

## Best Community Initiative 2015

This award will go to an outstanding community-based initiative that benefits local residents. The initiative should be developed and led by the people it serves, acting as an inspiration to others and offering real value to the whole community.

Please use the space below to describe the initiative in detail. It is possible that we may call for additional information regarding the project. The judges will be looking for evidence of:

- Identification of the need and value of the project to the community
- Proven benefit to the community it serves
- Scope for sustaining benefits in the longer term or extension of the project

<p>Contact Name: Larry Bannon</p>	<p>Contact details: Old House, Church Minshull Nantwich, CW5 6EA 01270 522144</p>
<p>Parish/Town: Church Minshull</p>	<p>Project name: SUMBA canal adoption</p>
<p>Project description:</p> <p>Church Minshull Parish council adopted a stretch of the Shropshire Union Middlewich Branch canal, to look after and enhance it between bridges 11 and 15 in Church Minshull, under the Canals and Rivers Trust (C&amp;RT) "Adopt Your Canal" scheme. In February 2014, it joined forces with another volunteer group under the name of 'Shropshire Union Middlewich Branch Adopters' (SUMBA) to extend the canal adoption from Barbridge Junction to Bridge 15 in Church Minshull, a distance of approximately 5.5 miles.</p> <p>The first task for the newly formed group was to to complete a comprehensive survey and audit of the towpath, flora &amp; fauna and canalside furniture, such as signage and benches.</p> <p>The has resulted in the development of a 3-year plan, which includes many elements, such as a strategic programme of works, an enviromental project, working with stakeholder groups, new initiatives and fund raising.</p> <p>SUMBA has developed a C&amp;RT approved Environmental Project to plant certain species, such as blackcurrant and gooseberries, plus rhubarb rhizomes, to help sustain the natural environment and provide a "fruity bonus" for passing towpath users and boaters.</p> <p>It will also plant many of Cheshire's 33 historic apple trees, including the Bee Bench - a South Cheshire variety and the Minshull Crab - a cooker originating in Church Minshull in 1777.</p>	

**Return by Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> April 2015:**

to

**Sylvia Batty, Cheshire Community Action, Suite G7, Ground Floor, Northwich  
Business Centre, Northwich CW9 5BF**

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In engaging other stakeholder groups, SUMBA has already achieved great success. SUMBA worked with the 'Small Tasks Volunteer Group' to install a brand new set of steps at Bridge 11, to allow access to the towpath, from the public footpath above.

SUMBA has agreed with C&RT, a programme of works for the next 12 months, continuing with an ongoing monthly programme, which will enhance the Middlewich Branch and benefit all users of our local canal, ranging from litter picking painting picnic benches, seats and totem posts, replacing damaged information signs, vegetation cutback, hedge laying, greasing paddle gear, painting lock gates, bollards and the installation of bench and BBQ bases.

An initiative called the 'Cheshire Towpath Gardens' scheme has been introduced, at various mooring sites, locks and bridges on the Middlewich Branch arm, to provide spring colour and fresh fruit for all canal users. Richard Parry, C&RT's Chief Executive, launched SUMBA's first "Cheshire's Towpath Garden" in September 2014. Mr Parry planted two historic Cheshire apple trees, with volunteers planting five further apple trees, 200 daffodil bulbs and hedging whips to repair and extend the hedgerow.

A new initiative to be introduced within the next 12 months, will be 'The Minsh Trail'. A circular walk which starts in Church Minshull and utilises the towpath, as part of the trail. SUMBA will be installing information boards and signage as part of the is new project.

Funding for some of the works and initiatives has been gained from Cheshire East Community grant, the 'Grow Wild' lottery fund and Church Minshull Parish council.

In December 2014, SUMBA were awarded a 'Volunteer Recognition Certificate' by C&RT, for developing an adoption which "...upholds it's values and delivers regular enhancement activity on the Middlewich Branch".



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