



PRESS RELEASE: 01 May 2024

Not embargoed

“Fund Britain’s Waterways” Rally, Acle Bridge, Sunday 5th May, 2:00 pm

A rally of boats and folks will be held at Acle Bridge on Sunday, 5th May, at 2:00pm to demand better government support for Britain’s waterways, particularly the Norfolk Broads.

Organised by the Broads Society, this is just one of dozens of protests across the country spearheaded by the Inland Waterways Association, who have gathered up to 75,000 signatures and will protest on the Thames outside Parliament next Wednesday.

The cost of maintaining the 200km of navigable waters weaving through the Broads currently falls on the owners of 12,000 boats through a system of tolls that harked back to a time when the Broads still looked for commerce. Nowadays, recreation and wellbeing are the watchwords.

An annual core grant also comes to the Broads Authority from Defra for managing everything from planning to nature recovery, but this has flat-lined for five years and is now less than the total toll income. Defra recently added money for dredging and other equipment to keep the navigation channels clear, but it can’t be relied on. Tollpayers think this is unfair, and they have a good point.

Mark Collins, Chair of the Broads Society, says: “The Broads offer wide public benefit and are enjoyed by millions of non-boating tourists, ramblers, naturalists and anglers, as well as for watersports from sailing to paddle-boarding. There is common cause to demand more support from government.

“The Broads can’t become a private reserve with toll-payers the major shareholders. Government must provide the lion’s share for Norfolk’s contribution to Britain’s National Park family, to cover public services like planning, environmental management and heritage conservation. These have become ever more costly as the climate warms up.”

Boat owners and the Broads Authority have common cause in wanting government cash to protect the Broads, and the Broads Society is calling for more cooperation.

Duncan Holmes’s family have lived in the Broads for generations. He heads up the Broads Society’s BroadSword volunteers helping to keep the Broads the way they should be and says:

“This is no time for a budget Broads approach. That will only lead to the sort of pollution and degradation seen in the past. We love the Broads and want to keep them as Britain’s finest inland navigation area and a unique national haven for wildlife. But it needs proper investment from government as well as boat owners.”

Collins says “We love the Broads and must not accept death by a thousand cuts. Join us at Acle Bridge and add your voice to the movement. “

Contacts: Mark Collins, Chair Broads Society, 07941 248 100 collinsmark@gmail.com
Duncan Holmes, Broads Society BroadSword Coordinator, 07393 566749;
broadsword@broads-society.org

PHOTOGRAPHS & VIDEO FOOTAGE WILL BE AVAILABLE AFTER THE RALLY ENDS