

PRESS RELEASE



FUND BRITAIN'S WATERWAYS

For immediate release

Date: 4 April 2024

Fund Britain's Waterways statement for the England & Wales local and mayoral elections, 2nd May 2024

Britain's network of 5,000 miles of canals and navigable rivers is a unique national asset. Almost 80% of local authorities have a navigable waterway or a waterway under restoration, and waterways touch the lives of millions.

In 2022 an estimated 8.9 million people took part in an inland boating or watersports activity, resulting in the delivery of £3.1bn in GVA to the UK economy in 2022/23 and supporting over 132,000 jobs. Millions of hours of volunteer effort have already gone into restoring derelict waterways, and volunteers around the country are continuing restoration projects or helping to maintain and operate active waterways. Media coverage such as the BBC's recent Countryfile feature is helping to highlight the importance of waterways to local communities, as well as their contribution to the environmental resilience, heritage, health and wellbeing and economic prosperity of the nation.

Yet concern for the future of Britain's inland waterways is mounting. More frequent episodes of extreme weather are taking their toll, inflation is biting and funding is already constrained and planned to fall further. Fund Britain's Waterways (FBW) has come together as a coalition of more than 120 organisations representing hundreds of thousands of users and supporters of inland waterways. Since June 2023 it has been campaigning for national and local government to act now and protect the public benefit and natural capital of our waterways.

Sir Robert Atkins, former Waterways Minister, current local councillor and Trustee of the Inland Waterways Association, said "Britain's inland waterway network is an irreplaceable part of the national infrastructure which generates numerous public benefits and should be safeguarded through more adequate public funding. From boaters and local businesses to recreational groups and individuals who value our waterways, we are united in looking towards local as well as national government and seeking support from our elected representatives. Our waterways matter to people and politicians must address the concerns."

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 120 members representing hundreds of thousands of users and supporters of inland waterways.

Contact:

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