

Debate Pack
18 November 2022
Number CDP-2022-0206

By Dr Dominic Carver,
Dr Roger Tyers,
Siobhan Wilson,
Paul Bolton

Future of the UK's canals and waterways

1	Background	3
1.1	Formation of the Canal and River Trust	3
1.2	Roles and responsibilities	4
	Maintaining infrastructure	5
	Environmental issues	6
1.3	Expenditure	7
1.4	Funding and revenue	7
	Defra grant agreement	9
1.5	Other Navigation Authorities	10
1.6	Additional stakeholders	11
2	Press Articles	13
3	Parliamentary Material	15
4	Further Reading	21

Summary

The Canal and River Trust (CRT) is a registered charity which was founded in 2012, when the responsibilities, assets, and liabilities of British Waterways were transferred to the organisation.

One of the CRT's main roles and responsibilities is to run and maintain its network of canals and waterways, however, the charity also carries out a wide and diverse range of activities for environmental and social benefit. To operate effectively it employs around 1,600 members of staff and also relies on the work of hundreds of volunteers.

The CRT receives revenue from a range of income streams, including boat licences and moorings however it currently receives around 24% of its income from a Defra grant which is guaranteed until 2026/27. Under the terms of the 15-year [Grant Agreement](#) (PDF) a review is taking place to consider whether, and if so, to what extent there is a case to continue supporting the CRT beyond the current grant period.

There will be a Westminster Hall debate on the 'Future of the UK's canals and waterways' on 22 November 2022. The debate will be led by Michael Fabricant MP.

This debate pack looks at the roles and responsibilities of the CRT and other navigation authorities. It provides details of current funding arrangements and discusses some of wider issues affecting the running and maintenance of the UK's waterways.

1

Background

1.1

Formation of the Canal and River Trust

The Canal and River Trust (CRT) was founded in 2012, when the responsibilities, assets, and liabilities of British Waterways were transferred to the charity. This took place under the [British Waterways Board \(Transfer of Functions\) Order 2012](#) which amended sections 104 and 105 of the [Transport Act 1968](#).

A [Memorandum of Understanding](#) published by Defra and the CRT at the time set out how these changes would work:

The British Waterways Board (Transfer of Functions) Order 2012 (the “Transfer Order”) contains a consequential provision amending the Transport Act 1968 to introduce some elaborations to the process for making orders under sections 104 and 105 of that Act (changes to the classification of a waterway or to the prescribed dimensions for navigation to which a waterway must be maintained).

The first set of changes to be made by the Transfer Order is that CRT will have an explicit right to be consulted in the case of any proposed orders under section 104 or 105 in respect of its waterways. Furthermore, it will have an enhanced “statutory proposer” role in relation to such orders concerning classification and maintenance dimensions of its waterways.

The second change is that the Secretary of State will be placed under an obligation to have regard to the financial position of CRT in deciding whether to make any order under section 104 or 105 concerning its waterways.¹

The [Memorandum of Understanding](#) also set out how the Government and CRT intended to work together:

CRT is successor to certain statutory functions of the British Waterways Board (BW) in England and Wales under the terms of the [British Waterways Board \(Transfer of Functions\) Order 2012](#) and to property, assets and liabilities of BW in England and Wales under the terms of the British Waterways Board Transfer Scheme 2012.

Defra formerly sponsored BW as a public body and is the settlor of a Trust Settlement relating to the waterways formerly owned or managed by BW and of which CRT is the sole corporate trustee.

To assist CRT in the execution of its duties as trustee of the Trust Settlement dated on or around the date of this MoU, Defra and CRT have entered into a

¹ Defra, [The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and Canal & River Trust Memorandum of Understanding](#) (PDF), 2012

Grant Agreement dated on or around the date of this MoU that provides for the payment of grant by Defra to CRT until 31 March 2027.

Defra and CRT each have enforceable rights and obligations under the Trust Settlement and the Grant Agreement but consider it to their mutual advantage to develop a constructive relationship of engagement and dialogue outside and beyond the requirements of the Trust Settlement and Grant Agreement.²

A Library [briefing on British Waterways](#) (April 2011) contains further information on the management of inland waterways and docks prior to the establishment of the CRT.

