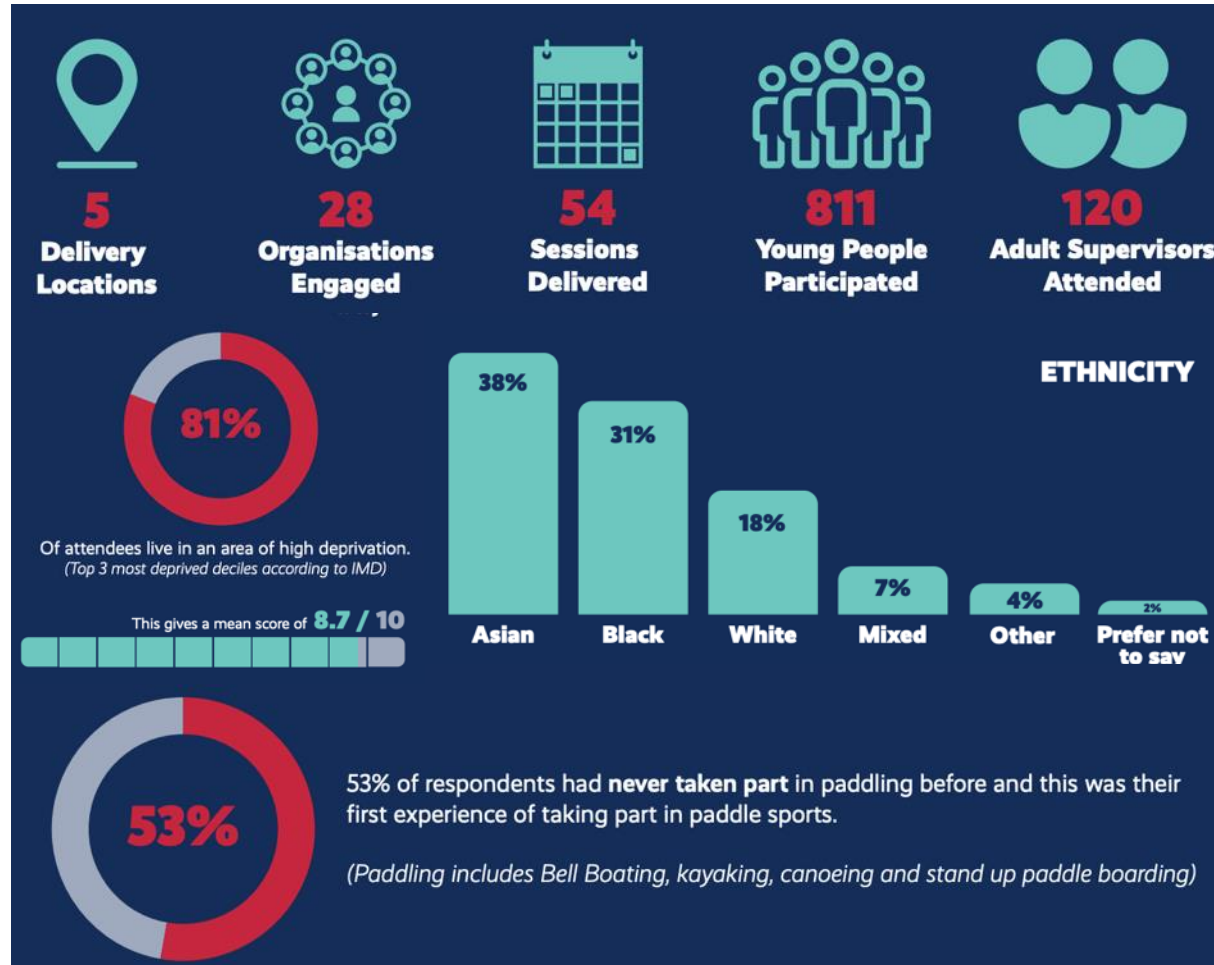
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Making life better by water

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Find out more: <https://bringitonbrum.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/The-Birmingham-Community-Paddle-Sports-Project.pdf>

INCLUSIVE PADDLE BOARDING: DORSET



- Disabled athlete, Will Behenna, in Dorset, has designed & developed **adaptive paddle boards** for disabled individuals & those with physical health conditions to access the water more easily.
- **Sport England funding** supports inclusive paddleboarding sessions to run.
- Also working with **Bournemouth University on a Beach Access Survey** to identify opportunities to improve beach access for underserved people.

