



Caring for our waterways  
– how the Trust applies its  
finances to benefit boaters

# Boater Report 2018



**Canal &  
River Trust**

Making life better by water

[canalrivertrust.org.uk](http://canalrivertrust.org.uk)

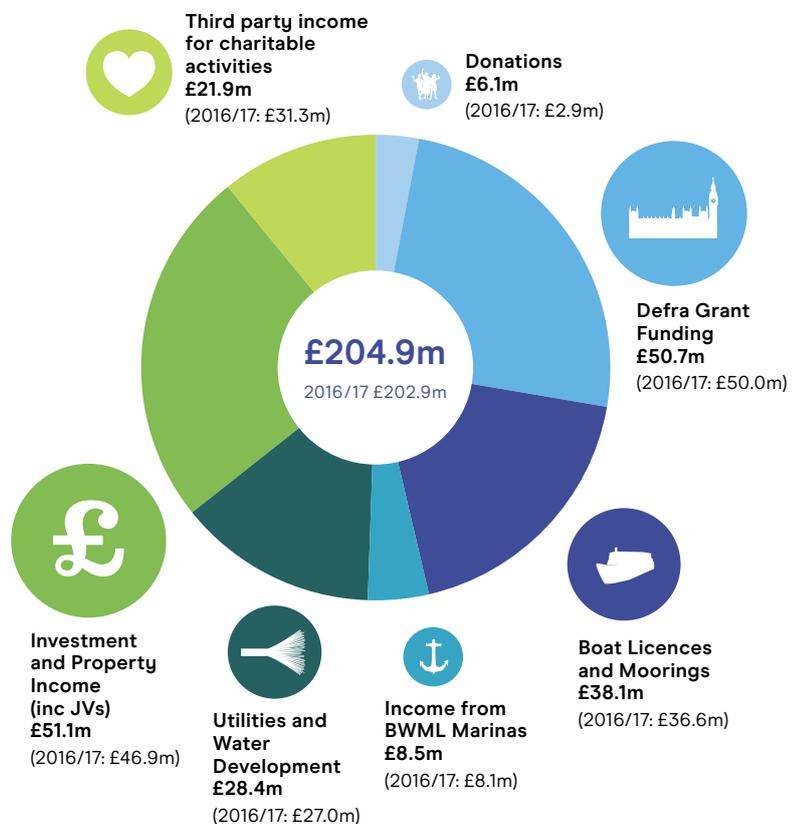
**“In 2017/18 leisure licences contributed £20.4 million, around 10% of our total income”**



The Trust’s core purpose is maintaining the 2,000 miles of canals and rivers we look after and making the experience of using them as good as we can. Boaters play a central role in funding this work: the money we receive from your boat licence forms a vital part of our finances. In 2017/18 leisure licences contributed £20.4 million, around 10% of our total income and, once the money from moorings and boating businesses is included, we received £38.1 million directly from boating activities. We wouldn’t be able to take care of the waterways without your contribution, alongside other sources of income that are also essential.

We generate money in a variety of other ways: our grant agreement with Government guarantees us just over £50 million a year through until March 2027 (though this is only increasing by around 1% per annum to 2021 and is fixed from 2022 so it will be declining every year in real terms when inflation is taken into account); income from our investments – both in property through rental income and in returns from our non-property funds (which now make up nearly 20% of our investments) – also nets us over £50 million each year; our utilities income – that is using the network to support water distribution, power cables and digital networks – generates over £25 million; and we also receive money from third party funders, councils, and companies, alongside donations from supporters.