1.2 Roles and responsibilities

One of the CRT's main roles and responsibilities is to run and maintain its network of canals and waterways. However, the charity also carries out a wide and diverse range of activities. To operate effectively it employs around 1,600 members of staff and also relies on the work of hundreds of volunteers.³ The CRT's vision is "to have living waterways that transform places and enrich lives" and its website highlights the importance of its work for supporting physical and mental wellbeing:

We provide a space where people can feel happier and healthier, nature is recovering and history is alive. A space for boating, angling, cycling, walking, paddling or just watching the world drift by.

Our research shows that spending time by water, whether it be your lunchbreak, daily commute or just a weekend stroll, really can make us feel happier and healthier.

With ever-increasing rates of obesity, stress and declining mental health in the UK, we are uniquely placed to make a significant contribution to improving the wellbeing of millions of people. Our canals and rivers run through some of the most heavily populated communities in England and Wales, providing accessible green and blue space where it's needed the most.

That's why, here at the Trust, we're working with volunteers and communities across England and Wales to transform canals and rivers into spaces where local people want to spend time and feel better. We know this will bring wellbeing opportunities to millions.

Our work involves not only looking after our waterways, particularly in the face of climate change, but promoting them widely to the nine million people

² Defra, [The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and Canal & River Trust Memorandum of Understanding](#) (PDF), 2012

³ Canal and River Trust, [Specialist teams](#)

who have waterways on their doorstep so that many more people benefit from our free, accessible and local source of wellbeing.⁴

Further information on how the CRT is run and how it makes decisions is set out in its [Governance Handbook](#).

Maintaining infrastructure

[Information from the CRT](#) describes the difficulty of maintaining its large, historic network of assets. The age, unique nature of individual pieces of infrastructure and heavy usage of the network all add to the challenge:

We are the charity that looks after 2,000 miles of the UK's canals and rivers and over 8,500 different structures, many of them listed. We actually look after the third highest number of listed structures after the Church of England and National Trust. Caring for our waterways is an expensive and technically demanding job.

No two locks on our canals and rivers are the same and our quirky canal and river system throws up all sorts of challenges created by the weather, time and occasionally the people who use them. With almost 20 million visits a year from boaters, cyclists, walkers, anglers and families our waterways take a lot of pounding.⁵

An [interview with CRT's chief infrastructure and programmes officer](#) Malcolm Horne, was published in New Civil Engineer on 24 October 2022. The article sets out the scale of the infrastructure that the CRT must safely maintain and operate. It also highlights the 2019 case of Toddbrook Reservoir when the spillway of the reservoir owned by the CRT partially collapsed after heavy rainfall:

The trust is a charity which owns 1,582 locks, 55 tunnels, 2,970 bridges, 281 aqueducts and 71 reservoirs on the English and Welsh canal networks. It recently awarded £800M worth of civil engineering contracts – its largest ever award for waterway engineering contracts.

Incidents like the partial collapse of the spillway at the Toddbrook Reservoir dam in August 2019 highlight the importance of maintaining key infrastructure and having a clear view of risk. [Construction firm] Kier has now begun the £15M permanent repairs and the reservoir is due to reopen in late 2024.

[...] there are many other reservoirs getting similar types of upgrades to mitigate against similar incidents. A number of sites will benefit from additional or larger spillways, while work on others will focus on upgrading

⁴ Canal and River Trust, [About us](#)

⁵ Canal and River Trust, [Engineering](#)

valves, strengthening inflow and draw-off structures and geotechnical investigations.⁶

An [Independent Review Report](#) on the Toddbrook Reservoir incident was published in February 2020. The review determined that “the most likely cause of the failure of the auxiliary spillway at Toddbrook Reservoir on the 1 August 2019 was its poor design, exacerbated by intermittent maintenance over the years which would have caused the spillway to deteriorate”.⁷

Environmental issues

Canals can provide a range of environmental benefits including the provision of habitat for aquatic and semi-aquatic species. However, canals also face a range of environmental issues such as invasive species, sewage discharges and plastic pollution that can affect the quality of habitat they provide and threaten the wildlife they support.

Storm overflows

When sewage infrastructure exceeds its capacity, usually during heavy rainfall, storm overflows discharge raw untreated sewage (although significantly diluted) into waterways and the sea. This can cause environmental damage and a risk to public health.

