

## PRESS RELEASE



*For immediate release*

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### **Fund Britain's Waterways warns against the Government's latest Canal & River Trust funding offer**

After months of waiting for DEFRA to announce its decision on future grant funding for the Canal & River Trust (CRT), and less than a fortnight after the launch of Fund Britain's Waterways (FBW), the Secretary of State has now confirmed that the Government plans at least to continue providing grant funding to CRT beyond March 2027 when the current grant comes to an end. Whilst this is welcomed, FBW members including the Inland Waterways Association (IWA) are deeply concerned that the Secretary of State has only gone as far to offer "over £400m" for the ten-year period from April 2027 which marks a further dramatic cut<sup>1</sup>. According to CRT it will equate to at least a 40% reduction of funding in real terms compared to recent levels<sup>2</sup>. The current funding, which has been fixed at £52.6m per annum since 2021, is already failing to keep up with inflation and the physical toll that more frequent severe weather is having on the waterways' infrastructure.

DEFRA's offer is simply not enough to avert the decline of CRT's network, particularly given the charity already faces a deficit of £12 -15m. The grant it receives from DEFRA makes up almost a quarter of its income and is critical in helping it lever in other sources of income and fund its essential maintenance programme. As Richard Parry, Chief Executive of CRT, has said<sup>3</sup> the proposed funding cuts from 2027/2028 will have a potentially "devastating impact".

FBW is campaigning to ensure that beyond this Parliament there will be sufficient grant funding to retain the huge environmental, economic and social benefits that Britain's inland waterways provide. That includes the 2,000 miles of waterways managed by CRT which alone contribute £6.1bn per year in economic and social value<sup>4</sup>. It is why, as part of FBW's broader campaign, it will continue to work with CRT and others to encourage the Government to rethink this week's funding announcement.

Les Etheridge, Chair of FBW, said: "The Government must take heed of CRT's warnings. Otherwise, these proposed cuts will result in the closure of waterways, harming businesses and placing communities at risk as the condition of CRT's waterways inevitably deteriorates."

IWA's CEO, Professor Sarah Niblock, added: "The waterways renaissance has been one of the UK's biggest success stories of the past 50 years on all levels. It is actually hard to find the words to express how devastated we feel and how fearful we are for the future in the wake of this decision. Sadly, the government don't seem to have even referred to their own data on the sheer scale of benefits offered by the waterways to our economy, ecology and wellness. I urge everyone to express their concerns to their MPs as a priority."

#### Notes to Editors:

1. DEFRA's Written Statement is available to view at: <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2023-07-10/hcws924>
2. CRT media release [Government funding cuts put future of nation's historic canals at risk | Canal & River Trust \(canalrivertrust.org.uk\)](#)
3. Ibid
4. "Valuing Our Waterways" (November 2022) published by CRT / Simetrica-Jacobs, with all methodology aligning with 2022 HM Treasury Green Book valuation techniques <https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/about-us/valuing-our-waterways>

**About Fund Britain's Waterways (FBW):** FBW brings together a wide range of organisations with the sole purpose of campaigning collectively for an increase in government funding of Britain's inland waterways to avert their decline, and to promote awareness of the huge economic, environmental and social wellbeing value they provide. Established in June 2023, it already has over 40 members representing hundreds of thousands of users and supporters of inland waterways – see below.

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For more information about Fund Britain's Waterways, or to join the group, please visit [www.fundbritainwaterways.org.uk](http://www.fundbritainwaterways.org.uk) or email [info@fundbritainwaterways.org.uk](mailto:info@fundbritainwaterways.org.uk).

FBW member organisations include:

- **Accessible Waterways Association**, set up to inform, represent, and assist people who live with disabilities, impairments or accessibility issues, and who want to enjoy the inland waterways and their surrounding environments
- **Aqueduct Marina**, an award-winning, 5 Gold Anchor, Clean Marina accredited narrowboat marina. Based on one of the best locations in the country on the Middlewich Branch of the Shropshire Union Canal in Church Minshull. We are a full-service marina with a busy boat yard, brokerage caravan site and cafe
- **Association of Waterways Cruising Clubs**, an affiliated group of boat clubs offering their members mutual facilities relating to boating on the inland waterways of England and Wales

- **Aylesbury Canal Society**, promoting the use of and providing moorings on the Aylesbury Arm of the Grand Union Canal for over 50 years. The Society and its members have always been involved in waterways campaigning, which is needed today as much as it was back in the 1970s when ACS was formed.
- **Basingstoke Canal Society**, working to secure an environmentally sustainable long-term future of the Basingstoke Canal for the benefit of its users and the community
- **Bradley Canal Restoration Society**, working toward the restoration of the Bradley Canal, from the Bradley Locks Workshop to the Walsall Canal at Moorcroft
- **Braunston Marina**, a major centre for leisure craft and narrowboats at the crossroads of the Grand Union and Oxford Canals
- **British Canoeing**, the national governing body for paddlesports in the UK
- **British Marine**, trade body for the UK leisure, superyacht and small commercial marine industry, representing 1400+ member businesses, through regional and group specific member associations which include:
  - **British Marine's Inland Boating Association** with over 100 independent companies offering river and canal holidays on hire boats, hotel boats, plus passenger trip boats and business services
  - **British Marine's Passenger Boat Association** representing all sectors of the passenger boat industry, including scheduled transport services, pleasure trips, private & business hire
  - **The Broads Hire Boat Federation** including operators of holiday hire cruisers and day-hire craft on the Norfolk Broads
  - **British Marine's London and Thames Valley Regional Association** which has over 250 members, of which over 80 operate their business alongside the non-tidal and tidal River Thames
- **British Marine Inland Boating**, formerly the Association of Pleasure Craft Operators APCO. The main trade body for inland waterway businesses, representing over 100 independent companies offering river and canal holidays on hire boats, day boats, hotel boats, passenger trip boats and business services.
- **Chesterfield Canal Trust**, working to promote the full restoration and appropriate development of the Chesterfield Canal, and to campaign for the construction of the Rother Valley Link, a navigable waterway to join the Chesterfield Canal to the Sheffield and South Yorkshire Navigation
- **Commercial Boat Operators Association**, the prime trade organisation involved in the effort to sustain and increase freight carriage on our waterways for economic and environmental reasons
- **DBA – The Barge Association**, the club for people interested in leisure and liveaboard barging on the inland waterways of UK and Europe
- **Electric Boat Association**, championing the interests of electric boat owners

