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[Westminster Campaign Cruise to rally support for Britain's Waterways](#)



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A call to action for the future of our waterways

The call to safeguard Britain's inland waterways will be heard from the river Thames by those in Westminster as a spectacular flotilla of boats come together to sound their horns as they stand united off from the Palace of Westminster on Wednesday, 8 May 2024.

A flotilla of around 30 boats, including commercial freight vessels and over 20 privately owned narrowboats from across the country, with some travelling over 350 miles to take part, will journey up the Thames, holding station off the Palace of Westminster from approximately 12.30-12.40pm, before continuing upriver in support of the Fund Britain's Waterways campaign to retain the nation's 5,000-mile network of cherished canals and rivers.

The event, set against the iconic backdrop of the Houses of Parliament, aims to draw attention to the waterways' severe funding challenges and the economic, ecological and health and wellbeing costs that the country would incur in neglecting this valuable public asset.

Starting from Westminster Bridge at 12:15pm, the campaign will see a vibrant gathering of supporters and culminate with the arrival of the flotilla from

approximately 12.30pm. Noteworthy attendees on a specially chartered viewing vessel will include parliamentarians and other dignitaries including Sir Michael Fabricant MP, Chairman of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for the Waterways and Professor Martin Bigg, Master of the Worshipful Company of Water Conservators.

*Expressing his support for the cause, **Sir Michael Fabricant** stated: ““Our canals and rivers and their associated towpaths and historic bridges, reservoirs, aqueducts and tunnels and other infrastructure all play an important part in the lives of millions of Britons. It is vital that we keep this 250-year-old heritage alive and maintained for the benefit of future generations.”*

The event will also feature a number of short talks on board the viewing vessel ‘MV Valulla’ from FBW advocates and industry experts, including Chair of the Twentieth Century Society **Hugh Pearman MBE** on the value of heritage, GPS Marine Holdings Ltd CEO **John Spencer** on the importance of commercial freight, and an FBW representative outlining the campaign's objectives and achievements.



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FBW's campaign continues to gather steam following a series of successful events last year calling for more adequate funding for all the navigation authorities which are already struggling to maintain the network against the impact of severe weather resulting from climate change.

The upcoming cruise is the culmination of a broader May Day Bank Holiday weekend of action, including various local events aimed at raising awareness and support for sustainable funding.

Events across the country range from the Inland Waterways Association's Canalway Cavalcade in Little Venice to community-led cruises and festivals, all designed to showcase the widespread use and love for Britain's waterways. These events will also provide opportunities for the public to engage directly with the campaign, sign the petition, and learn more about the waterways' impact on community well-being and national heritage.

Find out more about the May Day Bank Holiday weekend of action at <https://waterways.org.uk/waterways/sites/fund-britains-waterways-overview/fund-britains-waterways-future-activities>

Les Etheridge, Chair of FBW, urges public participation and commented: *"This is a pivotal moment for our waterways and many communities that rely on them. We invite people to join us on Westminster Bridge to show their support, and to sign our public petition, so that our message is not only heard in Parliament but also in Whitehall."*

Sign the petition here - <https://www.change.org/p/fundbritainwaterways>

For further information about supporting from Westminster Bridge, please contact Frances Phasey on 07734 038297 to join the supporters' WhatsApp group or visit <https://waterways.org.uk/support/ways-to-get-involved/events/fund-britains-waterways-westminster-campaign-cruise>

Join us in helping secure the future of Britain's waterways!



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What our supporters say:

“Our rivers and waterways are the essential lifeblood to Great Britain. If we abuse or neglect or poison, block or ignore, pollute, damage over-exploit, drain, choke or infect our natural water supplies, then the health of the entire nation is at risk. As a treasured public asset, the government must help to keep them running, clean and beautiful. The navigation authorities and the thousands of volunteers who help care for our waterways need more support from government to maintain this critical network.” **Griff Rhys Jones OBE, Patron of the River Stour Association and the Stour and Orwell Association**

“Funding Britain’s Waterways is one of the most important investments our nation can make. They are the arteries which link our country together in a magnificent fusion of industry, potential and pleasure. There is no other national asset so perfectly designed to enable citizens to enjoy Britain’s beautiful countryside and be inspired by past generations to help address today’s social and environmental challenges. For me, most importantly they provide access for millions of people to take in the clean air of the country, set in landscapes that still seduce the imagination with dreams of living within nature and being an active part of it.” **Sir Tim Smit KBE, Founder of the Eden Project**

“This campaign cruise illustrates the passion and concern people have for the future of our amazing network of inland waterways. It highlights the importance of safeguarding the network for future generations to enjoy whilst also helping bring economic prosperity to local communities such as those within my own constituency”, **Rt Hon Wendy Morton MP**

“The navigable waterways network is an unparalleled national heritage asset, dating from Georgian times onwards. It is not just for the boating community but the public at large: it is an interconnected leisure and wellbeing resource whose benefits are felt across society and across the country from dense urban to remote rural areas. What we enjoy today was saved and restored by waterways campaigners and volunteers from the 1940s to the present day, led by the IWA. Several canals are being restored right now. So, to start scaling down maintenance and repair of the whole network, as is threatened by severe cuts to the funding of the Canal & River Trust, is short-sighted and terribly damaging; closures may result. It is a kick in the face for all those who have devoted their efforts and funding to rescue and maintain this priceless national asset, and it is an attack on the environment shared by all of us. Defend, fund, use and celebrate our waterways!” **Hugh Pearman MBE, Chair of the Twentieth Century Society**

“The Worshipful Company of Water Conservators promotes a diverse and sustainable environment. Our rivers, streams and canals are a critical part of our environment. We depend on them for drinking water, recreation, navigation and wellbeing as well as part of flood prevention, supporting industry and agriculture. We must protect and enhance them for future generations.” **Professor Martin Bigg, Master of the Worshipful Company of Water Conservators**

“I would urge all Parliamentarians and aspiring Parliamentarians to get behind this campaign. Unless we safeguard the future of our waterways we will reach a tipping point where a huge range of public benefits from jobs to environment, leisure and tourism, health and wellbeing will be lost, and it will be extremely expensive to reinstate them.” **Rt Hon Sir Robert Atkins, former Minister for the Waterways**

Founded in June 2023, FBW brings together diverse stakeholders to campaign for increased governmental support to prevent the decline of Britain's inland waterways. Representing hundreds of thousands of users and supporters, FBW is dedicated to highlighting the many public benefits our waterways provide. For example, inland boating directly employs over 41,000 people and supports almost a further 300,000 jobs through its associated wider tourism. (Source: *British Marine Economic Benefits of the Leisure, Superyacht and Small Commercial Marine Industry, 2022-23*)

Notes to the Editor

- Images from 2023 event
- Members of the press interested in attending the event or would like to arrange an interview please contact Joanna Richardson - email: jrichardson@britishmarine.co.uk or call 07860 848834.

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 more than 125 members representing hundreds of thousands of users and supporters of inland waterways and secured over 50,000 signatures to its public petition.

Founding members of the Fund Britain's Waterways campaign include:

- The Association of Waterways Cruising Clubs
- British Marine
- The Inland Waterways Association
- The National Association of Boat Owners
- The Royal Yachting Association

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

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