

Press release: Boaters' views sought in consultation on proposed charges

Boat owners who keep or use a boat on waterways managed by the Environment Agency are being encouraged to have their say in plans to increase charges.

A public consultation into proposed increases to boat registration charges for 2019-20 and 2020-21 launched today and will run until the 30 August 2018.

The Environment Agency is the second largest navigation authority in the UK and is responsible for more than 1,000 km of navigable waterways including the non-tidal River Thames, River Great Ouse and Upper Medway Navigation.

The proposed charges form part of plans to create a financially sustainable service on waterways used by almost 30,000 boats. Currently the cost of running the service far exceeds the income generated from charges, risking a reductions in the levels of maintenance of waterway structures such as locks and the standard of customer service boat users expect.

The two year proposal gives time to complete a wider review of navigation charges alongside bringing in other measures to make the waterways less reliant on government grant-in-aid funding.

Mark Ormrod, the national manager for navigation at the Environment Agency, said:

Our navigation service plays an important role in protecting our waterways and supports both recreation and business for thousands of people.

This consultation is a valuable opportunity for our customers to tell us what parts of our service are most important and give us their ideas about how we should fund them so I would encourage as many boaters as possible to take part.

An increase in charges is essential to work towards creating a sustainable service that covers the cost of maintaining our valued waterways and delivering a safe and efficient service for our customers.

The proposed increases will raise an additional £930k to invest in the waterways over the proposed 2-year period. The increases by waterway are:

- River Thames: 5.7%
- Anglian Waterways: 7.5%
- Upper Medway Navigation: 10%
- Unpowered and boats covered by joint registration agreements: 7.7%

Subject to the consultation response, new charges could be implemented from 1 January 2019 on the River Thames and 1 April 2019 for our Anglian Waterways and the Upper Medway Navigation.

To take part in the consultation, please visit GOV.UK

Open consultation: Proposals for navigation boat registration charges 2019 to 2021

Updated: Added consultation document.

The current cost of the service we provide across our waterways far exceeds the income we receive from customer charges.

We need to make our waterways more financially sustainable so we are carrying out a full review of navigation charges. We want our charges to be fair, transparent and linked more closely to the cost of the service we provide for boating customers.

This 2-year proposal will allow us time to fully develop our future charging plans and look at new ways to fund the service. We'll use feedback from customers to make our work more financially sustainable, whilst providing customers with greater certainty about the charges they'll need to pay until 2021.

News story: Open call for sponsors and partners of the London Illegal Wildlife Trade (IWT) Conference

The UK government is hosting an [international conference about the illegal wildlife trade](#) on 11 to 12 October 2018. The conference will bring together global leaders to help eradicate the illegal wildlife trade and better protect the world's most iconic species from the threat of extinction.

Organisations interested in sponsoring the IWT London Conference 2018 or related activities are invited to get in touch.

Benefits of sponsorship for companies

Sponsorship offers a unique platform for companies to:

- gain commercial exposure through a strategically important international event
- showcase the very best of their brand and its relevance in combating IWT
- align with the key objectives of the conference and its underpinning values

Packages available to companies

Packages available to businesses span direct financial and/or value in kind support in the form of a free product or service for the event. All ideas for significant sponsorship would be welcome.

Contact for expressions of interest

Contact IWTconference@defra.gov.uk by Tuesday 31 July 2018.

[Press release: Environment Agency supports water restrictions in the North West](#)

The Environment Agency supports United Utilities plans for water restrictions across the North West to help reduce demand for water during this period of prolonged dry weather and protect the environment as well as public water supplies.

Although the region has seen some periods of rainfall in localised areas, over two very dry months, we have seen a rapid decline in reservoir levels in the North West and we have started to see significant impacts on the local environment.

The Environment Agency uses regulatory powers to manage water availability to maintain essential supplies for people and the environment and have been responding to impacts on the environment due to the dry weather over the last few months. Environment Agency teams have stepped up incident response as well as regulation of those abstracting water to ensure the environment is protected.

Environment Agency teams respond 24/7 to environmental incidents to protect people and the environment and have received a sharp increase in reports of environmental incidents in the North West, with 25 per cent of July's

estimated reports received in just the first three days.

Incidents can either be caused or exacerbated by the hot, dry conditions – such as fish in distress, or fish caught in pools due to flow flows, reports of Blue-Green algae, or moorland fires. Teams have been carrying out fish rescues, including one in Borrowdale, Cumbria, on Saturday and attending fish kill incidents exacerbated by dry conditions, such as that at Pigs Lee Brook, Bury, Greater Manchester, on Friday.

Environment Agency teams are meeting with affected groups including farmers to provide practical advice about conserving water and planning for prolonged dry weather. We have carried out abstraction licence checks, visited critical spray irrigators, carried out water abstraction visits, advised businesses and farmers on water usage, and inspected rivers where the flows are lowest.

Hydropower turbines have been checked for compliance including fish-pass and weir flows, and we have been on site monitoring air quality in response to the Saddleworth moorland fires. Teams are monitoring for environmental impacts across the region, and taking action to protect the environment.

Jim Ratcliffe, Environment Agency Drought Manager, said:

United Utilities plans for a temporary usage ban is a responsible measure to help preserve public water supplies and protect the environment given the impacts we are seeing from the dry weather.

Household water restrictions such as those proposed by United Utilities can reduce the demand for water by up to 10% – which is significantly more than changes to abstraction permits, or using other sources. This will help us balance the need of people through public water supplies, whilst protecting the sensitive natural environment.

Each week, our hydrology experts monitor river flows and groundwater to see how much water there is and plan accordingly. Just like in a flood scenario, we have put robust and well tested plans in place during this period of dry weather, ensuring our demand for water is managed in the best possible way.

Water is a precious resource and we always advise that businesses, farmers and householders use water wisely – especially during a period of dry weather – and to follow the advice of their water company. We all need to increase the amount of water we save to protect our natural environment and drinking water supplies.

As always, if people see any environmental impacts due to dry weather, such as fish in distress, please report it to the Environment Agency incident line on 0800 80 70 60 so we can investigate and take action.

The Environment Agency continues to work with United Utilities to ensure that, at all times, we make the best use of the water available and minimise any potential impacts to people, the environment and tourism should the dry weather continue.

Cumbria's unique geography makes it sensitive to high and low rainfall and the Environment Agency works with communities throughout the year to manage this.

During dry spells it's not unusual for some rivers and lakes in the North West to deplete quickly, during even short periods of low rainfall, and they tend to recover quickly when the rain returns.

If we have intense rainfall on dry or compacted ground it runs off rapidly making river levels rise rapidly. This can cause localised flooding so it is possible to have floods during prolonged dry periods.

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