

PRESS RELEASE

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Canal & River Trust showcases to Parliament the importance of the nation's waterways

The Canal & River Trust has hosted a week-long exhibition in the Houses of Parliament, setting out the importance of the nation's inland waterways to society in addition to their core role for boats and navigation. This includes providing green-blue corridors through towns and cities, connecting to the countryside, supporting jobs, the economy and helping to address the national crises in public health, biodiversity and the climate emergency.

With the Trust's network of canals and rivers running through nearly half of the parliamentary constituencies across England and Wales, the Trust's exhibition was an opportunity for the waterways and wellbeing charity to speak with MPs about how it supports local and national priorities, and the importance of the longer-term partnership with government to provide adequate funding to safeguard the network.

Michael Fabricant MP, chair of the Waterways All Party Parliamentary Group, hosted the launch of the exhibition on Monday 17 October, with speeches also from Richard Parry, chief executive of the Canal & River Trust, and Philip Dunne MP, chair of the Environment Audit Committee.

Richard Parry commented: "Built 250 years ago as arteries of the Industrial Revolution, today Britain's canals are the world's finest network of working industrial heritage, and their role for navigation remains integral to their core purpose.

"Over the centuries they have seen significant changes in their prospects, from thriving trade routes through to their resurgence as green-blue corridors providing wellbeing benefits for the nine million people who have waterways on their doorstep.

"With the growing threat of climate change, Canal & River Trust is increasingly focusing its resources on increasing the resilience of the canal network and our core purpose of keeping the waterways safe, attractive, accessible and available for boating and the wide range of other

users – on the water and on our towpaths, which attract around ten million users every month. Our role extends to helping Britain mitigate the effects of a changing climate, from helping to cool cities in summer and moving water around the country, to providing low-carbon energy to heat homes in winter and as sustainable transport traffic-free routes through our towns and cities with potential for environmentally friendly water-borne freight to be revived.”

The Trust currently receives around a quarter of its funding from Government, in an agreement secured when the charity was formed in 2012. The Trust is currently working with Defra on a review of the grant for the period beyond 2027 when the current Grant Agreement comes to an end.

Richard continued: “As well as demonstrating the benefits that our 250-year-old waterway network offers, this exhibition helps illustrate its fragility in the face of more frequent and intense extreme weather events. The scale of funding, and spending on the network must be maintained, with the sustainable long-term future of canals across England and Wales depending on building broad public support and maintaining our partnership with Government.”

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