



## Fund Britain's Waterways Update, February 2026

Welcome to the February 2026 update from the Fund Britain's Waterways (FBW) campaign.

In this edition we look at the recent announcement of additional funding for the Canal & River Trust, report on the growing FBW volunteer base, and preview some of the campaign plans for 2026.

### EXTRA £6.5M FOR CANAL & RIVER TRUST

On 4 February Defra [announced](#) an additional £6.5 million of investment in the Canal & River Trust (CRT) to support repair, maintenance and long-term projects. On one hand, while obviously welcome, this one-off sum is nowhere near enough to make a significant dent in the figure needed to reverse the decline of CRT's waterways. It also does nothing for waterways managed by other navigation authorities. FBW issued [a press release on 6 February](#) setting out our repeated call for Government to commit to a comprehensive national review of future funding plans for Britain's inland waterways.

On the other hand, this is the second announcement of additional waterway funding in the last six months (the first being the £500,000 from the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority for repairs to locks on the River Cam – details [here](#)). Might this possibly mean that the Government is starting to hear the message that all waterways need more funding?

### NEW FBW VOLUNTEERS

The FBW steering group is delighted to welcome two new members: Herbert Eppel, representing Leicester Civic Society, and Andy Williams who succeeds Anne Husar as both Acting Chair of the National Association of Boat Owners (NABO) and NABO's FBW representative.

We are very pleased that Anne will continue to support FBW as volunteer social media specialist, alongside two recent additions to our volunteers: Frances Phasey (communications) and George Seward (cruise master). Further details of the team are available [here](#).

Stephen Busby continues to coordinate our efforts as volunteer project manager. Please do contact Stephen if you are able to offer support to FBW as a volunteer ([stephen.j.busby@gmail.com](mailto:stephen.j.busby@gmail.com)).



Herbert Eppel



Stephen Busby



Frances Phasey



George Seward

### **FBW ON SOCIAL MEDIA**

Fund Britain’s Waterways is now on LinkedIn at <https://www.linkedin.com/company/fund-britains-waterways>. Please do follow us there, as well as on [Facebook](#) and [X](#).

### **FBW / BCNS ICICLE CRUISE TO WALSALL, 20/21 MARCH 2026**

The first FBW event of 2026 will be a campaign cruise jointly organised with the Birmingham Canal Navigations Society (BCNS) over the weekend of 20/21 March. The Icicle Cruise to the Walsall Town Arm will celebrate the re-opening of the canal after the August 2024 pollution incident and sample the new CRT arrangements at Walsall Basin. We already have 19 registrations, including two former working pairs of narrowboats, so this should be a spectacular sight.

Please email [bcnsevents2026@gmail.com](mailto:bcnsevents2026@gmail.com) for more information.



Boats in Walsall Basin during 2025 BCNS Explorer Cruise (credit: BCNS)

## **RUSSELL NEWBERY REGISTER RALLY, STALYBRIDGE, 24-28 JUNE 2026**

As previously mentioned, the main FBW campaign cruise will head North West this year. We are hoping that boats will join the Russell Newbery Register Rally in Stalybridge from 24-28 June. The Rally will form part of the celebrations of the 25th anniversary of the restoration of the Huddersfield Narrow Canal and many interesting activities are planned. The Register is generously opening bookings to non-members so do please consider joining and helping to get as many boats in the centre of Stalybridge as possible. Details are [here](#).



Huddersfield Narrow Canal in Stalybridge town centre (credit Sue O'Hare)

### **OTHER WAYS TO SUPPORT FBW**

#### **Lobby your MP about the fragmented waterway network:**

If you haven't already, please do write to your MP as well as local and regional politicians and mayors, highlighting the benefits of waterways, the threat to them and the FBW campaign. Guidance and template letters are available [here](#).

#### **Encourage as many people as possible to sign the petition:**

<https://www.change.org/p/fundbritainswaterways>

#### **Fly an FBW banner or flag on your boat or elsewhere:**

You can [download FBW graphics](#) and use one of the internet suppliers. Or [email](#) us for more help.

#### **Support or organise an event:**

Please email [info@fundbritainswaterways.org.uk](mailto:info@fundbritainswaterways.org.uk) either for further information about these events, or if you have ideas for additional events.

As always, our grateful thanks to everyone who supports the campaign in any way.

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