

PRESS RELEASE



For immediate release

Date: 14 November 2023

Fund Britain's Waterways message delivered to Westminster

A flotilla of boats today delivered a visual and vocal message to the Palace of Westminster that funding cuts for our canals and rivers are unacceptable and damaging¹. The boats, a mixture of leisure and commercial, drew parliamentarians' attention to their presence and the banners they were displaying by sounding their horns and holding station outside the Palace of Westminster. They were cheered on by a group of supporters on Westminster Bridge.

The boaters and supporters acted on behalf of a new campaign group Fund Britain's Waterways which represents over 100 organisations with varying interests in the waterways. The group is campaigning to ensure that there is sufficient funding to retain the huge environmental, economic and social benefits that Britain's inland waterways are widely acknowledged to provide². It will continue working to ensure that future governments continue to invest the relatively small amount of funding that is required to maintain all these benefits. The Westminster cruise built on the success of well supported campaign cruises earlier in the year in Birmingham and Gloucester. More events are being planned in the run up to the next General Election. Support for the campaign can be shown by signing the petition available at www.fundbritainswaterways.org.uk.

Sir David Suchet CBE FRSA, a long-term supporter of the waterways and a Vice President of the Inland Waterways Association, said "Our waterways are valued and used by millions of people. Over the years volunteers have not only worked to protect and restore them but also ensured that governments appreciate their value. I am pleased to see this proud tradition continue."

Christine Kemp, a long-standing waterway volunteer and liveaboard boater who participated today as well as in an earlier campaign in 2007, said "Who would have thought after the 2007 campaign cruise against DEFRA cuts that we would need to be here again in 2023, asking the government to look after our heritage and infrastructure. My boat is my home, and I spend time volunteering to help keep the canals in as good a condition as we can, but cuts to waterways funding will have a devastating effect on the canals and my way of life. Our waterways are one of the things that make this country special – serious cuts to their funding risk losing them for everyone."

Notes to Editors:

1. Fund Britain's Waterways press release: <https://waterways.org.uk/about-us/news/fund-britains-waterways-action-group-launched>
2. "Valuing Our Waterways" (November 2022) published by Canal & River Trust / 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 well-being value they provide. Established in June 2023, it already has over 100 members representing hundreds of thousands of users and supporters of inland waterways.

Contact:

For further information about Fund Britain's Waterways contact: info@fundbritainswaterways.org.uk