



Strategic review of navigation charges - summary of consultation responses

May 2018

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We improve the quality of our water, land and air by tackling pollution. We work with businesses to help them comply with environmental regulations. A healthy and diverse environment enhances people's lives and contributes to economic growth.

We can't do this alone. We work as part of the Defra group (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs), with the rest of government, local councils, businesses, civil society groups and local communities to create a better place for people and wildlife.

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1. Introduction

This document summarises the responses we received to specific questions asked about the future of navigation boat registration charges in the consultation on 'Environment Agency charge proposals from 2018'. The consultation ran between 30 November 2017 and 26 January 2018. It set out proposals to make changes to a number of our charges schemes. These proposals did not include specific changes to navigation charge amounts. We did however ask for views to help us shape proposals for future navigation boat registration charges.

There is a separate consultation response document which contains all sector responses to the 'Environment Agency charge proposals from 2018' on GOV.UK. See the [consultation response document](#). Navigation customers who gave views on questions not specific to navigation are included in this separate report.

For views provided on our navigation boat registration charges, this document:

- summarises the responses we received to the questions
- outlines what we'll do next to develop a 5 year charging plan

The Environment Agency is the second largest Navigation Authority in the UK. We are responsible for managing 1,000km of inland waterways. It's our job to keep them open and safe for a variety of uses, especially for boating.

In total, there are around 26,000 recreational and commercial boats kept or used on the waterways we manage. It's a legal requirement for these boats to register with us. We charge for this. The charge contributes to the cost of managing and maintaining the waterways.

The current cost of the services we provide far exceeds the income we receive from customer charges. Our customers benefit from the services they receive in each waterways area. If we maintain charges at the current level, the quality of maintenance and service we can offer will continue to reduce.

We are working hard to reduce our costs through efficiencies and maximising our income through other commercial opportunities. However we also need to review our regulatory approach and charging scheme. We are committed to making sure our charges are fair and transparent, and more closely reflect the true cost of the services we provide for our customers' benefit.

2. About the consultation

The consultation ran from 30 November 2017 to 26 January 2018. We extended the initial end date by two weeks in response to customer feedback, to allow more time for customers to get an understanding of and respond to the consultation. For navigation customers who received the invitation to take part by post, we extended the consultation further to 13 February and opened a separate online consultation tool (Consultation on Environment Agency Navigation's boat registration charges 2019 to 2023). This was because there was a delay in sending the letters and we wanted to give customers a reasonable amount of time to respond.

We invited 18,093 navigation boat registration customers to take part in the consultation. We contacted 12,041 by email and a further 6,052 by post, including customers:

- with boats registered on our Waterways (River Thames, Anglian Waterways and Medway Navigation) to August 2017 (including visitors)
- invited to renew in 2017 who had not yet renewed
- who had visited our waterways in 2016

The specific navigation questions we asked in the consultation are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Consultation questions

Question 1	What factors do you think should determine how we calculate the boat registration charge?
Question 2	What would you like to see included within a revised boat registration charges scheme?
Question 3 a-f	<p>Please rate the following elements of service based on how important they are to you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • channel dredging • tree and vegetation clearance • assisted passage (staff to operate locks) • routine patrolling by staff on patrol launches • compliance and enforcement checks • provision of facilities (such as moorings / water / refuse and sewage disposal) <p>Rating key: 1 important, 2 like to have, 3 don't mind, 4 could manage without, 5 don't want or need, 6 unsure</p>
Question 3 g	Other (please specify)
Question 4	Do you have any other comments on the above plans to review navigation charges and the boat registration charges scheme?
Question 5	Would you be interested in attending a workshop to help us shape our new proposals? If so, please provide your contact details.

Additional comments

In the full 'Environment Agency charge proposals for 2018' consultation, we asked this question:

Please give us any further comments on our proposals which have not been covered elsewhere in the questions - that is if none of the questions throughout the consultation have enabled you to raise further specific issues with these proposals please set them out here with any accompanying evidence.

There were a number of responses to this question. We've addressed them in this document along with additional comments made by those who responded by post. These responses are shown in Annex 1, Section 6.1 [Additional comments made as part of the consultation](#).

3. Overview of responses

In total we received responses from 870 different respondents. 446 through the online consultation tool and 424 written responses. We have not considered any responses received after the 13 February 2018.

Of these responses, 53 were made on behalf of groups or organisations who were happy to declare their participation in the consultation. The list of groups and organisations is shown in [Annex 2 in section 6.2](#).

When reviewing all of the responses, we found some which were not relevant. We classified a response as 'not relevant' and discounted it where the respondent did one of the following:

- did not comment
- wrote 'not applicable'
- commented on the format of the consultation
- referred to a comment made in another part of the consultation questions
- commented on another part of the 'Environment Agency charge proposals from 2018 consultation' not relevant to boat registration
- responded by saying they had sold their boat

For question 3a-f only

We discounted comments where:

- a respondent ranked a service as either 'don't mind', 'don't want or need' or 'unsure' and did one of the following:
 - did not include a comment in any of the other navigation questions
 - responded with a comment that referred to another part of the 'Environment Agency charge proposals from 2018 consultation' in the navigation questions
- respondents made comments to the other navigation questions but had not entered a ranking to any of the services in this question

Throughout this document we use the term 'relevant responses' to show those we did not discount. Table 2 shows the total number of relevant responses we received.