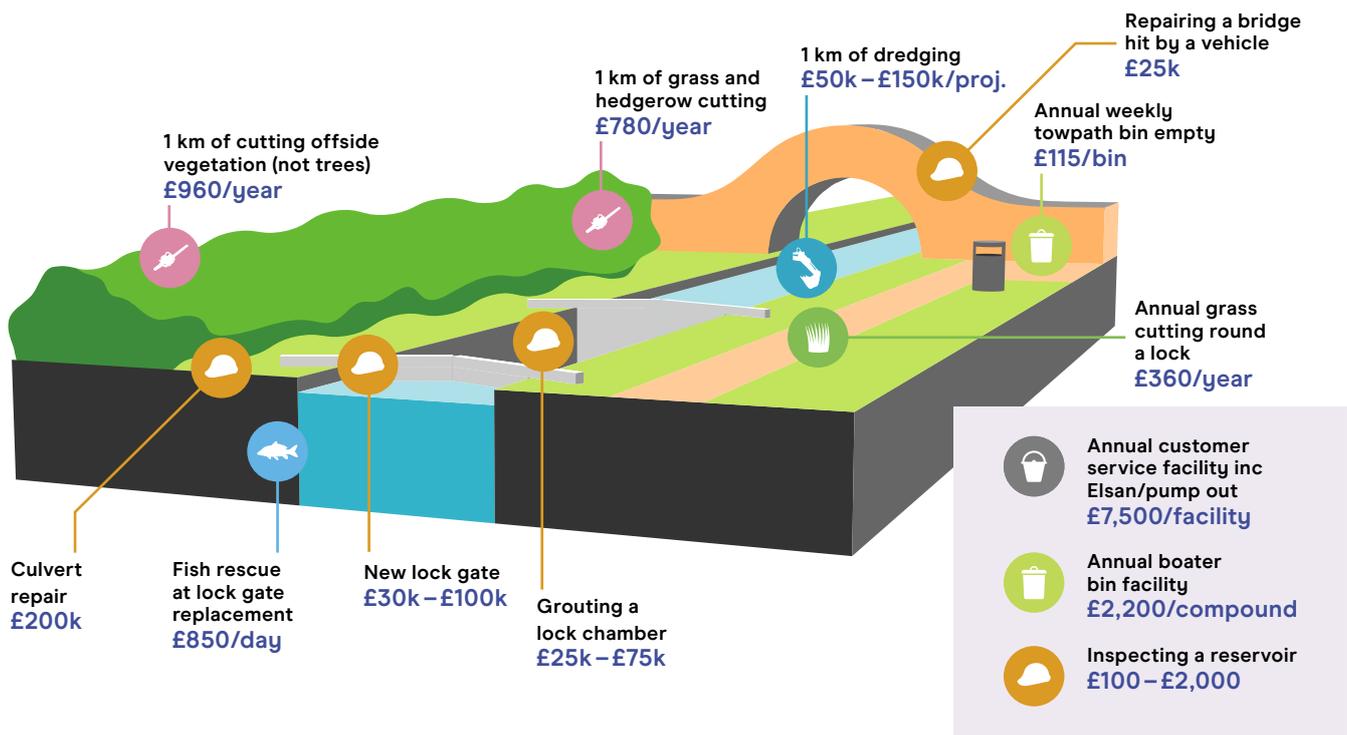
### Income for the last financial year



Of course, operating and looking after 2,000 miles of historic inland waterways and the wide variety of assets and structures that are integral to them, many of which are over 200 years old, is a costly task. Every year we carry out thousands of jobs, from multi-million pound projects on reservoirs and embankments to the smaller everyday tasks that keep our canals and river navigations open for boaters and others to enjoy. Our ambition is to make things better for boaters by focusing on the immediate repairs that most directly impact users, whilst still ensuring the waterways' basic infrastructure is in good condition, and reducing the number of times a canal is closed unexpectedly because of a structural failure of some sort.