Find out more:

<https://inclusivepaddleboarding.co.uk/>

THE WAVE PROJECT:

SURF THERAPY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE



- **The Wave Project: 15 years** as a registered charity
- Transforming young lives through **surf therapy**
- Over **half a million children** and young people are waiting for **mental health support**, and many won't receive help until they reach a crisis point
- Half of all mental health conditions begin before the age of 14, yet **early intervention** remains inaccessible to those who need it most.
- The mission is to intervene early, treat young people with respect, and **use an activity they can genuinely connect with** — surfing — to support **better mental health and wellbeing**.
- **Surf Therapy programme** is a 3-step intervention, designed to meet young people where they are and support them over time.
 - Step 1: Six-week Surf Therapy course
 - Step 2: Surf Club
 - Step 3: Progression to volunteering as Surf Mentor (where appropriate)
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70.5%
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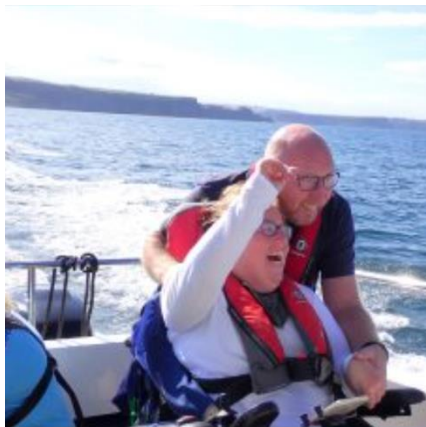
70.3%
GAINED CONFIDENCE

52.5%
DEVELOPED MORE TRUST

66.2%
FELT CALMER

Find out more: <https://www.waveproject.co.uk/15-years-of-surf-therapy/>

WETWHEELS FOUNDATION: BARRIER-FREE BOATING



- The vision of The Wetwheels Foundation is to **ensure everyone can access the water with a safe, barrier-free, enriching experience**
- Wetwheels offers a unique opportunity for **disabled and disadvantaged people of all ages** – including those with multiple, profound and complex impairments – to access the water
- Central to the individual experience is **active participation** – helping to broaden aspirations, increase confidence and directly impact on health and wellbeing.
- By 2027, they aim to support **15,000 people every year** to participate in a Wetwheels experience across the UK, with the widest reach and awareness possible
- They ensure **full wheelchair access** to the boat – including a ramp to the steering position and adapted steering controls. All are **active participants**, rather than simply passengers
- Research shows more than **80% of Wetwheels' participants have never previously been on the open water**
- Wetwheels was conceived and founded by **disabled yachtsman, Geoff Holt MBE**. The first boat, Wetwheels Solent, based in Portsmouth, made her debut in **2011**
- Each of the local Wetwheels Operators is a **social enterprise**, registered as a community interest company (CIC)

Find out more:

<https://wetwheelsfoundation.org/about-us/>





7. URBAN ACCESS

EU BLUE HEALTH GUIDE FOR URBAN PLANNERS & DESIGNERS



[SHARE SECTION](#)

Introducing the tools

The Toolbox consists of six online tools. Each provides information linked to a site's characteristics and works at a particular spatial scale – from site to country-level.

The tools can be used at any point when a blue space is being modified, but are most effective when used pre, during and post-intervention.

Download the [toolbox](#) for a full description of each tool or click on the links below:

- [Environmental Assessment Tool \(BEAT\)](#)
- [Decision Support tool \(DST\)](#)
- [Behavioural Assessment Tool \(BBAT\)](#)
- [Community Level Survey \(BCLS\)](#)
- [SoftGIS](#)
- [International Survey \(BIS\)](#)

- An **EU project** started in Jan 2016 & completed in Dec 2020
- The project was aimed at increasing understanding of how urban blue spaces can affect **people's wellbeing**
- The majority of Europe's population live in urban areas characterised by **inland waterways and coastal margins**
- Recommendations are designed to help decision makers & communities **promote health through access to good quality blue spaces**, informing the development of towns and cities fit for the future
- Resources include a **Blue Health Toolbox** – guidance for urban planners & designers

Find out more: <https://bluehealth2020.eu/>

SWIMMABLE CITIES ALLIANCE



PURPOSE OF THE CHARTER

Making Peace
with Nature



Promoting the
Rights to Life



Empowering
People in
Practice



Swimming
towards
Sustainable
Development



Investing in a
Better Future
for All



Connecting
South, North,
East & West



- Launched on the eve of the 2024 Paris Olympics, Swimmable Cities has grown into a global platform for **transforming urban waterways**
- The alliance is supporting a **grassroots movement** with 212 diverse signatory organisations from 109 cities and towns, and 36 countries around the world
- The Alliance champion the **Right to Swim and Nature Rights**, making waves of positive change together
- In November 2025, London Mayor Sadiq Khan reiterated his commitment to clean our rivers as **London** became part of the Swimmable Cities Alliance

Find out more:

<https://www.swimmablecities.org/>

Steps that you can take to get involved!



1. Join the Alliance

Make a public commitment to stand for your community's Right to Swim and Nature Rights.

Become a Signatory



2. Join our Community of Practice

Connect with international expertise, as we learn and share with municipalities around the world.

Connect with our Team



3. Join our Workshops

Tailored support for cities starting their urban swimming journeys or taking it to the next level.

