



Conservancy registration fee consultation 2022/23

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Introduction

The Conservators of the River Cam are the statutory navigation authority for the River between Kings Mill in Cambridge and Bottisham Lock near Waterbeach. Created and regulated by Acts of Parliament (principally the River Cam Navigation Act 1851 and the River Cam Conservancy Act 1922), it's our job to keep the River Cam open and safe for vessels to navigate.

Work of the Conservancy

As well as being responsible for the licencing of all vessels, the enforcement of the byelaws, and providing a 24/7 emergency call-out service for 364 days per year, the Conservators of the River Cam are responsible for a whole range of maintenance on what is a special river, with a unique set of management challenges, which include:

- Obstructions to navigation, including the removal of whole trees, bikes, trolleys, vessels which are adrift or abandoned.
- Weir clearance on behalf of the Environment Agency, weed harvesting, invasive species control (floating pennywort).
- Re-floating sunken vessels.
- Soft revetment works to banks, steel sheet piling, concrete piling.
- Servicing/maintenance on Jesus Lock and Baits Bite Lock which includes the hydraulic running gear at BB lock, the guillotine gate and vee-doors, the slacker doors, and their linkages etc.
- Grass cutting of the towpath, including management of the wellbeing of our protected species (e.g. water voles), tree management including pollarding, felling, re-planting and emergency call outs to deal with windblown trees, as well as regular hedge cutting.

In total there are around 1200 recreational, live-aboard, and commercial boats kept or used on our 7.5 mile stretch of the River. Our legal requirement to licence vessels includes checks on the safety and insurance status of boats on the river, and a means of identifying craft in the event of incidents. The charges, which are levied in accordance with the byelaws, fall on those who most benefit from the navigation services we provide.



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Financial Background and Outlook

During the past 12 months, the Conservators have been looking for ways to both increase income (from some small outside works projects) and reduce costs, with some re-structuring plans already in process. We are very much aiming to become a tighter and more efficient ship. For several years, the Conservancy has been running as tight budgets as has been possible, with some essential maintenance and necessary renewal of assets being delayed because of insufficient funding. In the past 12 to 18 months, we have reduced some of our regular river maintenance works because the Covid 19 pandemic caused the income stream, on which we depend, to be unreliable. Irrespective of the effect of the pandemic, the Cam Conservancy would face a substantial annual shortfall if there were no increases in registration fees over the next three years. This would have severe implications for the level of service we were able to provide, and the Conservancy would not be able to continue adequate and forward-looking maintenance of the river in accordance with its statutory obligations.

In normal circumstances, vessel registration fees contribute over 70% of the Conservancy annual revenue. This income is used to keep our waterway open and safe for use by both recreational and residential boaters, and for those who rely on the river for their business, as well as fulfilling our statutory responsibilities. Unlike neighbouring navigation authorities such as the Environment Agency and the Middle Level Commissioners, the Conservancy receives no form of outside funding whatsoever and it is essential that our financial security is established to deliver a sustainable navigation service into the future.

Comparisons with the charges made by other navigation authorities are unhelpful. They vary considerably and there is the need to take into account the differing patterns of usage and financial constraints that apply to different authorities. In the case of the Conservancy, a relatively short stretch of river is intensively used, mainly by unpowered vessels. As the Conservancy does not have any outside subsidy, it is mainly reliant on vessel registration for its income, and therefore the cost of maintaining the river inevitably falls most heavily on river users.

The total revenue generated from the proposed fee increases is the minimum required to ensure safe and efficient operations as well as having the required money set aside each year for repairs and renewals, and to meet the cost of more serious potential failures of equipment and our locks in the future.

Consultation process

We are consulting our licenced customers and other interested and affected parties on proposals for:

1. **The introduction of a revised, fairer charging structure for unpowered private vessels.**
2. **Boat registration charges within the Cam Conservancy area from April 2022 to March 2025.**



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Unpowered private vessels.