In some cases, the receiving waters may include canals, as was highlighted in a [Westminster Hall debate on Sewage Discharges](#) in October 2022. During the debate a number of MPs raised the issue of canals in their constituency being affected by sewage pollution from storm overflows.

A Library briefing on the governments [storm overflows discharge reduction plan](#) contains further information on the issue of sewage discharges and the actions being taken to reduce their impacts.

Invasive species

Another environmental issue highlighted by the CRT is controlling or preventing the presence of invasive non-native species in canals and waterways. A POST research briefing on [Invasive non-native species](#) (INNS) and invasive alien species describes them as “those that are introduced, intentionally or unintentionally, outside of their natural geographic range, causing environmental, social and/or economic impacts”.⁸

The CRT page on [tackling invasive species](#) explains that aquatic plants such as floating pennywort and other species like zebra mussels and signal crayfish

⁶ New Civil Engineer, [Interview | Canal & River Trust's Malcolm Horne on protecting history while planning for the future](#), 24 October 2022.

⁷ Defra, [Toddbrook Reservoir Independent Review Report](#), 10 February 2020

⁸ POST, [Invasive non-native species](#),

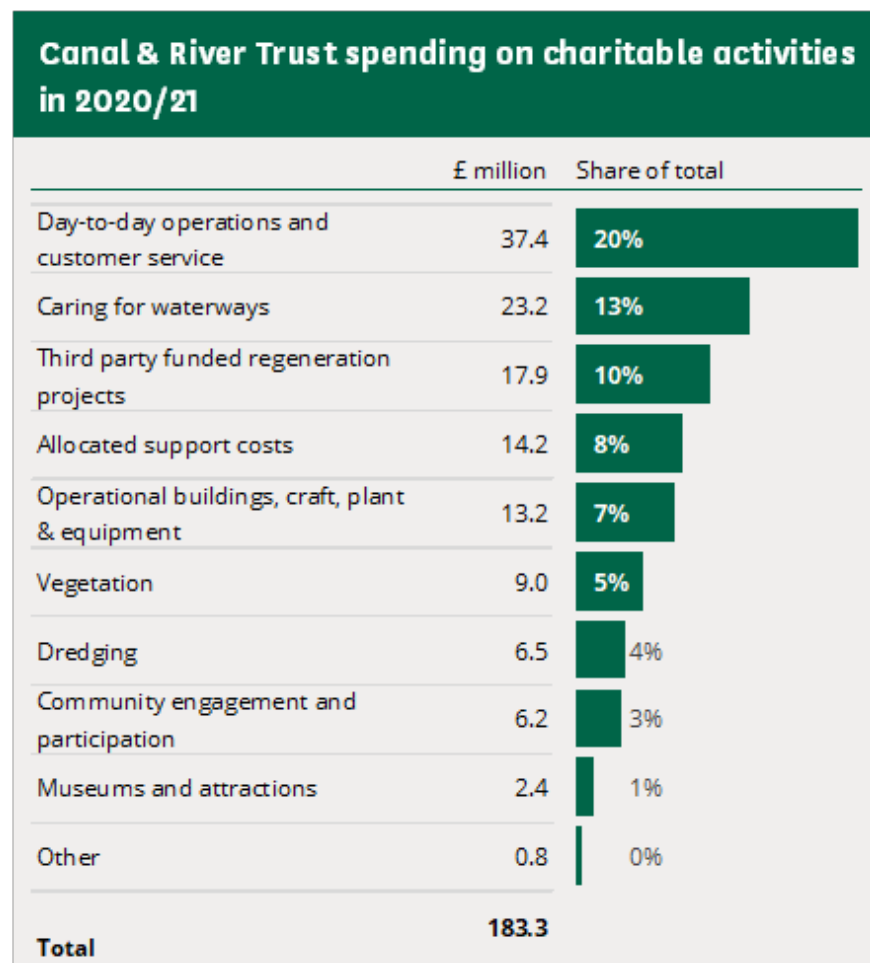
can have a detrimental impact on native species and the overall environmental health of canals and waterways.

1.3

Expenditure

Major infrastructure works account for the majority of the CRT's expenditure. In 2020/21 this amounted to £52.4 million from a total expenditure of 183.3 million. The next largest outgoings for the organisation are day-to-day operations including customer services and caring for the waterways. In 2020/21 these activities required £37.4 million and £23.2 million respectively.⁹

The chart below sets out the CRT's expenditure on charitable activities for the 2020/21 accounting period.