Connect with our Team

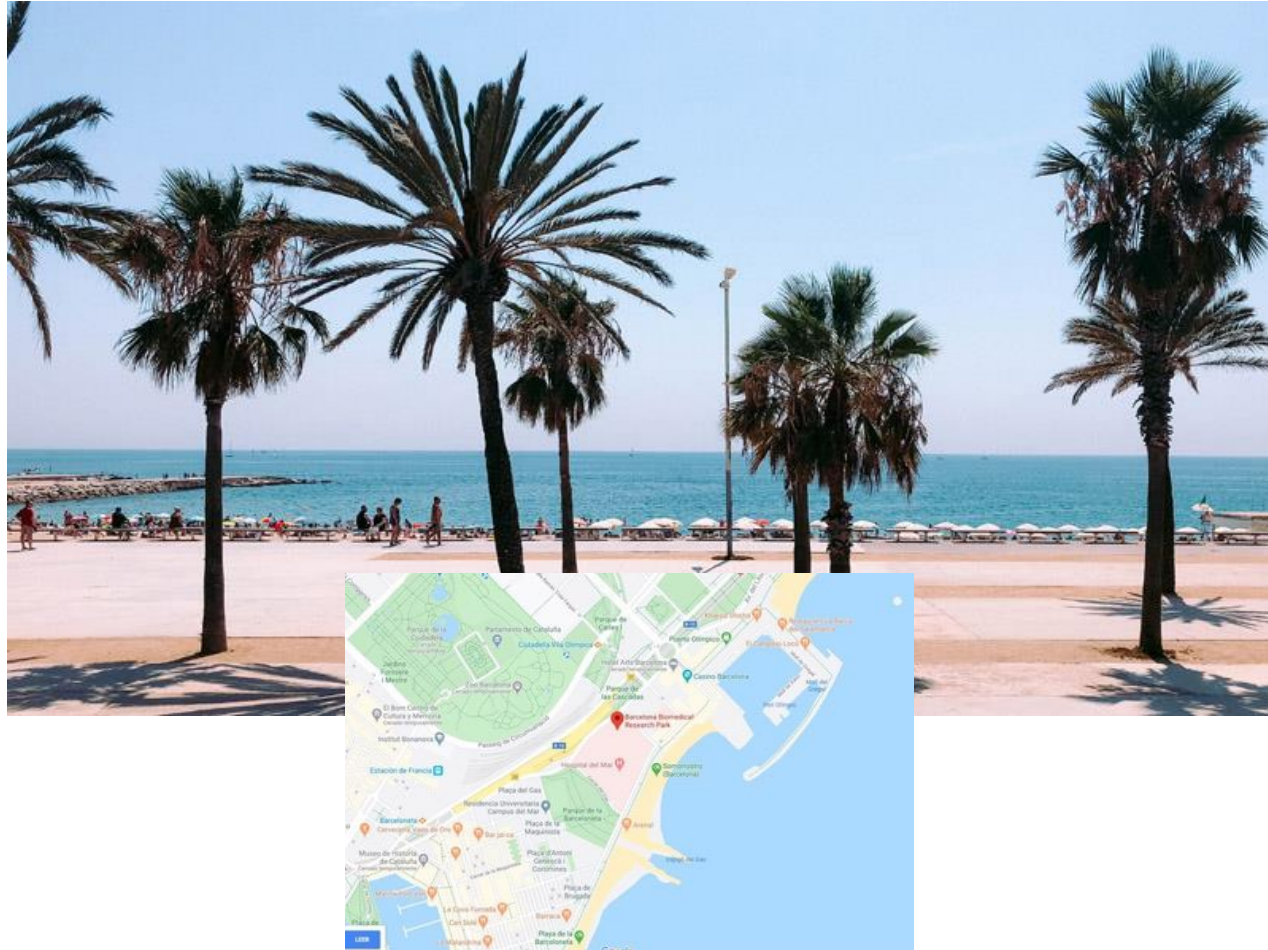
UNIVERSITY OF LIVERPOOL: COLLABORATION ON THE WELL-BEING POTENTIAL OF URBAN BLUE SPACE



- This **project** was funded by the **University of Liverpool's** Policy Support Fund, which encourages researchers to collaborate with policymakers to better understand and respond to local, regional, national and international challenges
- The project began with a **workshop** in March 2024, on urban blue space and public health. It was attended by **researchers, policy makers, practitioners and organisations from the VCFSE sector (voluntary, community, faith, and social enterprise)**. A visual representation of the day's discussion was produced by More than Minutes. It confirmed a desire for local collaboration on blue space issues, and suggested many possible areas of focus for research, including:
 - **Who uses blue space and how?**
 - **Who is responsible for healthy place-making?**
 - **Should blue and green space be treated the same in policy?**
- Informed by the workshop and a **literature review**, we carried out a **survey at two blue space locations** in Liverpool City Region, focusing on urban estuarine and coastal blue space, and analysed the results.
- We found that **blue space leads to wellbeing outcomes** through a combination of factors, influenced by multiple policy areas. Effective policy will be developed from a detailed understanding of how this complex system operates in place, which will vary over time, e.g. because of climate change.
- The urban estuarine and coastal blue space in Liverpool City Region is more than its obvious leisure destinations. It can be considered as a **series of neighbourhood wellbeing assets** – docks, marine lakes and promenades – that link to create an opportunity of city-regional significance for the wellbeing of residents.

