



Steering Group, February 2026



Hazel Owen, AWCC National Chair and Chair of Fund Britain's Waterways

Hi, I'm Hazel, a seasoned inland waterways enthusiast with over 20 years of experience navigating our beautiful water systems. Having made Strawberry Island my home base in the North East of the waterways system, I have explored and cruised a significant portion of the inland waterways, becoming well-versed in their intricacies and hidden gems.

It is my love for these waterways that led to my involvement with the Association of Waterways Cruising Clubs (AWCC), where I currently hold the esteemed position of National Chair. Subsequently becoming involved in the Fund Britain's Waterways Campaign, advocating for proper funding and resources to ensure the preservation and enhancement of our cherished waterways.

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Herbert Eppel, Leicester Civic Society

My passion for the unique and fascinating British inland waterways system started in 2002, during a week-long towpath walk from St Pancras to Leicester, which soon after led to the acquisition of a small narrowboat. Following enthusiastic local support when the FBW flotilla came through Leicester on its way to London in summer 2025, Leicester Civic Society was invited to nominate a representative for the FBW steering group, in the spirit of extending its membership beyond boating-related organisations, and I was nominated for the role. As it happens, I'm also involved in the IWA Leics branch. In my 'spare time' I've been running a technical translation business since 1995.

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Ed Helps, British Marine Inland Association Chair

I am currently the Chair of the British Marine Inland Association following a 6 year tenure on the British Marine and Boat Shows boards. Prior to semi-retirement I was Managing Director of ABC Leisure Group and remain a non-executive board director. I am a Trustee of the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal Society and was a Trustee of the Droitwich Canals Trust during its restoration. I have had a lifelong relationship with canals having been a canoeist competing on many canals around the country.

Contact: mail@edwardhelps.co.uk



Andrew Phasey, RYA

Andrew Phasey represents the Royal Yachting Association on the FBW steering group. Andrew is an enthusiastic river and canal boater in the UK and Europe. He has a strong belief in waterways being available for all, and is committed to supporting the campaign in every way for as long as it may take.

Contact: theoldmainline@fastmail.fm

Andy Williams, NABO Acting Chair

Contact: vicechair@nabo.org.uk



Mike Wills, IWA National Chair

I became chair of IWA in February 2024 but have been fascinated by the inland waterways since my teens. Early experiences included digging out a disused lock and helping to raise a sunken wooden narrowboat which was subsequently converted into a houseboat. I have had dozens of narrowboat holidays, am a regular towpath walker and in 2019 I purchased part of a worsted mill and wharf on the Leeds & Liverpool Canal which I have restored to create a four-storey house. I am a Chartered Accountant with a wide range of experience including

the senior civil service, private practice and non-executive directorship and consultancy. My commercial experience and my passion for the waterways has encouraged me to try to raise their public profile, encourage restoration, and seek to influence those who can support the wonderful national asset which is our inland waterways.

Contact: mike.wills@waterways.org.uk

Volunteers, February 2026



Stephen Busby (project manager)

My wife, Barbara, and I had a narrow boat built in 2017. Since then we have cruised most of the inland waterways gaining an IWA Silver Propeller award along the way. We have a mooring at Hawne Basin in The Black Country where the boat spends a couple of months over winter.

I decided to volunteer with FBW as it's something I can do from anywhere and is a way of putting something positive back into the canal world. We have many more volunteering opportunities, why not come and join us?

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Anne Husar (social media)

My Fund Britain's Waterways credentials include nearly 20 years liveaboard on our 70ft narrowboat during which time we've cruised many of the English canals and rivers, also most of the European ones too. A long-time NABO Council member and former Chair, a boater recently described me as a "passionate" supporter of the canals; I'll accept that.

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Sue O'Hare (secretary)

My love of waterways started by reading Arthur Ransome books and watching ships on the River Ribble. Various hire boats on the Norfolk Broads and then the canals led to a shared ownership narrowboat and eventually a boat of our own just before the Covid-19 pandemic. I've been a member of IWA's Navigation Committee since 2016 and have been Navigation Committee Chair since 2022. I was an IWA Trustee 2020-25.

As a teenager I heard about a section of the Rochdale Canal outside Manchester being filled in to create a shallow water park, and was horrified by the lack of forward thinking and sheer waste of potential. Ever since then I have been strongly motivated to make sure our waterways are properly valued as the enormous asset they are and never wasted again.

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Frances Phasey (communications)

I started dinghy sailing aged five, and narrowboating much later, in 1997. I've lived aboard, and also cruised on European waterways. Since retiring I've been a freelance writer.

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George Seward (cruise master)

George Seward is a life-long boater, having started as a young boy when his parents bought their first 19 ft Cabin Cruiser in 1969. Occasional weekends, then short holidays developed into two and three week journeys in the 1970's including the Caldon Canal before it was officially re-opened in '76?

George is well versed with the benefits of the canal system to all walks of life.

Fitting out three narrowboats, his last been a 58ft Colecraft which has now travelled to most parts of the country including many Tidal waters. Taking part in the FBW Campaign Cruise in London in 2024, he passed under Tower Bridge 4 times in three days.

George is a member and Treasurer of Hinckley Boat Club in Leicestershire, Regional Chair for the Association of Waterways Cruising Clubs (AWCC) and a member of the Fund Britains Waterways Steering Group.

Recently retired from a career in Corporate Finance with his own Business, George intends to cruise all parts of the System taking the message of the benefits of the canals to one and all with him. George has a young daughter who enjoys operating the locks – a great help to an older Dad!

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