Source: Canal and River Trust, [Annual Report & Accounts 2020/21](#), 28 September 2022

⁹ Canal and River Trust, [Annual Report & Accounts 2020/21](#), last updated September 2022

1.4

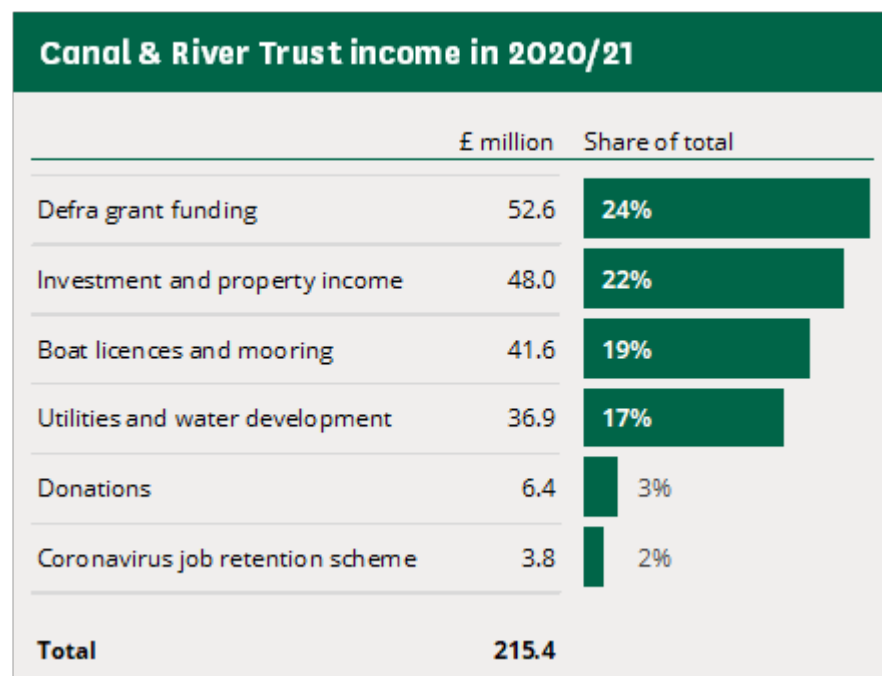
Funding and revenue

The Canal and River Trust (CRT) receives revenue from a range of income streams. These include Government funding, income from investments and properties, utilities and water developments and third-party income from charitable activities. For the 2020/2021 accounting period, the CRT received income of £215.4 million.¹⁰

Whilst these revenue streams vary slightly year on year, the latest annual report and accounts show that for the 2020/2021 period, CRT's largest source of income was Defra grant funding. This accounted for £52.6m of the organisation's total £215.4 million revenue, which is approximately 24%.

Income from investments and property was the organisation's second largest revenue source for the 2020/2021 period, generating £48.4 million of income. This organisation's third largest revenue source for was income from moorings and boat licenses which generated £40.4 million in 2020/21. This just under 19% of the total annual income for that year.

The chart below sets out income that the CRT receives from its remaining revenue streams.



Source: Canal and River Trust, [Annual Report & Accounts 2020/21](#), 28 September 2022

¹⁰ Canal and River Trust, [Annual Report & Accounts 2020/21](#), last updated September 2022

Defra grant agreement

Upon the establishment of the CRT, a 15-year [Grant Agreement](#) (PDF) was implemented by the Government. This runs to 2026/27 but allowed for a review to take place in the financial year 2020/21. The purpose of the review was to assess the need for the Government to continue to support the CRT beyond 2027.

The [Grant Agreement](#) sets out the details of the Government's funding arrangement and what the grant can be used for. Section 5 of the document sets out the amount of money to be paid as a grant and the schedule of payments, which was initially set at £39 million a year.¹¹

A response to a [parliamentary question](#) from 2012 covers the transfer from British Waterways to the Canal and River Trust and provides a brief overview of the allocation of future funding:

British Waterways (BW) will move from being a public corporation to a charitable body, the Canal and River Trust (CRT), in June 2012, subject to parliamentary consent. The Government have reached agreement with the CRT trustees on the long-term funding of the new charity until 2027, amounting to around £800 million. This historic and very substantial settlement demonstrates the Government's commitment to the big society and a sustainable and prosperous future for the inland waterways.