Find out more: <https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/heseltine-institute/projects/utilisation-of-blue-space/>

URBAN BLUE SPACE WALKS



- A study in Barcelona in 2020 assessing the effects of a walking intervention, finding a significant improvement in wellbeing and mood for those **walking through blue spaces**
- Test results demonstrated **significantly improved wellbeing and mood responses** immediately after walking in the blue space compared with walking in the urban space or when resting in the control site
- Cardiovascular responses showed increased activity of the **sympathetic nervous system**

Find out more: <https://bluehealth2020.eu/publications/blue-space-walks/https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0013935120307076?via%3Dihub>





8. LOW / NO COST

FINDOAR:

BLADE MATCHING SERVICE



findoar
the blade matching service

How does it work?



I.D. That Oar

Research the details of your oar so that you can give the most accurate description.



List An Oar

List an oar on the database as a “Have” or “Want” listing (includes registration).



Find An Oar

Search for something to match, or wait for others to contact you.



Other Options

If no luck, consider other options.

- **Removing cost as a barrier** to participation in blue activity spaces & reducing waste
- Equipment costs & replacement kit can be a real barrier for many in accessing blue space activities
- Findoar helps bring together those **looking for replacement oars**
- List an oar as ‘Have’ or ‘Want’
- Option to **buy, swap, sell or donate**
- If both parties are looking to make up a pair and each holds the oar the other wants, perhaps try playing **rock, paper, scissors** to work it out?!

Find out more: <https://findoar.co.uk/>





9. TACKLING INEQUALITIES

11 CASE STUDIES FOCUSED ON TACKLING INEQUALITIES

Will you add to this list of incredible initiatives giving those with less representation more opportunities in your place to get more active in blue spaces & increase their blue health? Hover over each image for a link to find out more.



The Wave Project (Young People): changing young lives through surf therapy



Learn To Swim Programme (Ethnically Diverse Groups): for global majority women



Explore Kent & AGE UK: free River walking groups



Bell Boat Programme (Young People & Ethnically Diverse Groups): summer programme



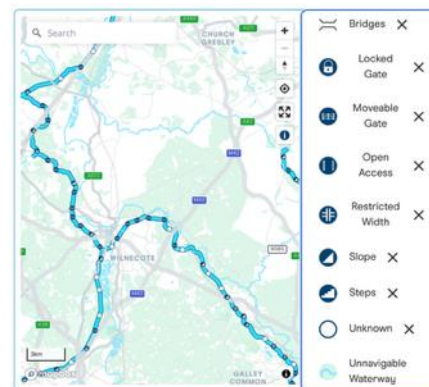
Fleetwood Beach Wheelchairs (Disabled People)



Inclusive Paddle Boarding (Disabled People): bespoke kit & disability inclusive sessions



Birmingham Community Paddle Sport Project (Ethnically Diverse Groups): opening communities to the canals



Canal & River Trust Accessibility Map (Disabled People): highlighting barriers & enablers to access towpaths



Activity Alliance 'Access For All' Guide (Disabled People): considerations for making blue spaces accessible for all



Wetwheels Foundation: barrier-free boating so everyone can safely access the water

