

FBW SURVEY

24th January to 14th February 2025

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15-Feb-v1.0

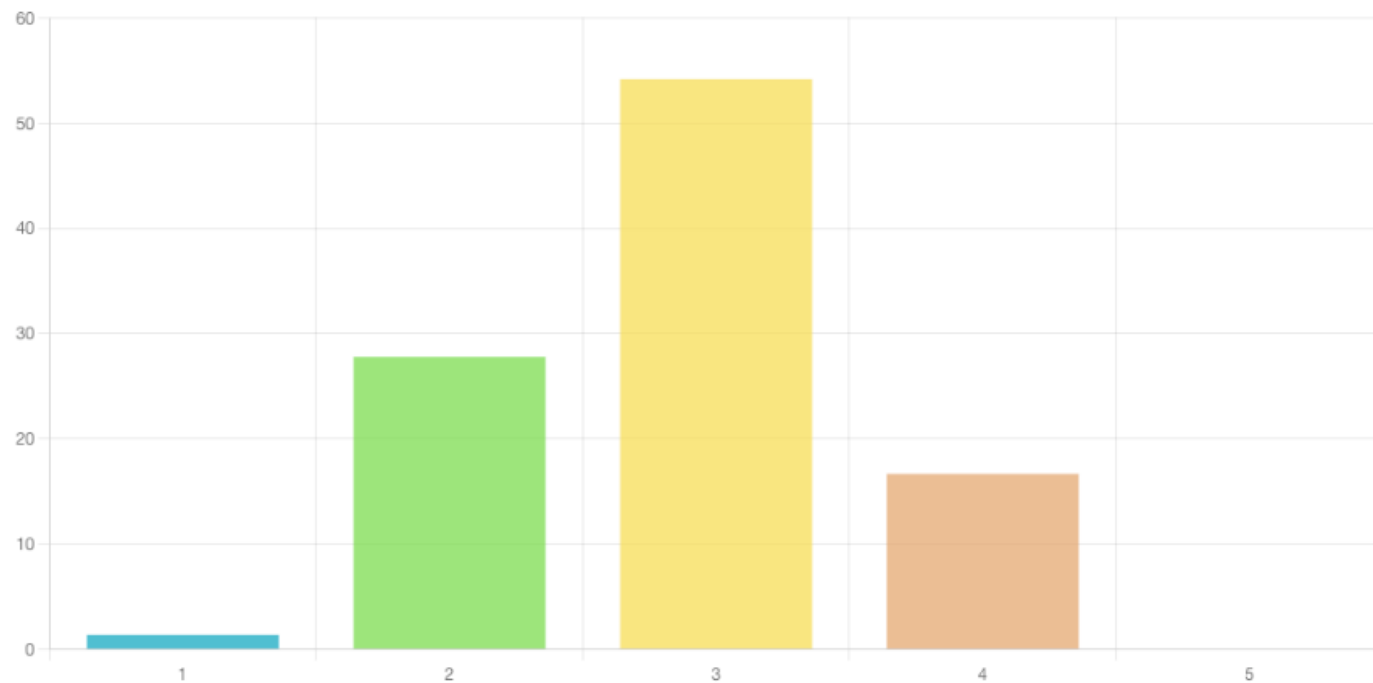
SURVEY

- Fund Britain's Waterways surveyed its members in Jan-Feb 2025 to review the FBW campaign so far and to assist with planning activities for 2025. The survey asked about:
 - Campaign Success
 - Impact on Goals and Engagement Levels
 - Future Involvement
 - Campaign Viability
 - Contact details (optional)
- The survey was conducted entirely online and the link was sent to FBW members (151) and IWA branch officers (30+)
- There were 72 responses to Q1 dropping to 59 for Q7
- There was a commitment to publish the results to FBW members.

Campaign Success

1

On a scale of 1 to 5, how successful do you feel the campaign has been in achieving its stated objectives to date?



	1	2	3	4	5	Responses	Weighted Average
Not at all successful - Extremely successful	1 (1%)	28 (28%)	54 (54%)	17 (17%)	0 (0%)	72	2.86 / 5
							2.86 / 5

2

In your opinion, what aspects of the campaign have been most successful?

