



FEE REVIEW 2027/28
PUBLIC CONSULTATION

CONSERVATORS OF THE RIVER CAM FEE REVIEW 2026/27

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CONSERVATORS OF THE RIVER CAM

Navigation authority for the River Cam, between Cambridge and Bottisham Lock

2027/28 Fee Review Consultation Document

Public Consultation on Registration Fees, Event Fees and Section 15 Application Fees

Consultation Period: 21 September 2026 (6 weeks)

1. Introduction

The Conservators of the River Cam Navigation Authority (CotRC) is responsible for ensuring safe, sustainable and efficient navigation along the River Cam between Cambridge and Bottisham Lock. Our statutory duties include maintaining the navigation channel, managing river infrastructure, regulating river use, and advising that events and activities on the river are conducted safely and responsibly. As riparian owners, we also maintain and manage riverbanks and associated land.

The CotRC is a small public body corporate. We receive no government or local authority funding; 100% of our operational income is generated through registration fees, event fees, and Section 15 application fees. Our ability to maintain the navigation depends directly on these fees.

A public consultation on fees was last undertaken in 2021. Since then, operational costs, maintenance requirements, and regulatory obligations have increased significantly. The Conservators have now agreed a set of proposed fee changes for 2027/28, which are presented here for public consultation.

2. Why We Are Reviewing Fees

Since 2021, several factors have increased the cost of delivering our statutory functions:

- **Inflation and rising operational costs** (fuel, materials, contractor rates)
- **Increased maintenance needs** due to ageing infrastructure, plant, work vessels and higher river usage

- **Greater compliance requirements** including safety, environmental protection, and data management
- **Growth in event activity**, requiring additional staff time for assessment, monitoring, occasional attendance, and Safety Advisory Group participation
- Rising **staffing and administrative costs** in line with national trends

To continue delivering a safe and well-managed navigation, fees must reflect the true cost of providing these services.

3. Current Fee Structure

The CotRC currently charges fees in the following categories:

3.1 Registration Fees

- Private powered craft
- Unpowered craft
- Commercial vessels
- Hire boats
- Punts and tour boats
- University and club rowing fleets

3.2 Event Fees

- Regattas and races
- Charity events
- Commercial events
- Filming and promotional activities

3.3 Section 15 Application Fees

Applications are required for certain works affecting the navigation, including:

- Mooring installations
- Bank works
- Piling
- Structures affecting the river e.g. buoys, booms, pontoons, scaffolding etc
- Temporary works

4. Financial Context

The CotRC operates on a cost-recovery basis. Our income must cover:

- Routine maintenance of the navigation channel
- Upkeep of locks, landings, and river infrastructure

- Safety inspections and compliance
- Patrols and enforcement
- Administrative and staffing costs
- Environmental monitoring and mitigation

Rowing activity necessitates substantially wider and more intensive vegetation clearance than general navigation, resulting in significantly higher river and bank management costs. For context:

The hire of an operated weed-cutting vessel costs approximately £1,600 per day, while bank management, such as the installation and/or repair of hard or soft revetments, and vegetation works can cost in the region of £80,000 per 100 metres of revetment work and four figure sums for vegetation clearance.

These costs are currently absorbed into general navigation budgets funded by all river users. A revised fee structure is therefore necessary to ensure proportionate cost recovery.

5. Proposed Fee Changes for 2027/28

5.1 Proposed Changes to the Fee Structure

The Conservators are proposing to simplify the vessel registration fee structure by removing certain existing fee options.

Power-Driven Vessels

It is proposed that there will be two registration fee categories:

- Private Annual Registration Fee
- Commercial Annual Hire Registration Fee

The current Commercial Day Hire fee option would be removed.

Manually Propelled Vessels

It is proposed that there will be two registration fee categories:

- Annual Registration Fee
- Commercial/RMO Annual Registration Fee

The current RMO Annual Fee category would no longer be offered as a separate fee category and would be incorporated into the Commercial/RMO Annual Registration Fee category.

The purpose of these changes is to simplify the fee structure, making it easier for river users to identify the appropriate registration category for their vessel.

5.2 Registration Fees

The Conservators propose the following fee changes:

Private Powered Vessels

- Increase annually by CPI only.

