

MEDIA RELEASE



FUND BRITAIN'S WATERWAYS

For immediate release

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Fund Britain's Waterways representation to the Spending Review 2025

Fund Britain's Waterways (FBW) has responded to an HM Treasury request for representations to the Spending Review 2025.

On 10 December 2024 the Chancellor Rachel Reeves launched Phase 2 of the Spending Review, intended to deliver the government's Plan for Change. As part of the process organisations were invited to submit feedback by 9 February 2025 on government spending priorities, and to suggest policy ideas that could inform decisions about departmental budgets and resource allocation over the multi-year Spending Review period.

FBW's aim in responding is to reinforce the widely acknowledged benefits that our inland waterways provide, to explain the need for increased government funding, and to request an urgent review of inland waterway funding.

FBW recognises the poor state of the country's financial position. Yet to fund our inland waterways properly would cost a small (in government terms) investment measured in millions not billions of pounds. In return the country will continue to obtain billions of pounds of benefits for health, economic and environmental benefits, much of the benefits in less well-off areas.

Government spending needs to be carefully targeted to achieve best value. The return achieved from a small additional investment in waterways makes it money exceedingly well spent.

We are already seeing the waterways deteriorating and businesses suffering, and the rate of deterioration is increasing because of the impact of extreme weather events caused by climate change. If underinvestment continues this will become worse until a tipping point is reached and waterways have to be closed, wasting the benefits as well as the millions of hours of volunteer time and millions of pounds of public money that have gone into the current network.

FBW has therefore requested that:

1. the importance of Britain's inland waterways as a unique national asset and part of the national infrastructure is recognised
2. the deterioration in condition that is already happening is acknowledged

3. a review of government funding for all Britain's inland waterways be carried out as a matter of urgency, with the aim of defining a sustainable funding solution which will enable the current benefits of our canals and rivers to be maintained and enhanced for future generations.

Mike Wills, Chair of FBW said "FBW welcomes the opportunity to make a representation to HM Treasury. It is becoming ever clearer that without urgent action the inland waterway network will be in serious jeopardy. Already in 2025 two canals have been closed by serious collapses of embankments following sustained heavy rainfall, resulting in the need for complex, lengthy and expensive repairs. If the condition of waterways continues to deteriorate, waterways will ultimately have to be closed, businesses will be harmed and communities placed at risk."

ENDS

Notes to the Editor

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 145 member organisations representing hundreds of thousands of users and supporters of inland waterways, and has secured over 50,000 signatures on 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.

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

The full submission to the Spending Review is available [here](#).

References

The benefits of Britain's inland waterways are documented in:

1. The latest [British Marine Economic Benefits report \(April 2024\)](#) which includes:

The combined economic contribution of the inland boating sector and its wider associated tourism generated the UK was £7.6bn in total for the year 2022/23 (the figure includes

£1.6bn from the inland marine industry plus £6bn from wider tourism generated by expenditure of those participating in inland boating and other inland watersports on non-boating goods and services such as food and hospitality)

Employment - the inland marine industry provides 41,166 total jobs. In addition, wider tourism associated with inland boating provides 295,886 jobs, so not only does inland boating directly employ over 41,000 people but it also supports almost a further 300,000 jobs through its associated wider tourism.

2. [‘Waterways for Today’ report](#) published by the Inland Waterways Association (November 2022)
3. [‘Valuing Our Waterways’ report](#) published by the Canal & River Trust with social value experts Simetrica-Jacobs, with all methodology aligning with 2022 HM Treasury Green Book valuation techniques (November 2022)
4. [‘Impact Report 2023/24’](#) published by the Canal & River Trust, January 2025

The impact of climate change on the waterways and the adaptations required are documented in:

5. [‘Impact of Climate Change on Asset Deterioration’](#) published by the Environment Agency, February 2021
6. [‘Our Climate Adaptation Report 2024’](#) published by the Canal & River Trust, December 2024