The funding agreement gives greater certainty to the waterways than ever before, making it easier for CRT to plan future activity.¹²

A decision on the possible future grant funding for the CRT was due for 1 July 2022, under the grant agreement. However, a [statement from Defra](#) in June 2022 announced that this would be delayed.

On 7 July 2022, in response to [Topical Question](#) on Government support for the country's canals and waterways, the Government set out that it was working on the funding review with the CRT:

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs is working with the Canal & River Trust on the current review of the Government's annual grant funding of the trust, as required by the 2012 grant agreement. [...] Because of their unique social, cultural and economic importance, the Canal & River Trust, an independent charity, benefited from £3.2 million.¹³

In June 2022, the [Inland Waterways Association responded to the delay](#) stating that "ongoing funding of Canal & River Trust's waterways is absolutely essential and [IWA] hopes that the postponement will give DEFRA

¹¹ Defra, [Grant Agreement Between The Secretary of State For Environment, Food and Rural Affairs And Canal & River Trust](#) (PDF), 2012

¹² [\[95187\] Column 482-483W](#), 20 February 2012

¹³ [Topical Questions Volume 717: debated on Thursday 7 July 2022](#)

more time to consider the many ways in which our inland waterways benefit the economy, the environment and the UK population”.¹⁴

On 15 November 2022, [ITV News Central reported](#) that the decision over the CRT's future funding had been postponed further and was not expected until next year.

1.5 Other Navigation Authorities

Navigation Authorities (NAs) are described by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency as “organisations which operate and manage navigable inland waterways in the UK”.¹⁵ The CRT is the largest NA in Great Britain, managing over 2000 miles of waterways. A [list and map of the CRT's canal & river network](#) can be found on its website¹⁶.

Another major NA is the Environment Agency, which is responsible for the River Thames among other areas, and there are many other smaller NAs. The Association of Inland Navigation Authorities (AINA) lists the [major NAs in Great Britain](#).¹⁷ In Northern Ireland, waterways are the responsibility of the Department for Infrastructure.¹⁸ NAs can be local government authorities, private canal companies, internal drainage boards and a variety of public and charitable trusts. Many have been created by local Acts of Parliament, and have different income streams depending on whether they are public, private or third sector organisations.¹⁹

Navigation authorities are defined in Section 221 of the Water Resources Act 1991 as “any person who has a duty or power under any enactment to work, maintain, conserve, improve or control any canal or other inland navigation, navigable river, estuary, harbour or dock”.²⁰ NAs can create their own guidance or byelaws for waterway users, which often include restrictions on vessel dimensions, speed limits, [Boatmaster licence](#) requirements and vessel registration requirements.²¹

¹⁴ IWA, [IWA responds to CRT Government Grant Review Update](#), 22 June 2022

¹⁵ Maritime and Coastguard Agency Guidance [Inland waterways: categorisation of waters](#) 8 October 2019

¹⁶ Canal and River Trust [Our canal & river network](#) 17 November 2022

¹⁷ Association of Inland Navigation Authorities (AINA) [Members](#) [Accessed 17 November 2022]

¹⁸ Department for Infrastructure Waterways [Accessed 17 November 2022]

¹⁹ Association of Inland Navigation Authorities (AINA) [Members](#) [Accessed 17 November 2022]

²⁰ [Section 221 of the Water Resources Act 1991](#)

²¹ Maritime and Coastguard Agency Guidance [Inland waterways: categorisation of waters](#) 8 October 2019; Broads Authority [Byelaws and speed limits](#) [Accessed 17 November 2022]

1.6

Additional stakeholders

The following section provides examples of additional stakeholders with an interest in the running and funding of the CRT. This list is not exhaustive.

Inland Waterways Association

The [Inland Waterways Association](#) (IWA) is a national charity that has campaigned for the protection and restoration of the UK's waterways for over 75 years.

In addition to CRT funding, the [IWA website](#) calls for funding for all navigation authorities and publicly-owned waterways:

Hundreds of miles of waterways – along with their unique heritage and habitats – are currently starved of sufficient funding, and rely on constant lobbying by us to safeguard their future.