54 responses

Successes & Actions Taken

- **Campaign Efforts:** Banners, boat cavalcades, campaign cruises, and floating protests (e.g., on the Thames and Westminster).
- **Media & Publicity:** TV news coverage, press coverage (mostly in waterways media), posters, and social media efforts.
- **Political Engagement:** Parliament cruises, writing to MPs, engaging with national and local government.
- **Community Involvement:** Recruiting members, petitioning, and bringing together diverse waterway interests.

Challenges & Limitations

- **Limited Reach:** The campaign has primarily raised awareness within the boating and waterways community but has not significantly reached the general public.
- **Government Apathy:** Despite awareness efforts, no clear change in government stance or increased funding has been achieved.
- **Media Attention:** Difficulty in gaining mainstream media coverage unless a major crisis occurs.
- **Repetition & Impact Decline:** Early campaign efforts (e.g., Westminster cruises) were effective but have lost impact over time.

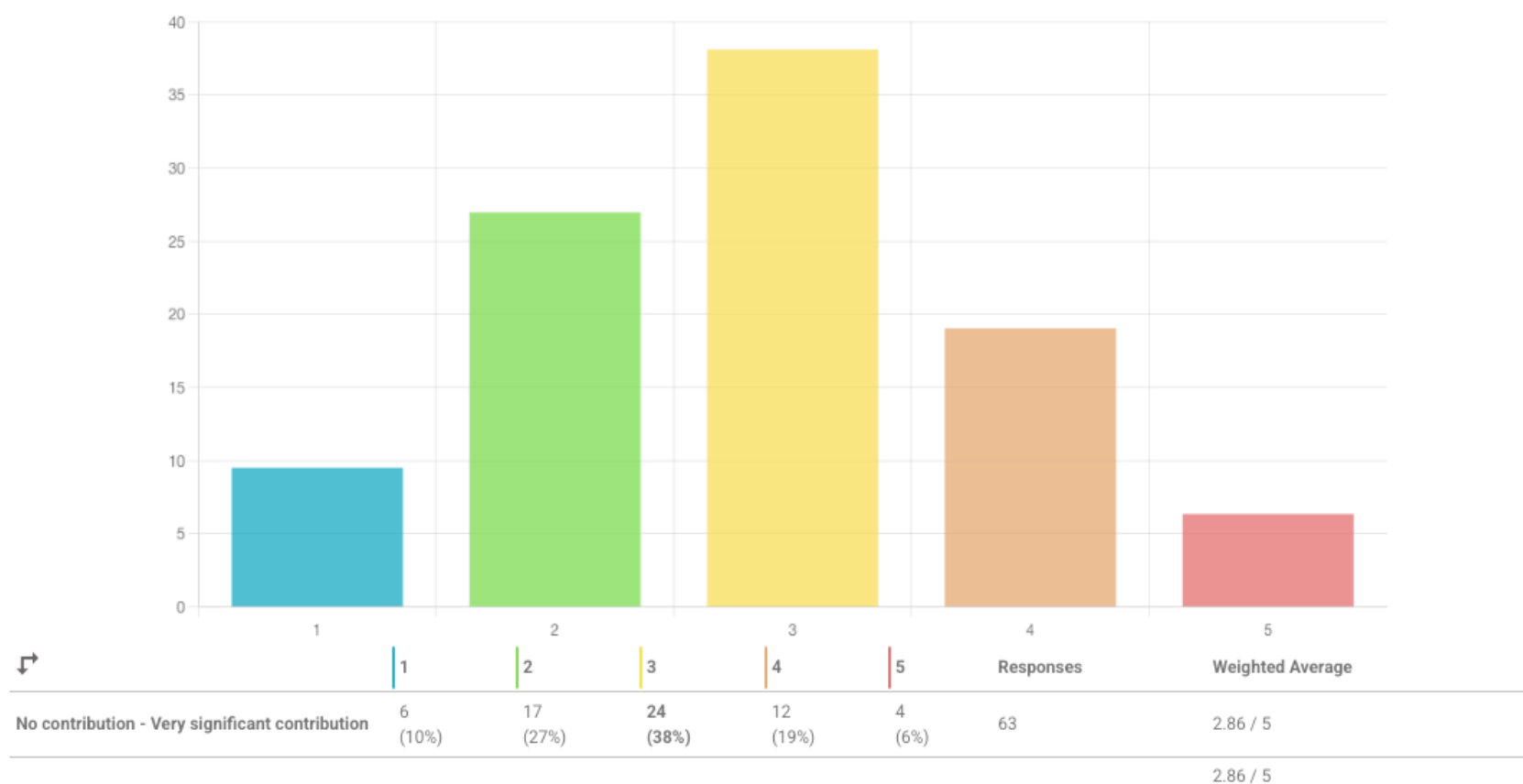
Key Takeaways

- The campaign has successfully raised awareness within certain groups but struggles to engage the broader public.
- Government engagement has taken place but has not yet led to funding increases.
- More diverse outreach (beyond boaters) and fresh media strategies may be needed to gain wider support.