**For every £1 we receive from boating, we get approximately £4 from elsewhere**

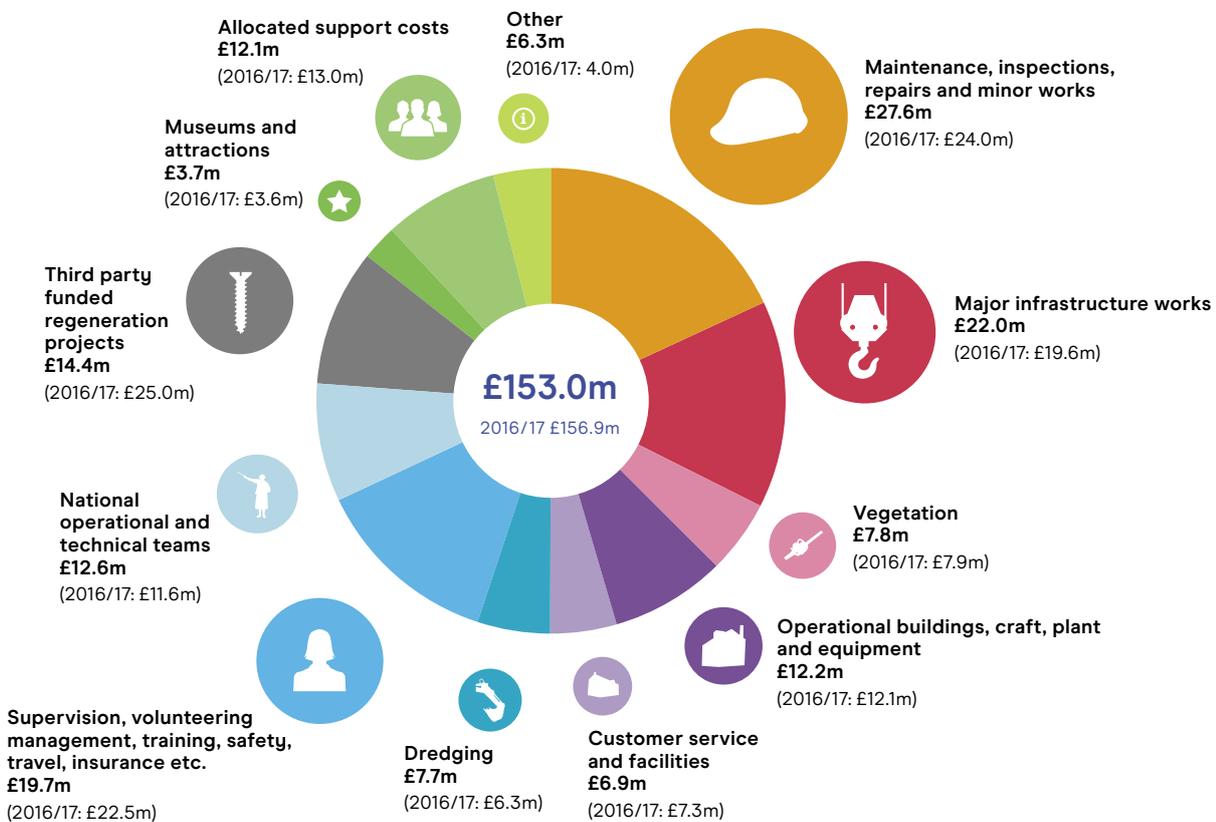


## Where does the money go?

As set out in our Annual Report, we incurred charitable expenditure of £153 million in 2017/18 and spent around £45 million in generating income, with some other overhead costs making up the total of over £200 million. Our formal accounts are

required to comply with charity accounting rules which means that both charitable expenditure and costs in generating income include some of the support costs necessary to operate the Trust.

## Resources expended on charitable activities



This chart is illustrative of how our costs are distributed. In the formal 2017/18 accounts we identified that £132 million of our total charitable expenditure was for waterway operation, maintenance and repairs (which includes an allocation of nearly £10 million of support costs as required by the accounting rules we work to – reflecting how our national teams support these activities, including our IT systems and costs of employee training, development and recruitment). Looking at this in a slightly different way,

the spend on the waterways splits broadly evenly between:

- the cost of heavy maintenance, repairs and other asset improvement projects; and,
- the day-to-day running of the network (including, for example, our contracts for managing vegetation and collecting waste) as well as our own teams that manage the network 24:7 throughout the year, responding to incidents, providing assistance, and keeping water supplies at the right levels.

In addition to this, we spent £17 million on works funded by third-parties (from outside the Trust) to improve the network, the largest category being for towpath re-surfacing, mostly in and around some of the cities that the waterways run through.

Finally, the growing contribution of our volunteers and local partner groups – many of whom are boaters of course – cannot be overlooked. They helped us carry out work that wouldn't have otherwise been

possible, from traditional towpath clean-ups, to increasingly complex works such as off-side vegetation management, and from introducing young people to the waterways to adopting local stretches of canal to make them attractive places to use and visit. Last year volunteers gave over 600,000 hours of their time and there were 225 community waterway adoptions. Waterway volunteering benefits its participants too, with 96% of volunteers indicating they would recommend it to others.



# “Boats and boaters will always be at the heart of what we do”

## Boating for all

In March 2018 there were around 34,000 licensed boats on our waterways, playing their part in their care. Our boat licence customer support team has brought licence evasion down to its lowest-ever level, with 96.9% of boats holding up-to-date licences, though unpaid licence fees would still provide around £600,000 in additional income that could be being spent on maintaining the canals and rivers.

## The challenge

We are a Trust for the waterways and for the wellbeing that they offer to people and communities – on the water or using the towpath. Our core work to care for the navigation will always come first, and boats and boaters will always be at the heart of what we do: the waterways must stay open for boating. To maximise our prospects for the long-term and to be fit for the future, we need to engage more people to support us, with boats and boaters integral to that goal, while we widen our reach to connect

with the millions of people who live and work around us. We will continue to seek to raise funds and draw support from new sources, increasing awareness of the Trust and the work we do, and promote the benefits that our waterways bring to people's lives.

We want you to be involved: become a Friend, volunteer, or simply help to promote our cause and spread the word. Tell people about the value of our wonderful waterways and why they should fight for them to stay open for everyone – because they are a vital part of our history and a source of wellbeing today, making life better by water, for boaters and all those who have discovered their local canal towpath.

The Trust's boating team is always happy to hear your views, comments, and suggestions so please do let us know what we can do to make your experience as good as we can, and in turn how you can help us to keep our canals and rivers at their best, now and for the future.

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All information correct at the time of printing.

**Cover Image:**

Peak Forest Canal