It is vitally important that publicly-owned waterways continue to receive an adequate level of funding from government.

This includes the 2000 miles managed by Canal & River Trust, the 630 miles run by the Environment Agency and those operated by Scottish Canals.

With access to towpaths and river paths being free, waterways are ideal for people to use for walking, boating, jogging, cycling, canoeing, fishing, paddleboarding, and making journeys to work or for shopping.²²

Waterways All-Party Parliamentary Group

The [Waterways All-Party Parliamentary Group](#) (APPG) was established in 2015. It considers “matters relating to navigable (and formerly navigable) rivers, canals, estuaries and lakes in the UK, including the potential social, economic and cultural impact of the regeneration of those waterways and extension of the system”.

The [IWA website](#) contains copies of minutes from meetings of the APPG and news stories about its work.

National Bargee Travellers Association

The [National Bargee Travellers Association](#) (NBTA) is a volunteer organisation, founded in 2009, that campaigns and provides support for itinerant boat dwellers on Britain's inland and coastal waterways. Its work includes helping people living on boats obtain access to services such as GPs and dealing with enforcement action:

²² IWA, [Campaigning for the waterways](#)

The NBTA seeks to represent the interests of all itinerant boat dwellers in respect of upholding our chosen way of life. The NBTA welcomes participants irrespective of location and also welcomes contact from other boating interest groups.

The NBTA has a small team of Volunteer Caseworkers who assist individuals to deal with enforcement action by navigation and other authorities, including Court action to remove their homes, or denial of services like GP registration, welfare benefits or school enrolment.²³

In 2017, the [NBTA raised concerns](#) that the CRT was pricing boaters out of certain areas by increasing the mooring costs. Its website also contains [news on currently active campaigns](#).

²³ NBTA, [About](#)

2

Press Articles

Waterways are the nation's heritage

The Times

Clive Henderson (National Chairman of The Inland Waterway Association)

1 April 2010

Housing crisis clogs up the canals

The Times

Simon de Bruxelles

24 February 2017

Scottish Canals may stop boats using network

The Times

Tim Bugler

22 June 2018

UK waters map: Who owns which waterways? Where are the boundaries?

Express Online

Liam Doyle

29 August 2018

The Times' view of plans to restore towpaths along Britain's canals: Arteries of Beauty

The Times

10 August 2020

Living near water can be beneficial to your mental health – here's how to have more blue spaces in cities

The Conversation

Michael Georgiou and Sebastien Chastin

10 March 2021

Measures to reduce harm from storm overflows to be made law

DEFRA

Rebecca Pow MP

29 March 2021

The Times view on sewage in rivers: Dirty Business

The Times

27 October 2021

Can canals, rivers and trains save supply chains hit by the HGV crisis?

The Times

Jon Yeomans

28 November 2021

Governments must step up to the mark and clean up our rivers

The Times

Jesse Norman MP

9 June 2022

Water giants under pressure to clean up Britain's dirty rivers

The Sunday Times

Jon Yeomans

3 July 2022

Transport group wants North Staffordshire canals back carrying freight

Stoke Sentinel

Phil Corrigan

29 August 2022

Britons urged to help monitor state of rivers, streams and canals

The Guardian

Sandra Laville

11 October 2022

Lizzie Carr wants to help the waterways that helped her beat cancer

The Independent

Saphora Smith

14 October 2022

Grubby truth about failure to clean up nation's rivers

The Times

Adam Vaughn

3 November 2022

Ofwat labelled 'toothless' after sewage spills in rivers

The Times

Steven Swinford

7 November 2022

3

Parliamentary Material

PQs

Inland Waterways and Rivers: Leisure

21 September 2022 | 45967

Asked by: Dr Rupa Huq

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to increase public access to (a) rivers and (b) waterways for (i) leisure and (ii) sport.

Answering member: Trudy Harrison | Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

The Government recognises that taking to our inland waters can have a positive effect on people's physical and mental wellbeing. We are aware that there has been a considerable increase over the last few years in numbers of people taking up water-based activities such as canoeing, stand-up paddleboarding and open water or wild swimming. Access to regulated waterways can be granted through licenses from the appropriate navigation authority. Access to unregulated waterways can be arranged through voluntary access agreements. The Government encourages interested parties to work together to increase the access to unregulated rivers and waterways through encouraging and incentivising voluntary access agreements.

