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Print page

Choppy waters ahead over boat ban scheme

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HOUSEBOAT owners have slammed plans to ban them from part of the river Cam during winter months.

(picture 3398r "Upset: Monica's facing Cam boat ban")The Conservators of the River Cam have agreed to ban mooring along Midsummer Common, from The Fort St George pub to Eights Marina, from October 1 to March 31, to try to ease congestion.

Currently about 15 boats are moored there, and would need to find alternative accommodation during the winter months.

Monica Guy, who has lived aboard her boat Tom Foolery since graduating from King's College last month, branded the decision "rubbish". "We're all quite upset," said the 21-year-old.

Miss Guy said she did not know where she would move to.

"I have not got a clue," she said. "That is part of the problem. They did talk about letting people double-park around Jesus Green but I think the council would make that 48-hour parking so it would be no good for us. They have not taken into account that there is not enough permanent mooring.

"A lot of people are very angry and are thinking about moving out of Cambridge altogether, but I do not want to do that."

A consultative document prior to the Conservators meeting said boats moored along Midsummer Common "contribute a great deal towards the congestion and it is recommended mooring be permissible only during the summer in the non-university season".

Prof Michael Chisholm, chairman of the conservators, said the six-month ban covered the time many novice rowing crews were on the river.

"This has seemed to be, in the judgment of the conservators, the best compromise between the conflicting interests," he said.

Other decisions taken by the conservators include allowing mooring of vessels up to 4.3m wide above Victoria Avenue - effectively permitting double-parking of narrow boats - and a 2.1m width restriction on mooring upstream of Green Dragon Bridge.

"We took some other decisions going further up river; we are willing to allow mooring up river between Jesus Lock and towards Magdalene Bridge, there's mooring permitted by us about Victoria Bridge and there's mooring further downstream," said Prof Chisholm

Prof Chisholm said he felt this provided enough space for the displaced boats, although "it could be a less desirable location for some of the occupants".

He added the conservators were still keen on providing more off-river mooring, such as a marina.

A formal approach was made to both Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire District councils asking them to recognise the need in their Local Plans.

However John Roebuck, head of parks and recreation at the city council, said the idea was not being pursued. "There's a need for it, but I don't have to be a planner to realise there's nowhere in Cambridge for it to go," he said.

Cambridge City Council is also set to change its policy regarding mooring on its land, which includes Midsummer and Stourbridge commons, Jesus Green and Jubilee Gardens.

Consultation is set to begin in the autumn over issues such as cost and location of mooring.

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