The purpose of this new structure is not to generate additional income for the Conservancy, but to make the fees more balanced across private unpowered categories. In the past, fees have been unfairly weighted against smaller craft, and in discussions with various river user groups, a number of issues have been raised regarding the comparative charges for different classes of unpowered vessels; for example the fee for a large canoe or kayak is currently £110, whereas that for a rowing eight is £82. The intention is to rebalance fees based on length, as is the case with powered vessel fees, and it was therefore felt that a complete review of the classes and charging structure of unpowered craft be undertaken. Adjustments have accordingly been made to charges for rowing craft, sailing craft, canoes and other small manual craft. Charges for punts remain unchanged.

Boat Registration Charges

As part of our strategic review of navigation charges, we intend to indicate the level of charges our river users can expect over the next three years. Accordingly, it is proposed to increase registration charges as follows rounded to the nearest pound:

Year 1-		Year 2-		Year 3-	
Unpowered	5%	Unpowered	7.5%	Unpowered	7.5%
Powered	7.5%	Powered	7.5%	Powered	7.5%
Commercial	10%	Commercial	7.5%	Commercial	7.5%

The differential charge for Year 1 recognises that some of the changes to fees for unpowered craft, as a result of the new structure, impose an increase in fees for some larger unpowered craft. On the other hand, the larger increase in fees for commercial craft, which were approved by Conservators in 2010, were deferred because of Covid.

We believe that these increases are necessary to provide financial stability and ensure that services for maintaining the river are maintained.

Reviewing our charges is just one part of a wider programme to make our organisation more financially sustainable. This includes making efficiencies wherever we can, protecting capital investment, and working to increase income from other limited sources. The details behind this financial review will be published in due course.

The current structure and proposed new structure with charges are set out below in Tables 1 and 2.



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Table 1- Current categories and fees for 2021/22

Fees for power driven vessels				
Category	Description of vessel	Private Annual fee	Annual Fee Commercial Day Hire	Annual fee Commercial Annual Hire
With engine up to 4 h.p.		£	£	£
30	Vessel (or Dinghy) up to 5 metres (16 ft 4.85 in)	£ 96.00	£ 119.00	£ 178.00
With engine over 4 h.p				
32	Vessel under 3 metres (9 ft 10 in)	£ 167.00	£ 207.00	£ 308.00
33	Vessel 3 to 5 metres (9 ft 10 in to 16 ft 4.85 in) inclusive	£ 339.00	£ 419.00	£ 627.00
34	Vessel 5 to 7.5 metres (16 ft 4.85 in to 24 ft 7.27 in) inclusive	£ 415.00	£ 514.00	£ 770.00
35	Vessel 7.5 to 10 metres (24 ft 7.27 in to 32 ft 9.7 in) inclusive	£ 537.00	£ 666.00	£ 997.00
36	Vessel 10 to 12.5 metres (32 ft 9.7 in to 41 ft 0.12 in) inclusive	£ 734.00	£ 908.00	£ 1,361.00
37	Vessel 12.5 to 15 metres (41 ft 0.12 in to 49 ft 2.55 in) inclusive	£ 945.00	£ 1,168.00	£ 1,753.00
38	Vessel 15 to 20 metres (49 ft 2.55 in to 65 ft 7.4 in) inclusive	£ 1,060.00	£ 1,312.00	£ 1,964.00
39	Vessel over 20 metres (65 ft 7 in)	£ 1,162.00	£ 1,438.00	£ 2,156.00
Fees for manually propelled vessels				
Category	Description of vessel	Annual fee	Annual Fee RMO	Annual fee RMO Hire & Commercial
Canoes / Kayaks				
01	Canoe or Paddleboard up to 5 metres	£ 55.00	£ 121.00	£ 336.00
02	Kayak up to 5 metres	£ 55.00	£ 121.00	£ 336.00
06	Canoe over 5 metres	£ 110.00	£ 246.00	£ 662.00
07	Kayak over 5 metres	£ 110.00	£ 246.00	£ 662.00
Punts	Note: Commercial Punts for hire must operate from recognised punt stations only			
10	Private Punt/ Hire Punts up to 1 metre beam	£ 131.00	£ 289.00	£ 855.00
11	Hire punt over 1 metre up to 1.2 metre beam	N/A	N/A	£ 1,422.00
12	Hire punt over 1.2 metre but under 1.95 metres beam or pedalo	N/A	N/A	£ 2,133.00
Rowing Craft	Note: Clubs and Colleges must provide a list of vessels and their Registration numbers. The Conservators do not recognise membership of British Rowing in lieu of a separate registration issued by the Conservators			
03	Rowing Dinghy or Tender (No engine)	£ 66.00	£ 148.00	£ 406.00
14	Tub Pair	£ 55.00	N/A	N/A
15	Scull	£ 55.00	N/A	N/A
16	Double Scull	£ 65.00	N/A	N/A
17	Pair	£ 65.00	N/A	N/A
18	Four (including coxed four)	£ 69.00	N/A	N/A
19	Eight (including coxed eight)	£ 82.00	N/A	N/A
Fees for sailing Vessels				
Category	Description of vessel	Annual fee	Annual Fee RMO	Annual fee RMO Hire & Commercial
Sailing Vessel	Note: For commercial sail craft, contact the Conservancy offices			
20	Sail under 3 metres (9 ft 11 in)	£ 55.00	N/A	N/A
21	Sail 3 to 5 metres (9 ft 11 in to 16 ft 5 in)	£ 90.00	N/A	N/A
22	Sail 5 to 7.5 metres (16 ft 5 in to 24 ft 8 in)	£ 176.00	N/A	N/A
23	Sail over 7.5 metres (24 ft 8 in)	£ 272.00	N/A	N/A
Miscellaneous				
41	Houseboat	£ 955.00	N/A	N/A
51	Any other vessel by agreement with the Conservators	Discretionary		