Unpowered Craft (canoes, paddleboards, kayaks)

- Increase by CPI only.

Commercial/Business Powered Vessels - A vessel is treated as commercial on the River Cam whenever it is used for hire, reward, trade, or any paid operational purpose,

- Increase by **200% (three times the current fee)**.

Punts and Tour Boats - the Conservators are proposing to adopt either an **income-share model** or the option of a 200% fee increase:

- **5% of annual turnover** payable by punt operators.
- **200% fee increase**

Rowing Clubs and University Boat Clubs

- Increase by **200% (three times the current fee)**, Reflecting the significant cost burden created by the more intensive and frequent weed-clearance programme required to support rowing, which far exceeds the level of vegetation management undertaken for powered and non-rowing vessels on other navigation authorities. Additional bank and vegetation management is also necessary to accommodate rowing activity.

Sailing Vessels

- Increase by CPI only.

Late Registration Fees

- Introduce a late-registration fee of **10–15% of the registration value**, or a flat fee of **£25.00**.

5.3 Event Fees

Racing Events

- Fees for 2026/27 have already increased to better reflect the actual cost of running events
- Future increases to follow CPI only.

Filming on Conservancy land or on the River Cam

- Increase from **£65.00 per day** to **£250.00 per day**, in line with comparable organisations.

Non-Racing Events (River) The Conservators have proposed a **flat fee option**:

- **£830 per day**, irrespective of event size.

Non-Racing Events (Towpath) The Conservators have proposed a **flat fee option**:

- **£1,010 per day**, irrespective of event size.

Non-Emergency Vehicles on the Towpath

- Increase by **200% (three times the current fee)**.

Obstructions on Conservancy Land (Towpath)

- First Aid posts
- Gazebos
- Portaloos

Propose a flat fee of £50.00 per item

Late Event Applications

- Introduce a late-application fee of **10–15% of the event fee**, or a flat fee of **£45.00**

5.4 Section 15 Application Fees

Propose to introduce a revised application process with a **non-refundable £100 consideration fee** for all submissions. Conservancy officers will determine the correct categorisations upon receipt of each application.

- Increase the categorisation fees by CPI only
- Late or retrospective applications to incur a **£150.00 penalty**.

5.5 Payment of all fees

The Conservancy proposes to discontinue PayPal payments due to high administration costs, allowing these savings to be redirected to more effective operational use

6. Impact Assessment

The Conservators of the River Cam have considered the potential impacts of the proposed changes to:

Private River Users

Modest CPI-linked increases only. No new categories were introduced.

Commercial Operators

Revised structure ensures fees reflect operational impact on the navigation. Punt operators move to a transparent income-share model.

Rowing Clubs and University Boat Clubs

Revised fees reflect the significant cost burden associated with rowing specific vegetation and bank management.

Event Organisers

Flat fees provide clarity and predictability for non-racing events. Filming fees are updated to align with comparable organisations.

Environmental and Community Impact

Fee income supports river management and environmental protection. No negative environmental impacts expected.

Change of payment method

Removing the PayPal option will have minimal operational impact on river users. The only change is that fees will need to be paid through the remaining approved payment methods. The reduction in administrative overhead will support more efficient use of Conservancy resources, ultimately benefiting users through better-directed expenditure.

7. Consultation Questions

We invite responses to the following questions:

1. Do you agree with the proposed changes to registration fees?
2. Do you agree with the proposed changes to event fees?
3. Do you agree with the proposed changes to Section 15 application fees?

4. Do you agree with the proposed changes to discontinue with PayPal ?
5. Do you feel the rationale for the proposed changes is clearly explained?
6. How would the proposed changes affect you or your organisation?
7. Are there alternative approaches the CotRC should consider?
8. Do you have any other comments on the fee review?

8. How to Respond

You can respond in the following way:

- **Email Submissions:** Written responses can be sent to info@camconservators.org.uk

Deadline: The consultation closes on 30 October 2026 midnight

9. What Happens Next

After the consultation closes:

- All responses will be analysed
- A consultation report will be published summarising feedback
- The CotRC will consider the findings and make final decisions
- Final fees will be published with implementation dates
- Stakeholders will be notified directly

Implementation of approved changes is planned for **1 April 2027**.