Impact on Goals and Engagement Levels

3 On a scale of 1 to 5, how significantly do you feel your organisation has been able to contribute to Fund Britain's Waterways objectives?



4

What can we do to improve or increase your involvement?

49 responses

Challenges & Limitations

- **Lack of Time & Resources:** Many individuals and groups are already fully committed and unable to increase involvement.
- **Volunteer Shortage:** More volunteers are needed to help with tasks like recruiting members and publicity efforts.
- **Limited Public Engagement:** Awareness remains mostly within the waterways' community, with little impact on the general public.
- **CRT's Inefficiency & Funding Issues:** Concerns about CRT's financial management and its failure to support the campaign effectively.
- **Difficulty in Securing Media Attention:** Efforts on social media and Facebook campaigns have had limited impact.

Suggestions for Improvement

- **Better Communication & Coordination:** Improve internal communication, provide clearer instructions on how supporters can help, and actively seek assistance.
- **More Publicity & Outreach:** Increase social media presence, engage with local councils, MPs, and mayors, and organise more local events (perhaps a conference?)
- **Stronger Leadership & Representation:** Some believe the IWA should take a more prominent role, and a high-profile public figure should represent the campaign.
- **Targeted Campaigning:** Focus on raising awareness of government funding issues, the economic benefits of waterways, and their role in flood protection.
- **Greater Government Engagement:** Increase lobbying efforts at national and local levels, including working with Heritage Alliance and transport heritage groups.

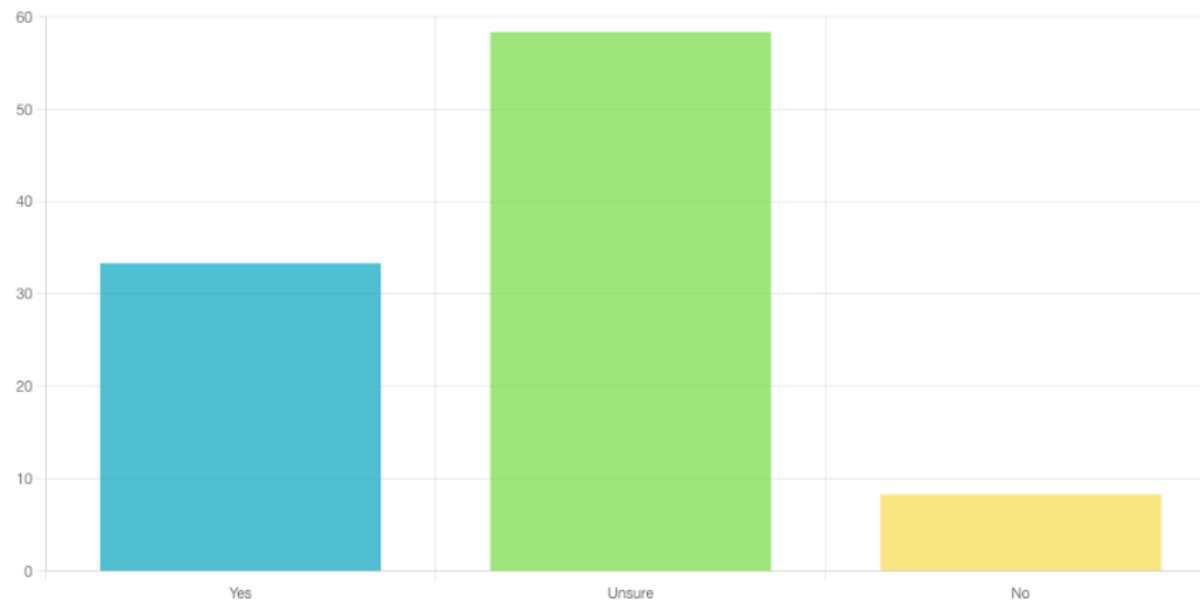
Key Takeaways

- While commitment from supporters is strong, the campaign struggles with volunteer shortages and limited public reach.
- More structured communication, increased publicity efforts, and stronger leadership could help enhance impact.
- Greater political and media engagement is needed to push for meaningful change in funding and policy decisions.