Sport and physical activity are incredibly important for our physical and mental health and the Government is committed to ensuring that everyone, regardless of background, should have access to and benefit from quality sport and physical activity opportunities.

The Government also welcomes applications for designated bathing waters for both coastal and inland waters such as rivers. Local authorities, groups, and individuals can apply, with Government encouraging applications by writing annually to the Chief Executive of every local authority in England and other stakeholders such as swimming associations.

Inland Waterways

5 September 2022 | 40836

Asked by: Conor McGinn

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department is taking steps to ensure that water levels in (a) canals and (b) waterways are at sustainable levels.

Answering member: Steve Double | Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Ministers do not have a role in operational matters on inland waterways, including water levels. It is for the navigation authorities to manage the maintenance and operation of the waterways for which they have responsibility, working with local authorities and the Environment Agency where necessary.

Inland Waterways: Repairs and Maintenance

29 June 2022 | 23712

Asked by: Mr Barry Sheerman

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans he has to upgrade existing waterways so that they can take larger cargos.

Answering member: Robert Courts | Department for Transport

To increase the use of freight on our waterways the Government provides revenue support through our Mode Shift Revenue Support and Waterborne Freight grants. We have committed £20 million per year to 2024/25 to support rail and water freight services on routes where they deliver environmental benefits over road haulage but are more expensive to operate.

The cross-modal and long-term Future of Freight plan, published on 15 June, sets out the Government's objectives for a freight and logistics sector that is efficient, reliable, resilient and sustainable. The plan explicitly supports mode shift of freight from road to rail, inland waterways, coastal shipping and new innovative modes such as e-cargo bikes. The plan also sets out how government will raise the status of freight within the planning system, will develop with industry a £7 million Freight Innovation Fund and will undertake work to develop a National Freight Network. This work will support, and provide opportunities to increase the use of, waterways for freight.

Upgrades of the waterways network in the UK are the responsibility of the Canal and River Trust (CRT), which is sponsored by Defra. The Department for Transport continues to work with Defra officials and the CRT to ensure that freight is considered in the operation, maintenance and enhancement of the UK's waterways.

There are a wide range of navigation authorities that manage inland waterways. These are either independent self-financing bodies such as port authorities or are funded by other branches of government such as Defra.

Inland Waterways: Freight

29 June 2022 | 23710

Asked by: Mr Barry Sherman

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to increase the use of water freight.

Answering member: Robert Courts | Department for Transport

To increase the use of freight on our waterways the Government provides revenue support through our Mode Shift Revenue Support and Waterborne Freight grants. We have committed £20 million per year to 2024/25 to support rail and water freight services on routes where they deliver environmental benefits over road haulage but are more expensive to operate.

The cross-modal and long-term Future of Freight plan, published on 15 June, sets out the Government's objectives for a freight and logistics sector that is efficient, reliable, resilient and sustainable. The plan explicitly supports mode shift of freight from road to rail, inland waterways, coastal shipping and new innovative modes such as e-cargo bikes. The plan also sets out how government will raise the status of freight within the planning system, will develop with industry a £7 million Freight Innovation Fund and will undertake work to develop a National Freight Network. This work will support, and provide opportunities to increase the use of, waterways for freight.

Upgrades of the waterways network in the UK are the responsibility of the Canal and River Trust (CRT), which is sponsored by Defra. The Department for Transport continues to work with Defra officials and the CRT to ensure that freight is considered in the operation, maintenance and enhancement of the UK's waterways.

There are a wide range of navigation authorities that manage inland waterways. These are either independent self-financing bodies such as port authorities or are funded by other branches of government such as Defra.

Inland Waterways: Repairs and Maintenance

25 April 2022 | 151047

Asked by: Caroline Lucas

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will publish details of the funds allocated for the maintenance of navigable waterways since 2017; and whether he has made estimates of the funding requirements for their maintenance over the next five years.

Answering member: Rebecca Pow | Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Navigation authorities are responsible for operational matters on their waterways, including allocation of maintenance expenditure, and Government does not have a role in that. The largest navigation authority in England and Wales is the Canal and River Trust (C&RT), which publishes details of its waterway maintenance expenditure in its Annual Report and Accounts, available on its website.

