



ANNUAL REPORT

APRIL 2024 – MARCH 2025



Photo Credit © Stephannie Wynne for GroundsWell



Our Mission

Fountainbridge Canalside Community Trust (FCCT) aims to make our local area a better place to live, work, do business and visit!

Generally we are interested in any opportunities that strengthen our community economically, environmentally or culturally, and promote social inclusion, sustainability and wellbeing.

Our website – www.fcct.scot – has more details about our events and activities, and we are on most social channels [@fcctEdinburgh](https://twitter.com/fcctEdinburgh)

Objectives for 2024–25

- To continue to develop the regular weekly activities – namely our Wellbeing Walks and Greenspace Group.
- To offer a full programme of events, private and community hires on our full fleet – Lochrin Belle, Waterwitch and Kingfisher.
- To continue to offer informal and certificated volunteer training and support a 'route to employment' through training up Boatmasters.
- To continue to expand the Edinburgh Canal Festival and introduce other annual free community events.
- To work towards replacing Lochrin Belle with a new boat and seek funding support.
- To negotiate canalside premises at Fountainbridge
- To ensure the financial stability of the organisation by seeking funding for projects and activities from April 2025 onwards.



2024-5 ACTIVITIES

GREENSPACE GROUP

At the end of this year (March 2025), this project had delivered 60 volunteer sessions – that is the weekly Tuesday group, plus some special sessions at other times. The sessions are all outdoors in one of our local canalside greenspaces. Weekly activities focus on noticing nature and maintaining and improving our local spaces, whilst learning and sharing skills, and trying new things.

The Tuesday morning group's register has grown to 52 people. At the start of the year we averaged 8 people per session but this had increased to an average of 11 per session by March 2025. Over 1,000 hours of volunteer time has been given this year through this project.

CANALSIDE WELLBEING WALKS

The walking group similarly goes from strength to strength. We walk for around an hour, exploring different routes from the canalside to the Meadows, local cemeteries and the Roseburn Path. With 4 volunteer walk leaders, the project is well supported and has seen a rise in the average number of weekly walkers, with our overall register rising to 46. The group is made up of people of all ages – from their 20s to 80s and 35% are men (some groups struggle to attract men).

SOME COMMENTS FROM PEOPLE WHO ATTEND OUR WEEKLY GROUPS

"Positive effects on well-being. Being outside with others learning new skills and knowledge."

"I am thankful for being able to take part in the Walking Group. It's very well organised and provides a way for me to participate in exercise in a very enjoyable way within the company of a lovely group of people, among beautiful surroundings."

"Helping me feel more connected to the area I live in. nice to meet new people living in the area."

"The walks are free, but they are priceless"

"I feel rooted and nourished when I'm with the group and to meet people I wouldn't know otherwise."

FUNDED WELLBEING PROJECTS

This year our funding for wellbeing projects on our canal boats came from Groundswell Consortium's Innovation Fund. The project spans two financial years, and in 2024/5 we have delivered approximately half of the project.

Groups from Health All Round's ecotherapy project and Association of Ukrainians in Great Britain's Edinburgh branch took part in short programmes on board the Lochrin Belle and for the first time we used Waterwitch to deliver a wellbeing programme to a small group from Fedcap (employability support).

300+ PEOPLE

attended our free weekend events, exploring and appreciating local greenspaces

50 WEEKLY WALKS

with attendance of

5-13 PEOPLE

average of 9 walkers per week

worked with over

70

local organisations and individuals to put on the Edinburgh Canal Festival

EDINBURGH CANAL FESTIVAL

We again ran our free 'Community Doors Open Day' style Edinburgh Canal Festival in June, providing free activities and entertainment. We exceeded our expectations for this year's event by involving around 70 organisations and performing groups (up from 50 in 2023). One particular success was the further development and vibrancy of the 'zone' at Harrison Park West.

