

PRESS RELEASE



For immediate release

Date: 5th August 2025

Fund Britain's Waterways campaigning on the River Cam

On Sunday 3rd August a colourful flotilla of boats travelled in convoy up the River Cam and assembled at Baits Bite Lock, to meet Charlotte Cane MP and draw attention to the threats facing Britain's canals and navigable rivers as a result of inadequate funding.

15 narrowboats and cruisers, dressed with Fund Britain's Waterways banners, made the journey from Bottisham Lock and were joined en route by a steam launch, a rowing boat and a kayak. They passed moored boats also dressed with banners and were applauded by supporters on the bank. A large group gathered at Baits Bite Lock including Cambridge city and county councillors and representatives of businesses and other organisations, united in their support for inland waterways and their call for investment to ensure their survival.

Baits Bite Lock is one of two locks on the River Cam which have had to be closed because of structural and safety issues. Additionally, an ageing, and failing, fleet of work vessels means that even routine operational work on maintaining the navigation, banks, and towpath is very difficult. By agreeing to liquidate their investments, the Conservators of the River Cam can just about afford to do the stabilisation work at Baits Bite, and work was scheduled to begin on 4th August. There is no possibility of stabilising Jesus Green Lock without external funding or investment, and the risk of structural failure remains a threat to river users and the environment, economy, and safety of the city of Cambridge, highlighting the urgent need for meaningful investment in Britain's waterways.

The situation is a specific example of the vulnerability of the entire inland waterway network. Communities and businesses across the country are at risk as navigation

authorities face mounting financial pressures and increasing impacts of climate change. This is why the Fund Britain's Waterways (FBW) campaign was set up, to raise awareness of the value of our waterways and the challenges they face and call for government action.

The cruise to Baits Bite Lock was organised in partnership with the Great Ouse Boating Association (GOBA) as part of FBW's major campaign cruise for 2025. The journey began with an initial group of boats setting off from Strawberry Island Boat Club in Doncaster on 29th March, which grew to a 26-strong flotilla delivering a clear message to Government from the Thames in London on 7th May. Boats then took different routes north before meeting for a record-breaking mass crossing of the Wash from Boston to Wisbech on 25th June. Two of the original group of boats participated in the cruise to Baits Bite Lock having now covered well over 1000 miles.

Charlotte Cane, MP for Ely and East Cambridgeshire, said: "It's great to see the FBW campaign for the maintenance of inland waterways active in Ely and East Cambridgeshire. Our waterways support wildlife, provide vital drinking and agricultural water, and offer people space to stay active and connect with nature. As I said in my maiden speech, our chalk streams and water corridors are precious — and maintaining them is essential for our health, environment, and future.

It was a pleasure to join FBW on their campaign cruise this weekend. Being part of the flotilla offered a wonderful opportunity to take in the stunning scenery of Ely and East Cambridgeshire's inland waterways. Now more than ever, it's vital that we protect and preserve these important natural spaces."

Paula Syred, British Marine Inland Committee Member and Director of Fox Narrowboats Ltd, said: "Vibrant rivers and canals are not just for boaters, they provide valuable wildlife habitat and are vital to prevent homes and businesses flooding. British Marine research shows tourist visitors on boats spend around £94.50 per person per night¹. Since Baits Bite Lock was closed in May 2024 our hirers from all over the UK and abroad have taken alternative routes, missing the City of Cambridge and spending their money elsewhere on the rivers.

This is not just a local problem. The inland waterways across the UK have been chronically underfunded for years, leading to our navigation authorities fighting a constant battle just to keep the network open, with no spare funds to make a true improvement and leave our rivers and canals in a fit state for the next generation. This is why we at Fox Narrowboats support the Fund Britain's Waterways campaign. We now sit at a crucial junction where Government can choose to properly fund our wonderful network and give it an ongoing future, or be responsible for its further decline."

¹ British Marine Economic Benefits of boating tourism survey 2017 / 18

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

About the [Great Ouse Boating Association \(GOBA\)](#):

The Great Ouse Boating Association (GOBA) represents boaters on the rivers Great Ouse, Cam, Lark, Little Ouse, Wissey and associated East Anglian waterways. Established in 1958 it now has approximately 1500 members. GOBA welcomes this important FBW initiative and is pleased to be working together with FBW in highlighting the threats to our local waterways which reflect the declining state of the waterways across the nation.

Photographs accompanying this release:



1. Closure notice and FBW banner and event notice at Baits Bite Lock
(credit: Sue O'Hare)



2. FBW campaign flotilla heading for Baits Bite Lock
(credit: Kev Maslin, Chasing the Boats)



3. FBW supporters with Charlotte Cane MP [in orange, behind the word "Fund" on the banner] at Baits Bite Lock (credit: Kev Maslin, Chasing the Boats)

For higher resolution images please contact info@fundbritainwaterways.org.uk

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