- **Fox Narrowboats**, a long-established family business operating a marina in March in Cambridgeshire, providing narrowboat and day boat hire, and curating a comprehensive blog about Fenland waterways
- **Foxhangers**, an established boatyard and hire fleet in Wiltshire employing approx. 35 people and providing 12,000 visitor nights each year, grown since its founding in 1997 following the restoration of the Kennet & Avon Canal after massive investment from British Waterways, local government, and the National Lottery
- **Great Ouse Boating Association**, representing boaters on the rivers Great Ouse, Cam, Lark, Little Ouse, Wissey and associated East Anglian waterways of England
- **Historic Narrow Boat Club**, a not-for-profit national club dedicated to preserving the working heritage of UK canals, from the boats themselves to details of the waterways on which they travel
- **Inland Waterways Association**, the only independent, national charity dedicated to supporting and regenerating Britain's navigable rivers and canals as places for leisure, living and business
- **Kennet & Avon Canal Trust**, the charity that restored the Kennet & Avon Canal which runs from Bristol to Reading and now operates 9 trip boats, including 4 for disabled passengers, and the world famous and fully operational Crofton Pumping Station
- **Kennet & Avon Trade Association**, a local trade association for businesses operating on the Kennet & Avon Canal
- **Lowland Canals Association**, aiming to promote the interests and wellbeing of boaters and other users of the lowland canals
- **National Association of Boat Owners**, listening to boat owners, speaking out for boat owners, representing boat owners
- **National Inland Navigation Forum**, a forum bringing together organisations with inland navigational interests
- **Newbury Boat Company**, a family-run marina within a Site of Special Scientific Interest on the Kennet & Avon Canal in Newbury
- **Norbury Wharf**, located at the heart of the Shropshire Union Canal at Norbury Junction. Offering full boat yard facilities and hire boats all year round.
- **Residential Boat Owners' Association**, the only national organisation which exclusively represents and promotes the interests of people living on boats in the British Isles
- **River Thames Society**, a charity formed in 1962 to help look after the Thames, for its protection and promotion from the source to the sea
- **Roving Canal Traders Association**, a non-profit making organisation run to help support and promote the diverse array of existing and potential Canal & River Trust registered Roving Traders on our waterways

- **Royal Yachting Association**, the national governing body for dinghy, motor and sail cruising, all forms of sail racing, RIBs and sportsboats, windsurfing and personal watercraft, and a leading representative body for inland waterways cruising in the UK
- **Russell Newbery Register**, started as an owners & enthusiasts club and formed to promote and preserve a valuable piece of Britain's Industrial and Canal heritage & history
- **Shire Cruisers**, a hire fleet and boatyard which helps customers to explore the Pennine canals and Yorkshire navigations
- **Shropshire Union Canal Society**, working to maintain, improve and restore the Shropshire Union Canal network for over 50 years. The society's activities include restoration work to open up the dry section of the Montgomery Canal in Shropshire, enhancement and maintenance work centred on Ellesmere on the Llangollen Canal, and bringing knowledge of the SU system to a wider audience through talks and guided walks.
- **Thames MotorBoaters Association**, representing owners of powered craft registered on the non-tidal Thames
- **The Baldwin Trust**, a small charity based in Leicestershire who provide therapeutic narrowboat cruises on Leicestershire waterways. With over 40 years of service to the community, in a typical season the Baldwin Trust gives over 2000 people, many of whom have mobility and other challenges, a very enjoyable day out on the water.
- **The Boating Association**, set up over 70 years ago to promote co-operation and comradeship between all river users and all associated waterways, to ensure the extension, development and improvement of these waterways and of their facilities and amenities so as to make the waterways safer and more pleasant
- **Torksey Yacht Club**, a small club based at the junction of the Fosdyke Navigation and the River Trent at the ancient village of Torksey
- **Trent and Mersey Canal Society**, founded in 1974 when Harecastle Tunnel was closed, and repairs looked unlikely. Later we fought for the repair and re-opening of Anderton Boat Lift.
- **TrentLink**, a discussion group of 1,600 cruising boaters of narrow boats to seagoing cruisers with a particular interest in the safe navigation of the tidal River Trent that links the "East Midlands" and "Yorkshire and North East" Canal & River Trust Regions
- **Wendover Canal Trust**, bringing the Wendover Canal to life, by rebuilding and relining the canal, increasing biodiversity and attracting more people to enjoy our ever-improving green corridor and improve their wellbeing
- **Wilts & Berks Canal Trust**, the UK's largest canal restoration project – 72 miles from the Kennet & Avon Canal near Melksham in Wiltshire via Swindon to the River Thames Abingdon in Oxfordshire – estimated to deliver £50m economic benefit annually and £150m wellbeing benefit annually, when complete
- **Your Helmsman**, a boat mover, helm instructor and boating coach