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Keep Canals Alive:

I share constituents concerns about the funding of our canals.

We are lucky to have some 2,000 miles of canals and rivers across England and Wales. They are hugely important, providing habitats for nature, homes for people and a place to take part in recreational activities. They also help to prevent floods and give us a network of green corridors steeped in rich industrial history unlike anywhere else in the world.

As constituents may know, in July 2023, the Government published its report of its review process for the Trust's annual grant funding arrangement. The Trust has a current funding agreement with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs that runs until 2027.

I know the Trust's future relies in part on this funding and I know it is now campaigning against the Government's decision to provide £400 million from 2027 to 2037, with a 5% yearly downward taper over these ten years as it argues this is a real terms cut of £300 million.

I am concerned the Government does not understand the value of canals, which help make the lives of working people better. Without maintenance, canals will fall into disrepair, cutting off these vital blue and green routes and access to nature for many.

I am also disappointed by the delays to this decision which has put the future of our canals and all those that rely on them at risk. It has made it more difficult for the Trust to plan and hampered the progress of a number of larger projects designed to help build and shape much-needed resilience to the harsh and increasingly frequent effects of climate change.

I believe the Canal and River Trust, alongside local navigation, harbour and waterways authorities, does a crucial job protecting and restoring our internal waterways. We are seeing an increase in their use, and it is therefore vital this protective and restorative work continues and that the Government does not roll it back, as it is crucial for reaching net zero goals.

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