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Table 2- New Categories and with fee increases (Year 1)

Fees for power driven vessels				
Category	Description of vessel	Private Annual fee	Annual Fee Commercial Day Hire	Annual fee Commercial Annual Hire
With engine up		£	£	£
30	Vessel (or Dinghy) up to 5 metres (16 ft 4.85 in)	£ 103	£ 131	£ 196
With engine				
32	Vessel under 3 metres (9 ft 10 in)	£ 180	£ 228	£ 339
33	Vessel 3 to 5 metres (9 ft 10 in to 16 ft 4.85 in) inclusive	£ 364	£ 461	£ 690
34	Vessel 5 to 7.5 metres (16 ft 4.85 in to 24 ft 7.27 in) inclusive	£ 446	£ 565	£ 847
35	Vessel 7.5 to 10 metres (24 ft 7.27 in to 32 ft 9.7 in) inclusive	£ 577	£ 733	£ 1,097
36	Vessel 10 to 12.5 metres (32 ft 9.7 in to 41 ft 0.12 in) inclusive	£ 789	£ 999	£ 1,497
37	Vessel 12.5 to 15 metres (41 ft 0.12 in to 49 ft 2.55 in) inclusive	£ 1,016	£ 1,285	£ 1,928
38	Vessel 15 to 20 metres (49 ft 2.55 in to 65 ft 7.4 in) inclusive	£ 1,140	£ 1,443	£ 2,160
39	Vessel over 20 metres (65 ft 7 in)	£ 1,249	£ 1,582	£ 2,372
Fees for manually propelled vessels				
Category	Description of vessel	Annual fee	Annual Fee RMO	Annual fee RMO Hire & Commercial
Canoes / Kayaks				
01	Canoe or Paddleboard up to 5 metres	£ 39	£ 79	£ 244
02	Kayak up to 5 metres	£ 39	£ 79	£ 244
06	Canoe over 5 metres	£ 53	£ 105	£ 330
07	Kayak over 5 metres	£ 53	£ 105	£ 330
Punts	Note: Commercial Punts for hire must operate from recognised punt stations only			
10	Private Punt/ Hire Punts up to 1 metre beam	£ 138	£ 303	£ 941
11	Hire punt over 1 metre up to 1.2 metre beam	N/A	N/A	£ 1,564
12	Hire punt over 1.2 metre but under 1.95 metres beam or pedalo	N/A	N/A	£ 2,346
Rowing Craft	Note: Clubs and Colleges must provide a list of vessels and their Registration numbers. The Conservators do			
03	Rowing Dinghy or Tender (No engine)	£ 24	£ 48	£ 152
14	Tub Pair	£ 63	N/A	N/A
15	Scull	£ 63	N/A	N/A
16	Double Scull	£ 74	N/A	N/A
17	Pair	£ 74	N/A	N/A
18	Four (including coxed four)	£ 100	N/A	N/A
19	Eight (including coxed eight)	£ 131	N/A	N/A
Fees for sailing Vessels				
Category	Description of vessel	Annual fee	Annual Fee RMO	Annual fee RMO Hire & Commercial
Sailing Vessel	Note: For commercial sail craft, contact the Conservancy offices			
20	Sailing Dinghies up to 3.5 m LOA	£26	N/A	N/A
21	Sailing Dinghies over 3,5 m LOA	£39	N/A	N/A
22	Sailing Vessels under 5 metres LOA	£95	N/A	N/A
23	Sailing Vessels up to 5 metres to 7.5 metres	£185	N/A	N/A
24	Sailing Vessels over 7.5 metres LOA	£286	N/A	N/A
25	Sailing Vessel with auxiliary engine	£315	N/A	N/A
Miscellaneous				
41	Houseboat	£ 1,045	N/A	N/A
51	Any other vessel by agreement with the Conservators	Discretionary		



