

## Press Release

The *Fund Gloucester's Waterways* Action Group is holding a Cruise and Rally on Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> September, in Gloucester Docks.

# **RALLY THIS SATURDAY IN GLOUCESTER DOCKS TO CAMPAIGN FOR MORE FUNDING FOR BRITAIN'S WATERWAYS**

Over 40 boats are expected to cruise from Saul Junction, arriving at the Main Basin at approximately 11.00. Docks residents, walkers, anglers, local businesses, charities and anyone who enjoys using the canal are marching from The National Waterways Museum in the Docks at 11.15, to join with boaters to hear talks at midday from both National and Local Waterways Groups, including **Les Etheridge, Chair of 'Fund Britain's Waterways'** and **Richard Parry CEO of 'The Canal & River Trust' (CRT)**.

Colin Brooks, spokesman for *Fund Gloucester's Waterways'* reports that *'The Gloucester Lock and Canal has been closed this summer on every Tuesday, and the daily opening hours have been reduced as well. CRT state this is due to cost pressures leading to necessary cost savings. Boaters are angry, and a lack of boats visiting Gloucester has affected local businesses. CRT have also announced this week a 5-year plan of above inflation boat licencing rises; changes to boat classifications and mooring costs which will only increase the boater's frustration.'*

He concluded – *'Gloucester people have this opportunity to show its passion for our docks and waterways. A good attendance by boaters and users alike on Saturday will demonstrate opposition to government cuts and services – Don't miss this opportunity to show your concern'*.

[ENDS]

For Editors

*Britain's unique and well-loved network of canals and navigable rivers is deteriorating because of inadequate funding. At a time of unprecedented challenges caused by the climate emergency and high inflation, government is failing to respond. 'Fund Gloucester's Waterways' (FGW) has been formed to provide support from the Gloucestershire area to the national 'Fund Britain's Waterways', a coalition of now over 70 Trade Associations and Organisations representing hundreds of thousands of users and supporters of inland waterways and is campaigning for national and local government to act now and protect the public benefit and environmental benefit of our waterways.*

*Management of Britain's 5,000 miles of navigable inland waterways is fragmented. The Canal & River Trust (CRT) has the greatest responsibility covering 2,000 miles. It is already in a difficult financial situation with a fixed government grant of £52.6m per year until 2027. DEFRA whilst agreeing to further support with a further grant, but has recently announced a*

reduction in funding from 2027, reducing this, in a 10 year reduction package of £400m down to £30m/annum in 2037, with total disregard for inflation over that period. Other national waterways face similar problems: the Environment Agency is operating with £22m per year, one third of its identified requirement, and Scottish Canals has over £70m of maintenance work outstanding.

The consequences of failing to maintain waterway infrastructure were clearly shown by the evacuation of 1,500 residents in case the dam at Toddbrook Reservoir collapsed in 2019. This event has shown the need for increased spend on CRT reservoirs of up to £25m per year, but it is as if the lessons have not yet been learnt. The government's National Security Risk Assessments list **"The rupture of a large reservoir or dam as one of its 10 top threats to the UK."**

There are thousands of circa 200-year-old structures that are placed at a greater risk through reduced funding. These locks, bridges, reservoirs, dams and aqueducts do not generate any income, but are a significant maintenance liability.

The Covid-19 pandemic demonstrated the value of Britain's inland waterways as people sought blue and green spaces to help recover. This was acknowledged in DEFRA's own Environmental Improvement Plan providing levelling up, economic, environmental, health and wellbeing benefits for us all.

The combined annual economic and social value of CRT waterways alone has been quantified as £6.1bn, including cost savings of £1.1bn for the NHS from active use of the waterways and towpaths.

Government state that there were 800 million visitors to the canals and rivers last year, but most of the visitors do not contribute anything toward the systems upkeep. Government only values their **current annual Grant at 7p per person/visitor** to maintain the 200 year old infrastructure, and this is set to be reduced from 2027.

Despite this greater understanding of their value, and the deteriorating state of the infrastructure today, the Government has now shown its intent to significantly reduce its funding for the waterways.

Further information

Colin Brooks – [info@fundgloswaterways.co.uk](mailto:info@fundgloswaterways.co.uk) – call 07876 523115

**Fund Gloucester's Waterways**



  
**FUND BRITAIN'S  
WATERWAYS  
MEMBER**