FREE AND FUNDED COMMUNITY EVENTS

Our community tells us in all our consultations and feedback that community activities and events that bring people together are most important to them. We have been developing the annual programme of events we aim to offer as well as interesting one-off opportunities. Many of these have been made possible through our 3 year National Lottery Heritage Funding. Here are the main ones this year ...

Tales from the Towpath: we partnered with Citadel Arts Group, whose members wrote playlets relating the canal history or culture. These 7 playlets were performed by professional actors in the unique setting of the moving canal boat, with some scenes on the towpath. 167 attended one of these free performances and due to their success, we did another run of performances in August, this time with a small charge attached to tickets. These also sold out.

Free creative workshops: 35 people attended one of three workshops to do with poetry and stories onboard the Lochrin Belle.

Bat Walk: Now a regular feature of September, we again invited Graeme to guide and teach us about bats in Harrison Park, with around 80 people attending.

Pumpkins in the Park: 40 families (approx. 100 people) dropped-in to take part in free autumn themed crafts and activities.



Flotilla of Light: Every November, we take part in the flotilla of light – an event where the boating community put on a procession of lit up boats which parade from Harrison Park to the Lochrin Basin.

Christmas Crafts and Market at North Merchiston Club: Local makers came to sell gifts and people could also make some free natural Christmas decorations (wreaths etc.). Approx 60 people attended.

Canal Boats

Being a canalside charity and growing out of the legacy of Re-Union Canal Boats (a name we still use to describe our ‘on-water’ activities), means that boats still make up a large part of our day-to-day work.

LOCHRIN BELLE

Lochrin Belle is our main trip boat and is skippered by a paid Boatmaster and two volunteer crew members. This year, similar to the past few years, we ran a total of 255 events on board. This was made up of 31 funded community trips (all free to participants), 27 paid/discounted community group hires, 71 private hire trips, 33 Gin Cruises, 17 Afternoon Chais, 26 Candle Painting Cruises, 15 open volunteer sessions, 7 Boatmaster or Helmsman training sessions, and 22 static events or meetings. Plans continue to replace Lochrin Belle in 2026 with a new-build, sustainably powered boat.

KINGFISHER

Unfortunately, the launch of Kingfisher, our small open boat with electric outboard, did not provide as much interest as we’d hoped.

Both pre-bookings and drop-in hires, which were offered for Sundays in the summer at Harrison Park, next to EUCS’ rowboats, did not bear much fruit. The poor summer weather did not help the uptake of trips.

There are a number of factors for the boat sub-group to consider going forward.

WATERWATCH

Waterwatch started offering trips to the public in May 2024. In order to introduce her to the market, we set up a voucher scheme with the online company, *itison*, who offer their customers savings on experiences, and help organisations like ours attract new customers. The scheme proved very successful and during this year Waterwatch delivered 65 *itison* trips, 21 private hires who booked with us direct, 13 community sessions and 6 volunteer trainings. Each trip was managed by 2 volunteer Helms, and feedback from volunteers and passengers alike was outstanding. We were incredibly pleased with this first season and look forward to developing and expanding next year.

VOLUNTEER TIME AND STATS

	TOTAL VOLUNTEER HOURS
Boat Volunteers	3378
Canal Fest	120
Corporate	224
Greenspace	1020
Board	202
Walk Leaders	157
	5101
	HOURS



INFORMAL AND CERTIFICATED VOLUNTEER TRAINING

Due to our Heritage Lottery Fund project, we now have a formal partnership with The Sorted Project, and partner with them on most of our volunteer training, so the following represents people from both our organisations.

28 people completed their First Aid certificate, 14 people attended a 2-day Mental Health First Aid course, 11 people achieved their RYA Helmsman and 1 person qualified as a Boatmaster (Skipper), with 3 others in training. New for this year, 4 people qualified as Pole Saw Operators, to support canal maintenance.



**Thank you
to our
funders in
2024 – 2025!**



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