



Sent by post to:

Andrew Lansley
David Howarth
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Margaret Wright
Richard Normington

Sent by email to:

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Miriam.Lynn@cambridge.gov.uk

Dear Sir/Madam,

We read with interest the letter that Robert Oeffner and Peter Convey wrote to you recently about houseboats in Cambridge, which was posted to a rowing newsgroup and made publicly available on the internet (<http://www.oeffner.net/stuff/SaveCambridgeRowing.pdf>).

Peter and Robert are correct that there are approximately 100 boats moored in Cambridge that are used as floating homes by residents of the city. We choose to live on the river for a variety of reasons - partly because it gives us affordable housing in a beautiful area of the city, partly because we enjoy the unusual ability to be able to move our house and wake up to a new view in the morning. Mostly, we just love the lifestyle, and are happy to belong to the friendly and lively community that has grown up along the river bank.

We are keen to contribute in a positive way to the life of the city. As a community, we do think we should make a fair contribution to the city finances in the way that other residents do through Council Tax. A year ago, we agreed with the City Council to pay mooring licences to contribute to the services we use, at a rate equivalent to Council Tax Band A. We also pay a large proportion of the costs of maintaining the river navigation through our licence fees to the Cam Conservators. The navigation licence for a typical 58' narrowboat is currently £565.83 per year - by comparison, the licence fee for a rowing VIII is £45.22.

We hold a 'Boat Open Day' annually, to allow people to experience our way of life. We try to have a minimal impact on the environment – without a national grid connection most boats use solar panels and wind turbines to provide for their power needs for example - and we recently organised the 'Cam Clean-up'. This was a fun and very successful event that saw around 100 boaters and other city residents (including members of the rowing and canoeing clubs) spend a day cleaning the river, to the benefit of all who use the river and its banks - from the dog-walkers, to the commercial tour operators, to the rowers, anglers and residential boaters.

We believe that the river is there for all who live in or visit the city, and we fully respect the rights of other groups to use the river. Indeed, one of the features of the river that we love is its lively, bustling nature, with joggers and cyclists passing on the towpath, and rowers, scullers, kayakers, tour boats and visiting boats from other parts of the inland waterways system passing by on the river.



camboaters

We do not believe that our presence has a detrimental impact on rowing in Cambridge. A number of our community are rowers and coxes themselves. There are many navigation restrictions already in place on the narrower stretches of the river to prohibit mooring (or restrict it to narrowboats of less than 7 foot beam), where it would otherwise be insufficiently wide to allow two rowing VIII's to pass. We are happy to accept these limitations in order to allow space for all users of the river, but we do not believe further restrictions are needed. Indeed, if river space was allocated according to the proportion of licence fees raised by the Cam Conservators, we would be entitled to far more space than we currently use, and the rowing groups very considerably less!

People on the river come from all ways of life – teachers, academics, cycle couriers, students, graphic designers - to name but a few. We even have a professional rowing coach among our number. Individually and collectively we believe we make a positive contribution to the life of the city.

If there are conflicts with other users of the river, we would like to work together to resolve them in a spirit of cooperation. We were very disappointed by the tone of Peter and Robert's letter, as we are keen to maintain a friendly and respectful dialogue with the rowing clubs. It is a shame they have never raised their concerns with us directly - they are very welcome to, and we will be sending a copy of this letter to them to encourage them to do so. Certainly, we do not feel their negative attitude is representative of rowers as a whole. We have very friendly relations with several of the town clubs; 'Champion of the Thames' and 'City of Cambridge' for example are always extremely helpful in letting us know when rowing competitions are happening on the river, and most boats moored on Midsummer Common will be moving voluntarily this weekend to make way for the annual City Sprints rowing regatta, despite being under no obligation to do so to help the smooth running of a rowing event.

We appreciate that you may have already responded to Peter and Robert's letter. However, in any further correspondence and meetings with the rowing clubs we would ask you and your party to support our right to our way of life, and acknowledge the contribution we make to the city and to the lively, engaging life of the river and its users.

With warm wishes,



Zoë Trent (on behalf of the Camboaters Community Association Committee)