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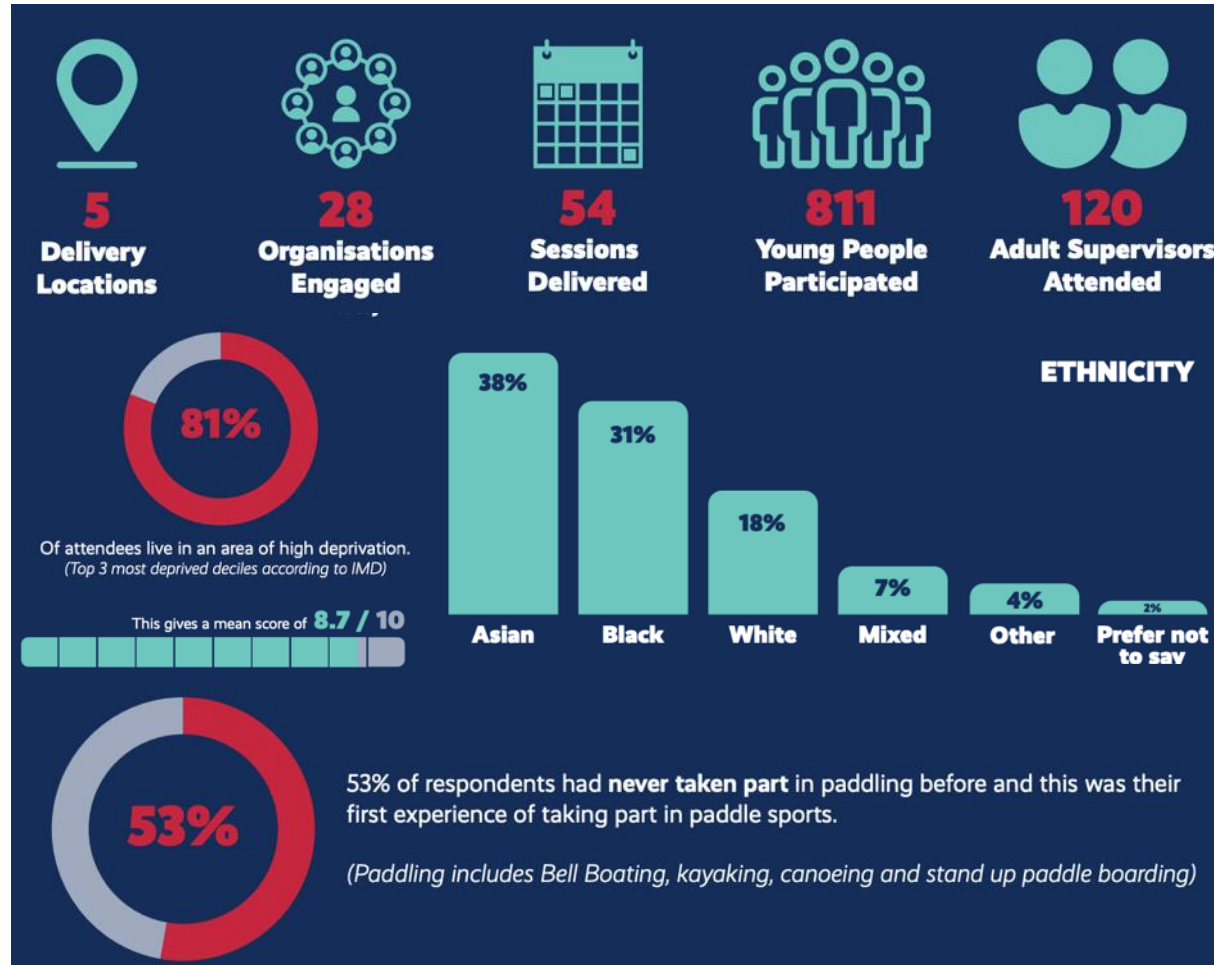
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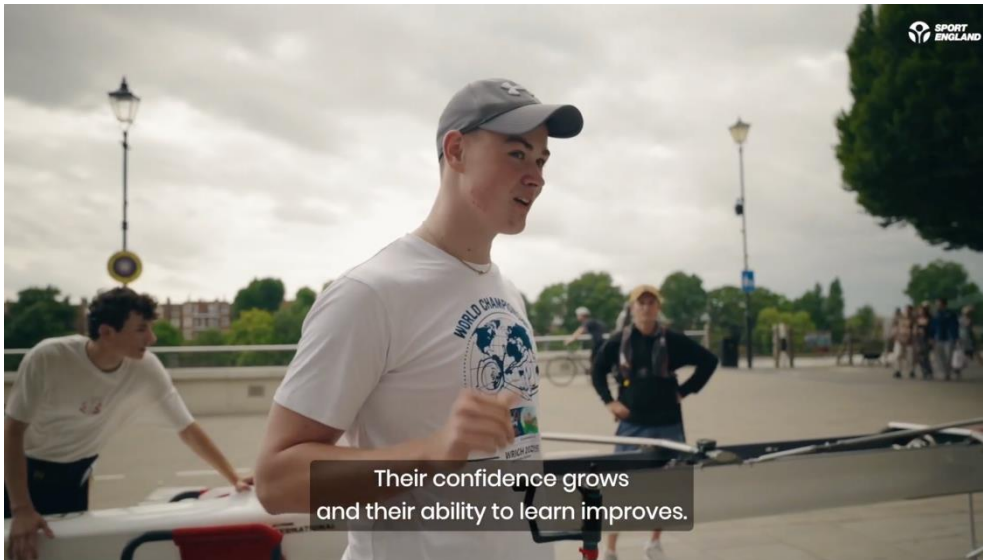


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FULHAM REACH BOAT CLUB
EST. 2014



