

Healing

Outdoor Swimming in

WHAT are we doing in the project?

This project will run outdoor watery activities and training to enjoy water safely and with care for the environment, and it will map and consider establishing and publicising suitable places for swimming or for other recreational uses of the rivers.

We are holding swim intro and swim events

- To introduce people of all ages to enjoying the water safely and with care for the environment, to allay fears and misunderstandings, and to equip them to do their own risk assessments and mitigate risks
- To train young people in life saving and lifeguarding
- To give an opportunity to participate in an open water swim event and to receive some coaching tips to help improve their swimming



Family swim intro session September 2021

Waters

the Brecks: present; future



Swim intro session September 2021

WHAT else is the project doing?

We will map and survey the Brecks waters

- To assess the rivers and other waters as places for watery recreation
- To recognise and establish swimming places suitable for different types of swimming and other watery activities, including swim walks, and to consider publicising them appropriately after discussion and with agreement
- To provide signage with historic, practical and safety information, drawing on research and photos and stories gathered in the BFER Tales from the River project
- We will consult, involve and work with landowners and land managers, conservation organisations, businesses and other river users, and with other BFER projects, especially on Access



WHY is this needed?

Many older people remember having fun in the water as a child, but outdoor swimming (apart from in the sea) has been discouraged for decades, meaning generations have lost knowledge and confidence to participate. Meanwhile, young people have carried on flocking to local swimming spots in summer.

Some landowners, land managers and other river users have concerns about swimming and other activities, and a key project aim is that improved understanding of safe and environmentally friendly behaviours around water will help tackle these.

Many parents and authorities have worries about the safety of young people swimming and playing in the water. The project will give young people training in life saving and water safety, and will get them to pass on safety advice to others, by involving them in training and as they talk to their peers – the best way to get it across to other young people.



Knettishall, popular and busy in summer

More swimming places are needed in the Brecks for the growing local population and popularity of outdoor swimming and other recreation. Large numbers enjoy the few available places at the height of summer, placing stress upon those locations, however recreation in and by local inland waters is more affordable and sustainable than travelling on busy roads to the coast in summer.





Landowner workshop March 2020 ©BFER

Healing Waters and landowners

Early in the project, March 2020, we held a workshop jointly with the Visitor Safety Group (a landowner organisation with a body of experience on balancing safety and visitor access) for landowners or managers with rivers or water where people swim or might swim or do other recreation.

We have been keeping in touch with landowners and managers throughout, providing information, liaison between them and swimmers and other recreational users, as well as discussing specific event venues and potential future cooperation.

For example we provided some wording for a swim poster to one landowner with a popular swim spot next to their land – similar to this one further north in Norfolk. And after a detailed discussion and joint risk assessment with one landowner, local swimmer volunteers have done support work, litter picking and checking in advance of the busier seasons. We have provided material that they can use to put across simple messages about keeping safe when swimming and playing in water at a place suitable for families and children.

HAVE FUN IN THE WATER AND STAY SAFE:

Spot the dangers – look before you leap in!
 - Find where you will get out before getting in.
 - Before jumping in, check it is deep enough and that there are no rocks or branches or other people in the way.
 - Get used to the cold before jumping. Get out before you get too cold.
 - If you get into weeds, swim slowly out, don't panic!

Advice – follow safety advice and read signs

Friend – swim with others.
 - Supervise non-swimmers, weak swimmers or young children

Emergency – if someone is in trouble, shout for help, call 999, ask for Fire & Rescue service, throw a rope or similar.
 - Only go in to rescue them if you are trained (as a drowning person can pull you under with surprising strength).
 - If you fall into the water or feel panicky, turn onto your back and float, shout for help.

For more advice about safety, see www.outdoorswimmingociety.com/10-tips-for-swimmer-swim-safety/

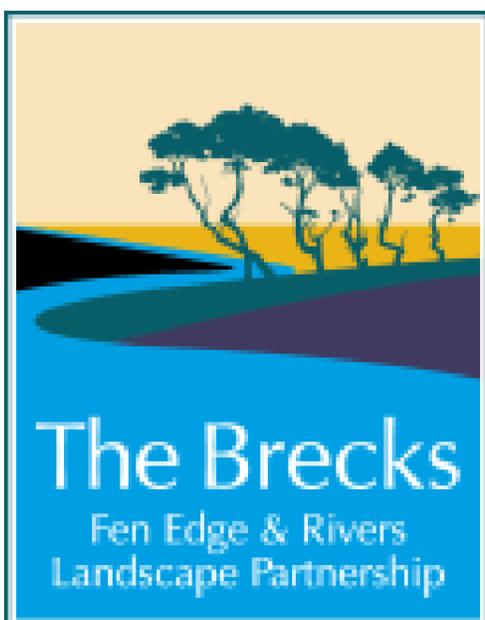
Be a responsible swimmer and user of the canal. Take responsibility for your own safety – all activities are at your own risk.

North Walsham & Dilham Canal Trust mwdct.org 01753 168 772

Example of simple safety notice at swim spot

Project area rivers & other waters

The area for the project is the rivers of the Brecks area and the edge of the Fens. The main rivers are the Wissey, the Little Ouse, the Lark and the Blackwater, and there are some other waters including some flooded quarries and lakes. See the BFER map on website.



The Healing Waters (Outdoor Swimming) project is part of The Brecks Fen Edge and Rivers Landscape Partnership Scheme (BFER, <https://brecks.org/bfer/>), supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund (<https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/>). For more see also <https://tinyurl.com/OSBprojHW>

