

MEDIA RELEASE



For immediate release

Date: 1 December 2025

Fund Britain's Waterways campaigning on the River Little Ouse

On Friday 21 November 2025, members of the Wilderness Boat Owners' Club set off on board *Navi* from the Ship Inn at the junction of the Little and Ely Ouses to attempt to reach Brandon Lock. The lock has now been closed for nearly two years, following its use for flood management in January 2024 which caused both the lock and the approach to silt up. Since it has been categorised by the Environment Agency as a 'Navigation' asset rather than a 'Flood Management' asset, the cost of rectifying the situation falls to the Navigation budget which has proved inadequate.

The closure was first highlighted by another Wilderness trailboat cruise in September 2024, also under the Fund Britain's Waterways banner, when the twelve boats were unable to reach their intended destination of Brandon Town. Since then sandbanks have developed further and three trees have fallen across the river. Virtually the top four miles and lock to Brandon are now closed to boating.

Ivan Cane reports: "We had a good journey upstream to Hockwold. The first fallen tree was easy to pass, and we didn't actually notice the second one. We had no trouble along the next section, although noted that the left archway (going upstream) of the railway bridge is now getting impassable.

When we reached the lock/weir cut tree three came into view. *[Photos 1 & 2]* As this substantial tree is across the deeper channel, it is diverting the current to the south bank. This is then faster, and carrying silt. As soon as the current passes the tree, it slows and deposits its silt in a bank across the river.

As the bank extends across the river, we hit it suddenly with the outboard. Luckily, being prepared for such an occasion, we were able to stop and raise the engine. As local paddleboarders, canoeists and wild swimmers had surveyed the area for us in advance, we knew that there was a pool below a sticking-out tree where we could reach the bank to moor *[Photo 3]*, and also to walk to town.

We were welcomed by local canoeists and paddleboarders, as well as representatives from the Inland Waterways Association and other Ouse club members. *[Photos 4 & 5]*

Last year three boats a week on average were visiting Brandon, but the social media publicity of longer boats being unable to turn below the weir led to many being dissuaded from taking the journey. To us, the situation is that, since our 2024 flotilla cruise of twelve craft to the Agency moorings last September, the lock/weir cut has become impassable through silting up, compounded by the third fallen tree being substantial enough to change the direction of the current. Certainly, no craft longer (25 feet) or with a deeper draught (18 inches) could reach further than the wild mooring at the westernmost end of the Town Council's land.

The town of Brandon is now virtually cut off from the national and local system of navigable waterways. Sadly, Brandon is a small outpost of the Agency's national navigation portfolio, but we hope that a little publicity will bring it slightly closer to the fore. We hope that our efforts on behalf of the Fund Britain's Waterways campaign will help a little towards Environment Agency navigation assets funding deficits being improved."

The closure of the river to Brandon comes at a time when the Town Council is working hard to attract more users to their waterway. With Suffolk County Council aid, a jetty is being rebuilt, by the town's bridge, to enable canoeists and paddleboarders easier access. The canoe pass at Brandon Stauch is hopefully to be re-opened, and the Bridge Hotel is improving facilities so that boaters are able to moor alongside their business. Meanwhile both the Environment Agency's public moorings, one above the bridge, and the other below the weir are now inaccessible by boat, whilst the lock itself will soon enter its third year of waiting "for essential maintenance works". *[Photo 6]*

Ivan comments further: "We do appreciate the work that the Environment Agency's navigation team undertakes to keep the Ely and Great Ouse system working – despite the lack of funding and ageing navigation assets that they have to work with."

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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.

FBW has campaigned throughout 2025 with a major campaign cruise from Yorkshire to the Palace of Westminster and across the Wash to Anglian waterways, to raise awareness of both the value of the inland waterways and the threats to them. The year was rounded off with campaign cruises to Bait's Bite Lock on the River Cam in August and lastly to Brandon Lock on the River Little Ouse in November. Both these locks have been closed for some time owing to lack of funding, though Bait's Bite is expected to reopen shortly after temporary stabilisation work funded by the Conservators of

the River Cam with a contribution of £500,000 from the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority. The funding of long-term repairs to both Bait's Bite and Jesus Lock on the River Cam into Cambridge remains under discussion.