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Impact of the charge increases on navigation users

The latest published annual consumer price index rate is 2.4% (12 months to June 2021). Our proposed increases will therefore be somewhat absorbed by inflation-based increases to our operating costs. Crucially, the percentage increase each year will allow us to provide for the maintenance of our capital assets, as well as running day to day operations as safely and efficiently as possible.

We appreciate that any increase to the cost of enjoying the river or running a business is rarely welcomed by those who must pay it, but boat registration charges are a relatively small amount compared to owning and operating a boat and are essential if we are to maintain the river to the standard everyone would like.



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Consultation questions

We would like your views on our proposals to increase navigation boat registration charges over the next 3 years. We also want to hear your views on the proposed new charging structure for unpowered private vessels. Please note that any personal information you provide will be kept confidential and any published results of this consultation will be anonymised.

THE CONSULTATION RESPONSE FORM SHOULD BE FILLED IN ONLINE. DETAILS OF HOW TO ACCESS THIS FORM CAN BE FOUND AT THE END OF THIS DOCUMENT

Section 1: About you

To help us analyse the responses we receive we'd like to understand more about you and the boat/s you own, operate, or represent.

Q1. Please tell us if you're responding as an individual or on behalf of a group or organisation.

Q2. What is the main reason you or those you represent use your/their boat/s?

For private pleasure use

For commercial use

Other

Q3. What type of boat/s do you own, operate, or represent?

Commercial unpowered

Commercial powered

Motor cruiser

Residential boater



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Private unpowered (e.g canoe, kayak, rowing/sculling boat, sailing boat without auxiliary engine)

Other

Q4. Can we publish your response?

We will not publish any personal information or parts of your response that will reveal your identity.

Q5. Please tell us how you found out about this consultation?

Section 2: Your views

Q6. Do you understand and accept the need to increase Cam Conservancy boat registration charges in order to maintain the navigation service?

Q7. We are proposing to increase charges annually for the next 3 years as set out in the above document. Please let us have your comments on this proposal.

Q8. To what extent is the boat registration charge is a proportion of overall cost of owning or operating your boat/s?

Q9. If introduced, what would the impact of the increase be for you?

Q11. Do you agree that the proposed changes to categories for unpowered craft will make charging structure fairer?

Q12. Do you have any other ideas on about how the charging structure could be made fairer across ALL categories of vessels?



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Section 3: Any other comments

Q13. We really value your feedback on our proposals and are grateful for your input. Please tell us if you have any further comments and provide as much information as possible to support your answer.

How to respond

Go to our website: www.camconservancy.org.uk and click on the 'Fee Consultation' tab. You will be taken to an online version of this form which you can fill in. Completing the form this way will ensure that we can gather and analyse your information as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Consultation dates

The closing date for responses is 25th of October 2021. Any responses we receive after this date will not be included in the analysis.