

## PRESS RELEASE



*For immediate release*

**Date: 6 February 2026**

### **Fund Britain's Waterways welcomes additional funding for Canal & River Trust but calls for sustainable funding for all waterways**

The Fund Britain's Waterways (FBW) campaign group welcomes the announcement by Defra of an additional £6.5 million of investment in the Canal & River Trust (CRT) to support repair, maintenance and long-term projects. However, whilst the additional funding will help with immediate priorities, it represents only 12% of the current £52.6 million annual grant funding to CRT, a figure which is already inadequate and which is intended to start reducing from April 2027.

Neither the ongoing Defra grant funding nor the additional funds are sufficient to halt the decline of CRT's network. This is made abundantly clear by the rising cost of maintenance and repairs. The recent breach of the Llangollen Canal at Whitchurch is likely to cost several million pounds to repair. Maintenance work over the 2024/2025 winter period cost over £60 million. Repairs to just one reservoir at Toddbrook will cost nearly £50 million. Even repairing bridges after vehicles have struck them costs over £1 million each year.

Neither is CRT alone in facing problems caused by long-term inadequate funding. The Environment Agency's waterways are also deteriorating in the face of ageing infrastructure, climate change effects and inflationary pressures. There are now five indefinite closures across its Anglian waterways, which the Agency has stated that it has no plans to address owing to ongoing financial pressures.

FBW has been campaigning for more than 2½ years for local and national government to take urgent action to protect Britain's inland waterways. In the last six months there have been two announcements of additional funding, firstly £500,000 from the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority for repairs to locks on the River Cam and now £6.5 million for CRT. These are a very welcome indication that Government may be starting to hear the message, but what is needed is sustained, predictable long-term funding for all waterways.

For these reasons FBW repeats its call for Government to commit to a comprehensive national review of future funding plans for Britain's inland waterways.

Hazel Owen, Chair of FBW, said: “£6.5m of additional funding for CRT is good, but not good enough. FBW will continue to campaign for a sustainable level of funding for all waterways to ensure their survival for future generations. Everyone is agreed on the value of our waterways, but that must be translated into funding.”

#### **Notes to Editors:**

1. The DEFRA press release of 4 February 2026 announcing the additional CRT funding is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/iconic-canal-to-be-better-protected-with-65-million-investment>
2. Defra’s Written Statement of 10 July 2023 announcing the level of grant funding to CRT from 2027 is at: <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2023-07-10/hcws924>
3. CRT’s media release in response to the Defra Written Statement is at [Government funding cuts put future of nation’s historic canals at risk | Canal & River Trust \(canalrivertrust.org.uk\)](https://www.canalrivertrust.org.uk/news/government-funding-cuts-put-future-of-nation-s-historic-canal-at-risk)
4. More information on the Environment Agency Anglian region closures can be found at <https://waterways.org.uk/about-us/news/fenland-waterways-face-permanent-fragmentation-as-old-bedford-sluice-becomes-fifth-indefinite-closure-in-the-region>

#### **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 now has more than 160 member organisations representing hundreds of thousands of users and supporters of inland waterways.

For further information about Fund Britain’s Waterways, see [www.fundbritainwaterways.org.uk](http://www.fundbritainwaterways.org.uk) or contact Sue O’Hare, Navigation Committee Chair at the Inland Waterways Association [sue.ohare@waterways.org.uk](mailto:sue.ohare@waterways.org.uk)

**Photographs accompanying this release:**



1. Narrowboat stranded by the breach in the Llangollen Canal in Whitchurch, Shropshire, December 2025 (credit: Taylors Aboard)



2. Environment Agency closure notice for Brandon Lock on the River Little Ouse, November 2025 (credit: Ivan Cane)



3. FBW supporters on Westminster Bridge, May 2025 (credit: Liz Rayner)

For higher resolution images please contact [info@fundbritainswaterways.org.uk](mailto:info@fundbritainswaterways.org.uk)