



Fund Britain's Waterways Update, September 2026

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

As you will have gathered from our updates in July, it has been an eventful summer for the FBW team. Although much of the planned campaign cruising was disrupted by canal closures caused by both infrastructure failures and low water levels, this helped to reinforce the message of the consequences of inadequate funding for our waterways.

FBW / GOBA CAMPAIGN CRUISE ON THE GREAT OUSE, 13-19 JULY 2026

Unlike the main campaign cruise, the 'Navigating for Change' campaign cruise on the River Great Ouse to the Bedford River Festival went ahead as planned. It was organised by the Great Ouse Boating Association (GOBA) in association with FBW and was very successful in highlighting the issues facing both the Great Ouse and the waterways more widely. During the cruise meetings were held with local MPs and councillors including the Mayor of St Ives Alexander Thompson, the St Neots MP Ian Sollom and the North Bedfordshire MP Richard Fuller. Local boatyards and marinas provided support along the way, as did the Environment Agency volunteer lock keepers. The cruise culminated at the Bedford River Festival, the second-largest free outdoor festival in the United Kingdom behind only the Notting Hill Carnival.

A few of the photos from GOBA follow to give a flavour, and more details can be found on the GOBA website at <https://goba.org.uk/navigating-for-change-2026-great-ouse-campaign-cruise/>.





LIVERPOOL AT LAST!



Since the main 2026 campaign cruise ended at the last-minute venue of the Anderton Boat Lift, the campaigners have had mixed fortunes. Some have successfully returned to base but others are being delayed by low water levels and stoppages. We are delighted to report that on 16 August three boats succeeded in reaching the original destination of Liverpool Docks, crossing the Mersey in perfect conditions from Eastham Locks on the Manchester Ship Canal to the reopened Brunswick Lock into the Docks.

Photos: Crossing the Mersey, and the FBW flag in Liverpool Docks (credit: Fiona and Steve Burt)



BROWNHILLS CANAL FESTIVAL, 15/16 AUGUST

FBW presence at waterway events continues, and the FBW steering group has been very pleased to welcome help from members and supporters. At the Brownhills Canal Festival FBW had a very successful joint stall with Kev Maslin of Chasing the Boats Photography.



WHITCHURCH CANAL FESTIVAL, 5/6 SEPTEMBER

FBW had a stall on both days of the annual Whitchurch Canal Festival on the Whitchurch Arm of the Llangollen Canal. The festival, run by the Whitchurch Waterway Trust, was particularly important as a fundraiser this year because of the adjacent breach of the Llangollen Canal. It was very busy and CRT were giving guided tours of the breach site. FBW was able to benefit from the footfall to raise awareness of the wider issues affecting the waterway network.

(Photo credit: Ian Page)



If you are able to offer help to promote the campaign at any other events please do get in touch, either through the website contact form or by emailing info@fundbritainswaterways.org.uk.

LETTER TO THE PRIME MINISTER

The fragmentation of the waterway network over summer provided an excellent opportunity for me to write to the Prime Minister. I drew his attention to the benefits of the inland waterways and the threat to them from inadequate funding and asked him to champion the issue across government by recognising inland waterways as part of the nation's essential environmental and community infrastructure, supporting a fair and sustainable funding settlement, and encouraging coordinated action to protect these irreplaceable assets for current and future generations.

REPRESENTATION TO THE AUTUMN BUDGET 2026

FBW responded to an HM Treasury Stakeholder Survey requesting representations to the Autumn Budget 2026. This is the latest of several representations to the Treasury by FBW, making the case that our canals and navigable rivers deserve urgent attention as nationally significant environmental, economic and community assets. The infrastructure failures and low water levels of 2026 have made clearer than ever the peril of the waterway network, while the impact on individuals and businesses has demonstrated its importance to local communities.

FBW made three key 'asks':

1. **the importance of Britain's inland waterways is recognised**, as a unique national asset and part of the national infrastructure with the potential to make an even greater contribution
2. **the need for increased investment is acknowledged**, to reverse the deterioration in condition that is already happening and to counter the threats posed by climate change
3. **a review of government funding for all Britain's inland waterways is carried out as a matter of urgency**, with the aim of defining a sustainable funding solution to enable the current benefits of our canals and rivers to be maintained and enhanced for future generations.

For more information see the press release at <https://fundbritainwaterways.org.uk/fund-britains-waterways-submits-representation-to-the-autumn-budget-2026/>.

ENVIRONMENT AGENCY Q&A SESSION, 23 SEPTEMBER

At the same time as campaigning for increased funding for navigation authorities, FBW recognises the importance of those navigation authorities being able to explain how they are making the best possible use of funds for the waterways. For this reason FBW has been holding Q&A sessions with major navigation authorities to enable detailed questions to be asked and answered.

FBW recently secured an in-depth Q&A session with the Environment Agency (EA) about the waterways they manage. Questions have been collected from members and provided to EA in advance, to enable full answers to be given. Written responses will be available after the meeting, which will take place on 23 September.

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/fundbritainwaterways>

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@fundbritainwaterways.org.uk either for further information about planned events, or if you have ideas for additional events.

Internal and external event kits are now available. Please email info@fundbritainwaterways.org.uk if you are interested in borrowing one. The photo (credit: George Seward) shows the external kit in action at the Stafford Riverway Link Open Weekend.



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

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