



Press Release

For immediate release

Fund Britain's Waterways Takes Warning to Westminster

- **Britain's inland waterways are under threat:** adequate investment needed for failing infrastructure and to safeguard the future of the 5,000-mile network
- **A united national campaign:** 160 organisations with hundreds of thousands of supporters back Fund Britain's Waterways (FBW) to protect the environmental, leisure, heritage, and freight value of our waterways
- **Campaigners take powerful action** 26-strong flotilla, some travelling over 275 miles, arrived at Westminster to deliver a clear, visible message directly to MPs and the public

Government received a wake-up call today from waterways campaigning group, Fund Britain's Waterways, as it takes its message to Westminster.

A flotilla of boats today stopped by the Palace of Westminster as the call to safeguard Britain's inland waterways reached the heart of government. A colourful 26-strong flotilla delivered a clear message to the nation's policy makers from the Thames to protect the future of our waterways.

The journey began with the initial group of boats setting off from Strawberry Island Boat Club in Doncaster on 29th March as the start of the major campaign cruise to and beyond the heart of government, raising awareness and being joined by other boats along the way. By the time they stopped outside Parliament, the group had operated 172 locks to London.

The flotilla included a pair of working fuel boats, a historic narrowboat, a Dutch barge and privately owned narrowboats from across the country, some of which had to battle failing canal infrastructure and a pollution incident in their determination to reach Westminster.

United, they sounded their horns to cheers from supporters on Westminster Bridge, drawing the attention of MPs gathered on the Palace's terrace ahead of Prime Minister's questions today.

Welcoming the flotilla were crowds of inland waterway supporters on the bridge and representatives from the campaign's alliance of 160 organisations joining Parliamentarians on the Terrace.

Fund Britain's Waterways is a coalition of organisations representing hundreds of thousands of users and supporters of inland waterways campaigning to safeguard the future of Britain's 5,000-mile network of cherished canals and rivers. The campaign urges recognition of the importance of Britain's inland waterways as part of the national infrastructure with environmental, leisure, heritage, and commercial freight value, and calls for an urgent review of their funding in view of their already-deteriorating condition

This year's flotilla is led by Hazel Owen, Chair of the AWCC (Association of Waterways Cruising Clubs) and a member of the FBW steering group, who said:

"Not even broken locks or pollution from a fire closing the Maida Hill Tunnel stood in the way of the 26 boats representing thousands of FBW members getting our message across to the Government that adequate funding is required to save our canals for future generations.

A big thank you to the staff and volunteers of the Canal & River Trust for the special efforts they made to facilitate the campaign cruise. Thanks to them as well as the hard work of the boaters we were able to reach the Palace of Westminster as planned. We were delighted to be welcomed by Parliamentarians and FBW representatives on the terrace and supporters on Westminster Bridge as we sounded our horns and made quite a noise."

From Westminster, the FBW flotilla continues its journey north and will cross the Wash to the Anglian waterways, continuing to sound its horns and the alarm across the country to the need for investment and support for Britain's inland waterways. The initial group of boats is scheduled to return to Doncaster in August, 20 weeks after leaving.

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

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Uma Kumaran MP and guests on the terrace of the Palace of Westminster (credit: Uma Kumaran MP)

L-R Ros Daniels (Canal & River Trust Regional Director London & South East), Mike Wills (Inland Waterways Association National Chair and Chair of FBW), Uma Kumaran (MP for Stratford & Bow and Waterways APPG Co-Chair), Mel Hide (Royal Yachting Association Director of External Affairs), Sue O'Hare (Inland Waterways Association Deputy Chair and Member of FBW Steering Group), Richard Parry (Canal & River Trust CEO)



Members of the FBW flotilla standing off the Palace of Westminster (credit: Rachel Eglinton, Be Seen Be Green Photography)



The FBW flotilla viewed from Westminster Bridge (credit: Liz Rayner)



FBW supporters on Westminster Bridge (credit: Liz Rayner)