Future Involvement

5

Would your organisation be interested in being more involved in the next phase of this campaign?



33% (20)

Yes

58% (35)

Unsure

8% (5)

No

(60)

Responses

6

If you answered No or Unsure to Question 5, please share with us any reasons or considerations.

30 responses

Challenges & Limitations

- **Lack of Time & Capacity:** Many individuals and organisations are already at full capacity with their own commitments.
- **Volunteer Shortages:** Difficulty in motivating members to get involved, particularly among older demographics.
- **Limited Interest & Focus:** Some groups are more focused on local projects rather than the national waterways campaign.
- **Unclear Next Steps:** Uncertainty about the future direction of FBW and how supporters can contribute.

Concerns About the Campaign

- **Visibility & Momentum:** Some feel FBW needs to demonstrate stronger progress to justify further involvement.
- **Public Influence:** Concern that FBW lacks real impact on the general public or policymakers.
- **Potential Negative Messaging:** Businesses worry that discussions around funding shortfalls and possible canal closures may deter customers.
- **Perceived CRT Focus:** Some feel the campaign is too centred on CRT, neglecting other waterways and governing bodies.

Suggestions for Improvement

- **Stronger Focus on Habitat & Biodiversity:** Align messaging with national funding priorities, which emphasize environmental sustainability.
- **Clearer Calls to Action:** Supporters want specific, actionable tasks they can take part in.
- **Proactive Strategy:** Be ready to react decisively if closures are proposed rather than maintaining a passive stance.
- **Wider Engagement Beyond CRT:** Consider a broader approach that includes non-CRT waterways.