Defra provides the C&RT with an annual grant of around £50 million a year under a 15-year agreement, £10million of which is conditional on achievement of certain key performance indicators. The grant allocations since 2017 are as follows:

Year	Funding
2017/18	£50.6m
2018/19	£51.2m
2019/20	£51.9m
2020/21	£52.6m
2021/22	£52.6m

The annual grant will continue for the next five years capped at the 2020/21 level of £52.6m. The grant is currently being reviewed as required by the agreement to inform a decision about any future Government funding beyond the end of the current grant period in 2027.

Defra also provides the Environment Agency (EA) with a grant-in-aid for its navigable inland waterways. The allocations since 2017 are as follows, with the increase from 2019 to enable commencement of a programme to bring EA navigation assets to safe reliable operating condition:

Year	Funding
2017/18	£5.6m
2018/19	£5.6m
2019/20	£11.5m
2020/21	£16.4m
2021/22	£28.6m

The Environment Agency has received a total grant-in-aid settlement for the next three years of £73m.

The Broads Authority receives a Defra National Park grant to cover its funded activities allowing it to fulfil its statutory duties under the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads Act 1988. In exceptional circumstances the Defra grant can be used to support shortfalls in navigation income, as permitted under section 17(8) of the Norfolk and Suffolk Act 1988. Use of the National Park grant for navigation can only be on an incremental basis, agreed formally with Defra in advance.

There are also other smaller navigation authorities that do not receive any government funding.

Inland Waterways: Safety

14 April 2022 | 154485

Asked by: Ben Everitt

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether the Government has undertaken an assessment of the cost of (a) maintaining and (b) improving the resilience of the Canal and River Trust's waterway network to safeguard public safety in response to climate change.

Answering member: Rebecca Pow | Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Defra provides the Canal and River Trust with an annual grant of £52 million, under a 15-year agreement signed when the Trust was established in 2012. The grant may be used for the Trust's charitable objects and the permitted activities set out in the formal Grant Agreement document, which is published on the Government website. This includes maintenance of the canal network infrastructure. Around £10 million of the annual grant is conditional on the Trust meeting key performance indicators covering

waterway safety, improvement of towpath condition, and flood defence and mitigation. The Trust's waterways maintenance expenditure is available in their Annual Report and Accounts, which is published on the Trust's website.

Climate change impact is being considered as part of Defra's current review of the Government grant required by the Grant Agreement, to inform a decision about any future funding for the Trust from 2027.

4

Further Reading

- IWA, [Waterways for Today](#) (PDF), (revised) November 2022

Disclaimer

The Commons Library does not intend the information in our research publications and briefings to address the specific circumstances of any particular individual. We have published it to support the work of MPs. You should not rely upon it as legal or professional advice, or as a substitute for it. We do not accept any liability whatsoever for any errors, omissions or misstatements contained herein. You should consult a suitably qualified professional if you require specific advice or information. Read our briefing '[Legal help: where to go and how to pay](#)' for further information about sources of legal advice and help. This information is provided subject to the conditions of the Open Parliament Licence.

Sources and subscriptions for MPs and staff

We try to use sources in our research that everyone can access, but sometimes only information that exists behind a paywall or via a subscription is available. We provide access to many online subscriptions to MPs and parliamentary staff, please contact [hoclibraryonline@parliament.uk](mailto:hoclbraryonline@parliament.uk) or visit commonslibrary.parliament.uk/resources for more information.

Feedback

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in these publicly available briefings is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware however that briefings are not necessarily updated to reflect subsequent changes.

If you have any comments on our briefings please email papers@parliament.uk. Please note that authors are not always able to engage in discussions with members of the public who express opinions about the content of our research, although we will carefully consider and correct any factual errors.

You can read our feedback and complaints policy and our editorial policy at commonslibrary.parliament.uk. If you have general questions about the work of the House of Commons email hcenquiries@parliament.uk.

The House of Commons Library is a research and information service based in the UK Parliament. Our impartial analysis, statistical research and resources help MPs and their staff scrutinise legislation, develop policy, and support constituents.

Our published material is available to everyone on commonslibrary.parliament.uk.

Get our latest research delivered straight to your inbox. Subscribe at commonslibrary.parliament.uk/subscribe or scan the code below:



 commonslibrary.parliament.uk

 [@commonslibrary](https://twitter.com/commonslibrary)