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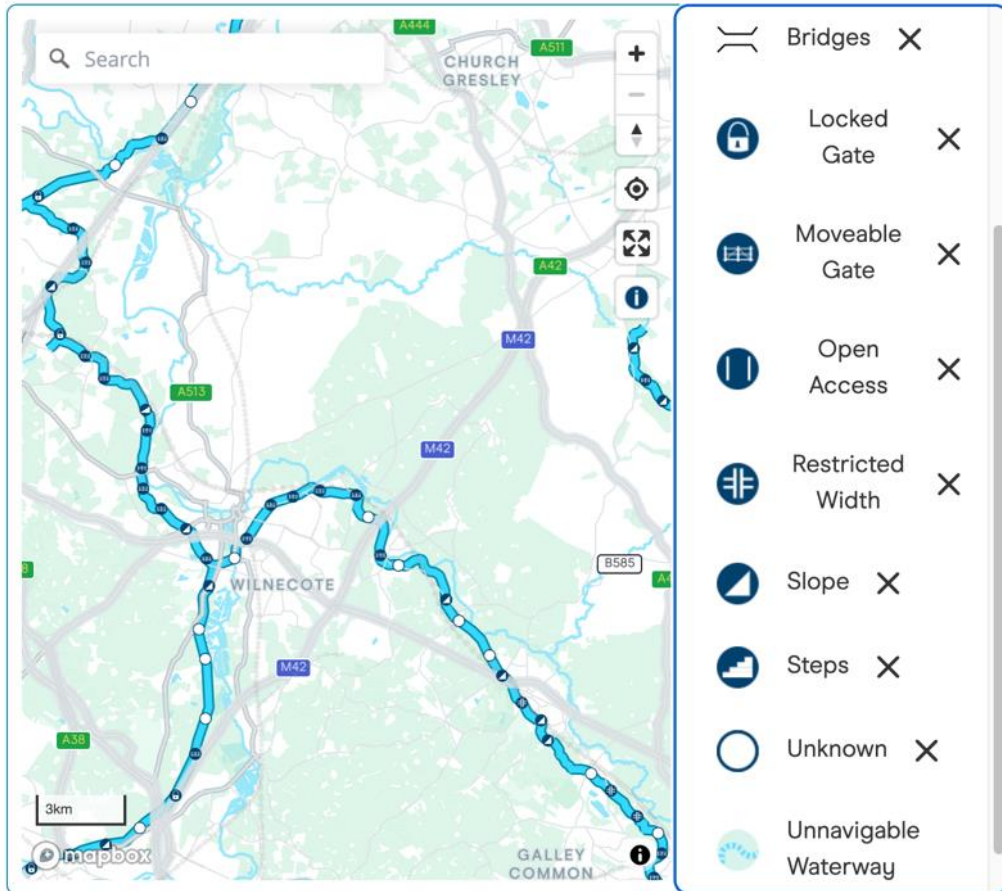
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Find out more: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c78e3y50rm9o>

CANAL & RIVER TRUST: ACCESSIBILITY MAP



Canal &
River Trust
Making life better by water



- Accessibility Map available from the Canal & River Trust highlighting barriers & enablers to access the UK's **2,000 miles of towpaths**.
- **Canals and rivers** provide year-round opportunities for people to get out and about in the fresh air.
- The Canals & River Trust have gathered information **on towpaths and access points** to make it easier for everyone to discover their local waterway.
- Zoom into the map to find details on **towpath surface, gradient and access points** onto the canal. High accessibility areas are highlighted which may be suited to wheelchairs or pushchairs.
- Please note you will need to fully **zoom in** to see all available information.
- The key can be expanded by clicking the **i icon** on the map.

More information

Access points: the location and type of access on to the towpath

- ramp - the access point/routes include a ramp
- steps – the access point/routes include some steps
- fixed gate – kissing gates or similar, possibly restricting wheelchairs or pushchairs
- open access – simple opening mainly level
- movable gate – opening gate or similar
- locked gate – restricted access eg private moorings

Find out more:

<https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/things-to-do/walking/accessibility-map>

ACTIVITY ALLIANCE: ACCESS FOR ALL GUIDE



Find out more: <https://www.activityalliance.org.uk/how-we-help/resources/66-access-for-all-creating-accessible-places-and-spaces>

**activity
alliance**
disability
inclusion
sport



Accessible outdoor spaces



Green and blue spaces

- Path width and length
- Softer ground
- Outside lighting
- External level changes
- Hazards
- Handrails
- Waterside
- Access and route information



External signage

- Signs and waymarkers
- Technology



Play, spectating and rest areas

- Play areas
- Viewing areas
- External seating and shelter
- Terraces and decking

Top tip! Engaging disabled people early and throughout the process ensures the diverse needs of your audiences are met.

- Considerations for making blue spaces accessible for all, taken from the Activity Alliance's 'Access For All' Guide
- Creating accessible blue spaces for people with disabilities

Key actions

We have reached the end of this section. Have a look through the list below and ☒ **check the boxes** that apply to your space. Note any areas for improvement.