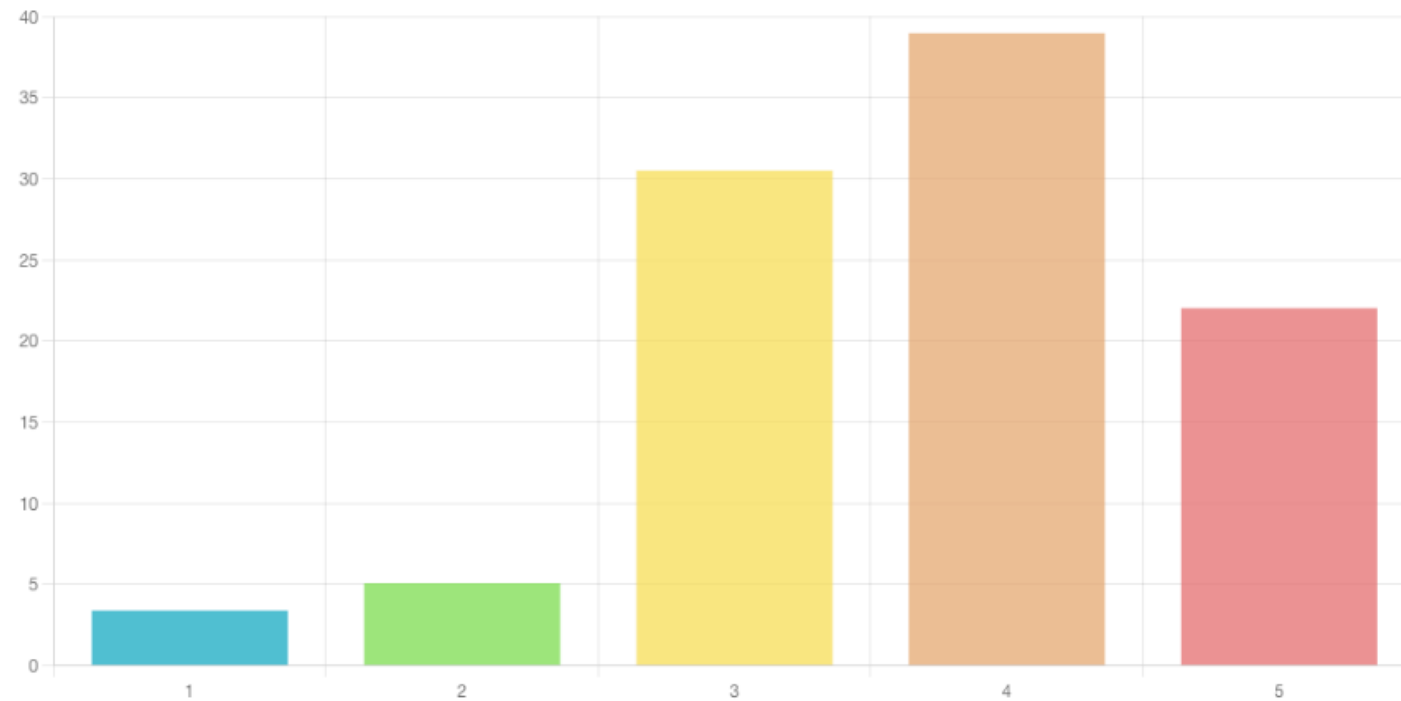
Key Takeaways

- The main barriers to greater involvement are lack of time, unclear direction, and perceived lack of impact.
- The campaign may benefit from a more defined strategy, better volunteer engagement, and broader messaging beyond CRT.
- Future efforts should focus on clear, tangible goals that align with wider national priorities like biodiversity and conservation.

Campaign Viability

7

On a scale of 1 to 5, how necessary do you think it is for the campaign to change tactics for a viable next stage?



	1	2	3	4	5	Responses	Weighted Average
Not necessary at all - Absolutely necessary	2 (3%)	3 (5%)	18 (31%)	23 (39%)	13 (22%)	59	3.71 / 5
							3.71 / 5

8

Please suggest what alternative approaches or focus areas might be more effective, or add any further thoughts, opinions and input here.

Challenges and Current Issues

42 responses

1/2

- Difficulty in identifying effective campaigning tactics.
- Public apathy, including from expected supporters.
- Increased competition for attention and funding.
- Free public access to canals creates reluctance to pay for their upkeep.
- Lack of significant national awareness or concern about canal issues.

Key Campaign Strategies

1. **Local Engagement:** Work with local communities, elected officials, and media to build support and influence national decisions.
2. **Social Media & Online Presence:** Expand social media use, drive traffic to the campaign website, and simplify petition signing and donations.
3. **Major Advocacy Push:** Coordinate a focused effort around key government financial events (e.g., Autumn Statement, Budget).
4. **Sustained Effort:** Keep the campaign going long-term, targeting government review of canal funding.
5. **National Visibility:**
 - Improve media presence with high-profile campaigns, direct lobbying of MPs, and publicising canal issues (e.g., landslips, stoppages).
 - Engage Parliament via questions at PMQs and media campaigns to pressure the Treasury.
6. **Broader Public Involvement:**
 - Include non-boating canal users (walkers, cyclists, fishermen).
 - Work with celebrities and community leaders.
 - Highlight benefits of waterways for public health, well-being, and economic growth.
7. **Alternative Framing for Funding:**
 - Present canals as a heritage asset, linear park, and part of climate adaptation.
 - Emphasize biodiversity, flood control, and economic contributions.

8

Please suggest what alternative approaches or focus areas might be more effective, or add any further thoughts, opinions and input here.

42 responses

2/2

Potential Adjustments

- Shift focus from demanding general funding to identifying projects that are more likely to receive support.
- Improve understanding of the economic cost of maintaining waterways versus income sources.
- Work in alignment with Canal & River Trust (CRT) leadership strategies.
- Engage directly with national and local governments through targeted campaigns, events, and media coverage.

The overall goal remains securing long-term funding for the waterways while increasing visibility and public engagement.



PARTICIPATING ORGANISATIONS -1

- Ashby Canal Trust
- BCS, Broads Society,
- Chasing the Boats
- Cheshire Cat Narrowboat Holidays
- Coombeswood Canal Trust
- Court above the cut YouTube
- Electrika - the electric narrowboat show
- Farncombe Boat House
- FBW
- Fox Narrowboats
- Hillingdon Canals Partnership
- yourhelmsman.co.uk
- IWA (2)
- IWA Birmingham
- Black Country & Worcestershire Branch
- Birmingham Canal Navigations Society
- Littlebury Training
- London Canal Museum
- Maidenhead Waterways



PARTICIPATING ORGANISATIONS -2

- Mercia Marina
- Wilts & Berks Canal Trust (2)
- Narrowboat day hire limited
- 31 Responses
- NABO
- National Transport Trust
- NINF
- Northern Canals Assoc
- Shire Cruisers
- Thames and Medway Canal Association
- Wilderness Boat Owners' Club