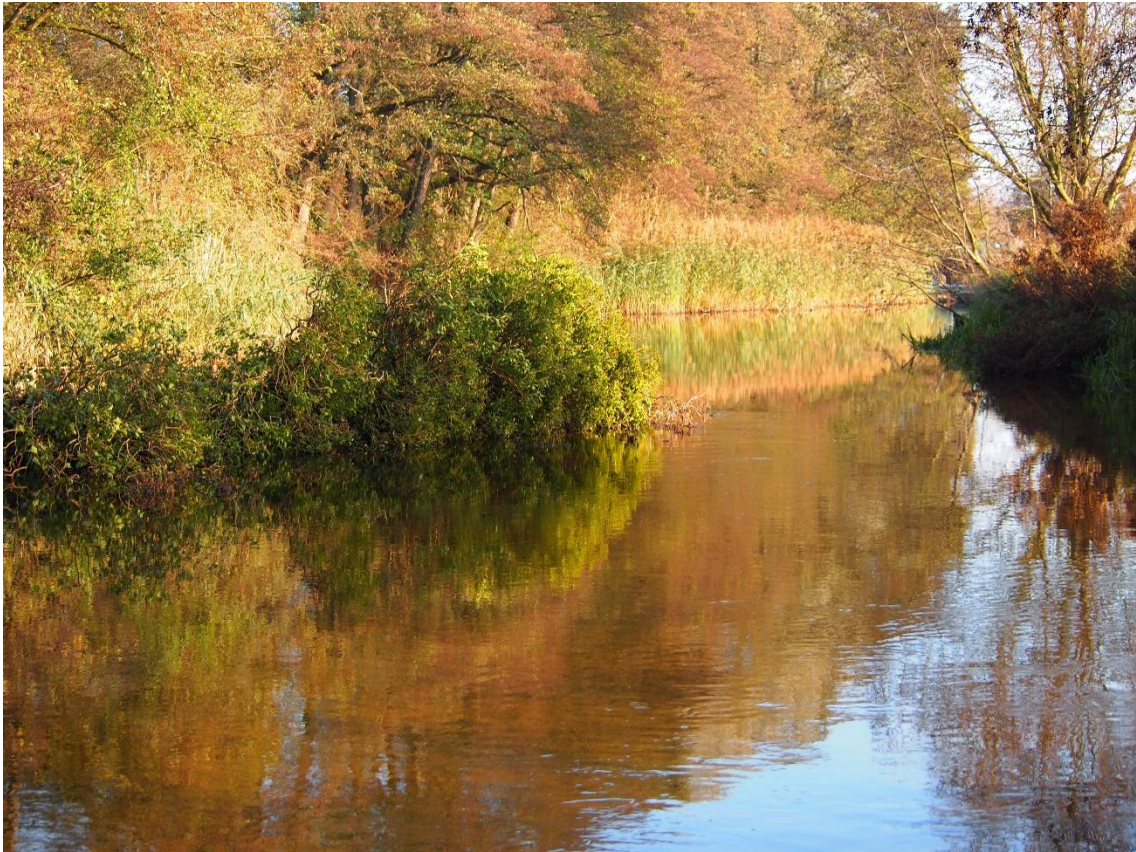
About the [Wilderness Boat Owner's Club](#):

The Wilderness Boat Owners' Club provides a means for owners or past owners of a Wilderness trailable boat to seek advice, share experiences, seek help, lobby on issues relevant to this type of boating, and generally make the most of their boat ownership. The Club seeks to support waterway restoration groups and to lobby navigation authorities and other organisations when necessary and appropriate, to highlight and resolve issues that are important to the members and the waterways more broadly.

Photographs accompanying this release:



1. Approaching the third fallen tree across the river (credit: Kevin Moore)



2. The third fallen tree across the river (credit: Kevin Moore)



3. Approaching the bank to moor at the highest reachable point, closest to Brandon Lock (credit: Mike Daines)



4. Welcome from local river users (credit: Mike Daines)



5. Campaigners with Fund Britain's Waterways banner at Brandon Lock (credit: Mike Daines)



6. Brandon Lock closure notice, November 2025 (credit: Ivan Cane)

Contact:

For further information contact info@fundbritainswaterways.org.uk