Green and blue spaces:

- ☐ Have you provided accessible arrival information about the facilities at your locations for visitors who arrive by walking, wheeling or cycling?
- ☐ Have you identified all-weather routes with adequate lighting and clearly marked hazards?

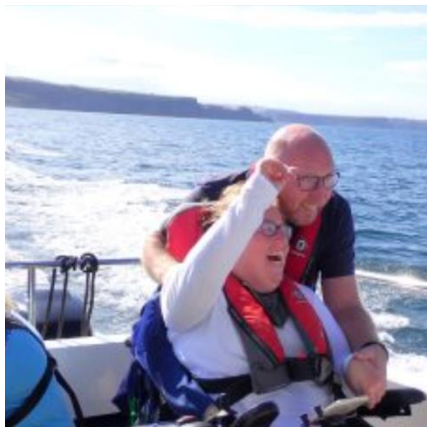
External signage:

- ☐ Is your signage clear, easy to read and understand?
- ☐ Have you tested routes to ensure they are easy to navigate, and informed visitors of any helpful technology that may support them?

Play, spectating and rest areas:

- ☐ Have you provided rest points or shelter? These are really useful along walking routes or in any spectating areas to ensure comfort and accessibility.
- ☐ Are your play areas accessible, inclusive and easy to find?

WETWHEELS FOUNDATION: BARRIER-FREE BOATING



- The vision of The Wetwheels Foundation is to **ensure everyone can access the water with a safe, barrier-free, enriching experience**
- Wetwheels offers a unique opportunity for **disabled and disadvantaged people of all ages** – including those with multiple, profound and complex impairments – to access the water
- Central to the individual experience is **active participation** – helping to broaden aspirations, increase confidence and directly impact on health and wellbeing.
- By 2027, they aim to support **15,000 people every year** to participate in a Wetwheels experience across the UK, with the widest reach and awareness possible
- They ensure **full wheelchair access** to the boat – including a ramp to the steering position and adapted steering controls. All are **active participants**, rather than simply passengers
- Research shows more than **80% of Wetwheels' participants have never previously been on the open water**
- Wetwheels was conceived and founded by **disabled yachtsman, Geoff Holt MBE**. The first boat, Wetwheels Solent, based in Portsmouth, made her debut in **2011**
- Each of the local Wetwheels Operators is a **social enterprise**, registered as a community interest company (CIC)

Find out more:

<https://wetwheelsfoundation.org/about-us/>





10. CHAMPIONS



9 CHAMPION CASE STUDIES - LIST

As is so often the case, there's always a passionate individual or group who step forward & make great things happen. Here are just a few of those blue space heroes, both at a community & sporting level. Who would you add? See the next page for links to their inspiring stories.

Champion case studies

- Will Behenna, Inclusive Paddle Boarding
- Andy Train MBE, Founder of Birmingham Community Paddle Sport project & Olympic Canoeist
- Etienne Stott, Olympic Canoeist & Climate Activist
- Chris Desai, Founder of UOCEAN 2050
- Sustainability Working Group at Stratford Rowing Club
- Imogen Grant MBE, Olympic Rower & Sustainability Champion
- Matthew Arris, Marine Champion at Bracknell Sub-Aqua Club
- Adam Freeman-Pask, CEO of Fulham Reach Boat Club & Environmental Steward



9 CHAMPION CASE STUDIES - LINKS

As is so often the case, there's always a passionate individual or group who step forward & make great things happen. Here are just a few of those blue space heroes, both at a community & sporting level. Hover on each image for a link to find out more.

Inclusive Paddle Boarding



Will Behenna, Founder & full time wheelchair user



UOCEAN Volunteer Plastic Clean Ups



Chris Desai, Founder of UOCEAN 2050



Bracknell Scuba Champion Marine Conservation



Matthew Arris, Marine Champion



Birmingham Community Paddle Sport Project



Andy Train, MBE, Founder of BCPSP



Sustainability Workshop for Juniors



Sustainability Working Group, Stratford Rowing Club



Climate Activist



Etienne Stott, Olympic canoeist



Ambassador for The Rivers Trust



Imogen Grant MBE, Olympic Rower, working to improve sustainability within rowing



On-going Phosphate & Nitrate River Testing

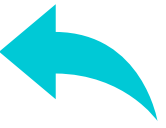


Adam Freeman-Pask, CEO of the charity Fulham Reach Boat Club





SUPPORTING CLUB CHAMPIONS



PADDLE UK have a great example of engaging with clubs to support & encourage Environmental & Sustainability Club Champions & Working Groups on their journey with their Clear Access Clear Water Club Champion Planning Template. They include example actions across 4 areas of sustainability. All kept light touch & accessible through a simple template.

