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Council tests the waters

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HUNDREDS of Cambridge residents and river users are being asked to help draw up a policy on mooring along the River Cam.

(picture 10597r "River plan: Council seeking opinions")Houseboat owners, rowers and anglers are among those whose views are sought on where mooring should take place and whether it should continue to be free of charge.

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The city council survey follows a controversial decision by the Conservators of the River Cam - guardians of navigation on the river - to ban most mooring on Midsummer Common between October 1 and March 31.

Conservators say the ban would ease congestion when novice rowing crews are out on the river, but have agreed to defer finalising their decision until October so they can take the results of the consultation into account.

Coun Joye Rosenstiel, executive councillor for community development and leisure, said: "In the last 10 years the river has been under increasing pressure.

"The aim of the consultation is really to decide how best the river can be enjoyed by everyone - people using it for recreation, the people who want to live there, those who use it for fishing and rowing.

"Some of these things are not necessarily compatible with each other but we hope this policy will enable them to coexist reasonably peacefully."

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She said there had been "considerable growth" in the number of houseboats over the last decade, partly as a consequence of Cambridge's high house prices.

"We are testing the water out on whether people feel it is fair the boat owners should pay the equivalent of Band A council tax," Coun Rosenstiel explained.

Currently, free 48-hour mooring is permitted by the council at Jubilee Gardens and Jesus Green between Jesus Green Weir and Chesterton Road toilets, and Jesus Green Lock and Victoria Avenue Bridge. Elsewhere, mooring is unrestricted and free where the city and county councils own the riverbank, except where it is prohibited by the Conservators of the River Cam for navigational purposes.

Consultation papers will be distributed to residents living close to Midsummer Common, Jesus Green and Stourbridge Common over the next few weeks, but any other resident wishing to comment should contact John Roebuck, head of parks and recreation, on (01223) 457531 or john.roebuck@cambridge.gov.uk

For more information, parks and recreation staff will be at an open afternoon at Wesley Church, King Street, on January 26 from 3-8pm.

The deadline for comments is February 11 and the council's Community Development and Leisure committee will consider the outcome of the consultation on March 24.

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