

AINA CASE STUDY

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Truman Enterprise Narrowboat Trust



West Midlands charity provides special waterway trips for the young and disabled

Located on the Hatherton Branch of the Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal, the Truman Enterprise Narrowboat Trust is a non-profit making organisation and registered charity which provides narrowboats for young people to be actively involved in a range of waterway-based activities. Their boats are moored at Hatherton Marina near Cannock, and are used by youth clubs, schools and community groups from the West Midlands and further afield. The Trust is a member of the National Community Boats Association.

The work of the Trust encourages social inclusion by providing opportunities for young people to live and work together in a supportive environment which allows the development of social skills and teamwork. Boat trips also enable participants to experience and learn about their cultural heritage and facilitate an awareness and understanding of our inland waterways as an important recreational amenity catering for everyone.

The project has a long history and began in 1965 under the auspices of the Walsall Youth Leaders Council who raised funds to acquire a narrowboat for young people to use. The original wooden purpose-built vessel *H.F.Truman* was built in Walsall and was launched in 1968. Following initial success the Trust was asked to run a second narrowboat named *Usk*, which was replaced in 1992 by a new steel boat called *A.J.Felgate*.

The original boat also needed replacement and successful fundraising from local businesses and a £50,000 grant from the National Lottery Charities Board meant a new steel boat could be commissioned. Fitting out took place in Wolverhampton and a naming ceremony followed in September 1997. The new *H.F.Truman* now accompanies *A.J.Felgate* and a regular weekend trip jtravels to Norbury Junction or Great Heywood.

A third boat, *Walsall Enterprise*, now provides special trips for disabled and elderly people. Groups of up to twelve people, including carers, can be accommodated and a ramp and lifts allow two wheelchairs to travel on board. Picture windows allow full views of the canal scenery and different route options are available.

For more than forty years the communities of Walsall have now benefited from living and travelling on the Trust's boats, and this pioneering project has inspired many similar ventures across the UK. Volunteers remain central to the success of the Trust.

Further information: www.truman-enterprise.org.uk