4 key environmental areas for Paddle clubs	Top-line considerations
1. Lobbying and Engagement open up opportunities to influence local and national policy, enable partnership working and secure additional funding.	Think about how your club can champion and improve engagement with the Clear Access Clear Waters Campaign within your community, championing environmental work and access on water.
2. Protecting the environment and cleaning up our coastal and inland waters highlights the positive contribution paddlers make and shows why access is vital.	Think about the role your club plays in protecting the local environment.
3. Celebrating achievements and shouting about your successes within and beyond the club raises the profile of the CACW campaign and your club.	Think about how your club can strengthen communication with members and beyond.
4. Having suitable access to paddle is really important for the enjoyment of our sport by the whole community.	Think about the role your club plays in improving access locally.



VIDEO RESOURCES

10 VIDEO RESOURCES - LIST

Videos are a great way to deep-dive into case studies or engage new audiences on the challenges & opportunities of blue spaces. Here's just a few we've found. See the next page for direct links to each video on the list.

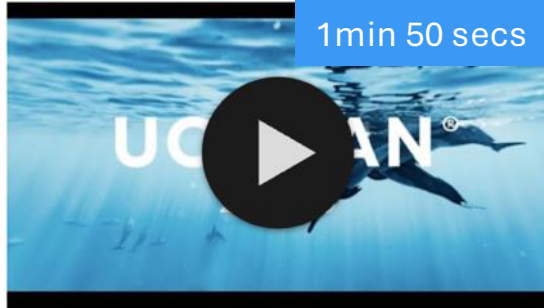
What would you add?

- | | |
|---|---------|
| • <u>UOCEAN</u> Water clean up initiatives | <2 mins |
| • <u>Check Clean Dry</u> advice from Paddle UK & NNSS | <2mins |
| • <u>The Rivers Trust</u> : State of Our Rivers Report | <2mins |
| • <u>Fleetwood Beach Wheelchairs</u> : Volunteer insights | <15mins |
| • <u>Fulham Reach Boat Club</u> – Sport England case study
on environmental stewardship & action | <4 mins |
| • <u>Inclusive Paddleboarding</u> documentary | <9mins |
| • <u>Open Minds Active</u> Learn to swim case study | <5mins |
| • <u>The Paddlers Code</u> | <7mins |
| • <u>AGE UK & Explore Kent</u> : Walking River Group | <2 mins |
| • <u>Jo in the Water</u> cinema trailer | <3 mins |

10 VIDEO RESOURCES - LINKS



Videos are a great way to deep-dive into case studies or engage new audiences on the challenges & opportunities of blue spaces. Here's just a few we've found. Hover on the image for the link to watch. What would you add?



UOCEAN water clean up initiatives



Check Clean Dry advice from Paddle UK & NNSS



The Rivers Trust: State of Our Rivers Report



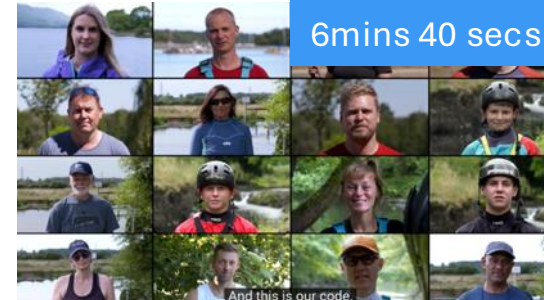
Fulham Reach Boat Club environmental focus in blue spaces case study



Inclusive Paddle Boarding



Open Minds Active Learn to Swim Programme for global majority women



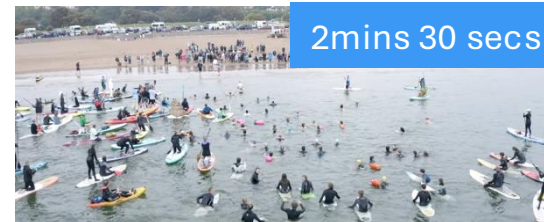
The Paddlers Code



Age UK Kent: Free organised walking group along the Thames



Fleetwood Beach Wheelchairs: An insight from volunteers



Jo in the Water cinema trailer: the fight to save our rivers, lakes & oceans, in cinemas from March 2026

KEY TAKE-AWAYS: INSPIRING CASE STUDIES



- 1 **32 inspiring case studies** from across England & a variety of sports.
- 2 **12 water quality case studies** testing the water, restoring water quality, removing invasive non-native species & plastic.
- 3 **20 access case studies** giving guidance & safety, establishing inclusion first spaces, creating urban access & removing cost.
- 4 **9 inspiring case studies of blue space heroes.**
- 5 **11 case studies to remove barriers to inclusion** for disabled people, young people, people in prison, older people & people from ethnically diverse groups.
- 6 **10 short videos** bringing some of these outstanding case studies to life.



THANKYOU

Building healthy nature-rich blue spaces together across England for everyone to enjoy movement in water. March 2026

CLEAN WATER
SPORTS ALLIANCE



Active
Partnerships



PLANS WITH PURPOSE