Table 2: Total number of relevant responses

	Number of relevant responses
Question 1	738 out of 870
Question 2	568 out of 870
Question 3 a-f	814 out of 870
Question 3g	233 out of 870
Question 4	432 out of 870
Question 5	247 out of 870
Additional comments	27 out of 870

4. Summary of responses by question

We reviewed all the comments made in each response to each question. Some of the responses only contained one point but the majority made a number of points.

We grouped the points into subject matter and created a series of tags. We totalled up the tags for each question. We did this for each 'relevant response'. This enabled us to analyse the information more clearly.

This summary only shows the subjects with 20 or more tags for each question. The tables in [Annex 1, section 6.1](#) include every subject raised.

Question 1

What factors do you think should determine how we calculate the boat registration charge?

Table 3: Responses to question 1

Subject	Number of times tagged
Size of boat - length x beam (width)	196
Size of boat (no dimensions given)	128
Level / frequency of use	99
Type of use - residential or not	74
Type of use - commercial or private	70
Link to cost of all services	66
Type of boat - powered or unpowered	61
Size of boat - length only	60
More flexible registration options	59
Engine size / type / power	51
Link to level of service - facilities	48
Environmental impacts - wash	41
Link to level of service - lock keeper / assisted passage	35
Fairness / value for money / affordability	33
Environmental impact - fuel type / emissions	29
The public benefit of waterways - all users should contribute	27
Don't change - ok as it is	27
Where the boat is kept or moored	27
Size of boat - other comments	23
Link to / same as Canals & River Trust / other Navigation Authority	23
More / better compliance and enforcement activity	22

In the responses to this question, there were 27 other subjects identified with fewer than 20 tags. See [Annex 1](#) for the detail.

Question 2

What would you like to see included within a revised boat registration charges scheme?

Table 4: Responses to question 2

Subject	Number of times tagged
More flexible registration options	98
More / better compliance and enforcement activity	91
Link to level of service - lock keeper/assisted passage	38
Online / digital registration service	36
Where the boat is kept or moored	33
Link to cost of service (all including channel maintenance)	29
Fairness / value for money / affordability	29
Type of boat - powered or unpowered	28
One registration for all waterways	24
More / better availability of moorings	21
Link to / same as Canal & River Trust / other Navigation Authority	20
Discounts for clubs / groups / charities / historic boats / age (youth and OAP) / low income	20

In the responses to this question, there were 46 other subjects identified with fewer than 20 tags. See [Annex 1](#) for the detail.

Question 3a-f

Please rate the following elements of service based on how important they are to you - Channel dredging; Tree and vegetation clearance; Assisted passage (staff to operate locks); Routine patrolling by staff on patrol launches; Compliance and enforcement checks and Provision of facilities (for example moorings / water / refuse and sewage disposal)?

This question asked respondents to rate navigation services provided by the Environment Agency from a list of options. They were asked to rank the services for importance from 1. 'Important' to 6. 'Unsure'.

We received 814 relevant responses. Table 5 shows the results - where at least one of the services was ranked by the respondent and we considered it a 'relevant response'.

Table 5: Importance ratings of navigation services

Service	Important	Like	Don't mind	Could manage without	Don't want or need	Unsure
Channel dredging	482	169	56	41	41	13
Tree & vegetation clearance	483	215	47	28	30	7
Lock operation	191	186	128	163	117	10
Patrols	125	196	169	161	123	21
Compliance & enforcement	340	190	123	69	60	12
Other services - moorings	507	157	48	40	43	8

Question 3g

Other (please specify)

This was an additional question at the end of question 3a-f which asked respondents to tell us about other services they consider important.

Table 6: Responses to question 3g

Subject	Number of times tagged
More / better compliance and enforcement activity	43
More / better availability of moorings	27
Access: vegetation/dredging	25
Remove sunken and / or unregistered boats	22

In the responses to this question, there were 29 other subjects identified with fewer than 20 tags. See [Annex 1](#) for the detail.

Question 4

Do you have any other comments on the above plans to review navigation charges and the boat registration charges scheme?

Table 7: Responses to question 4

Subject	Number of times tagged
Link to cost of all services	78
Fairness / value for money / affordability	62
More / better compliance and enforcement activity	59
The public benefit of waterways - all users should contribute	34
Link to / same as Canal & River Trust / other Navigation Authority	33
Don't change - charges already too high	28
Don't change - ok as it is	25
More flexible registration options	23
Locks - staff and / or safety	20

In the responses to this question, we identified 32 other subjects with fewer than 20 tags. Some of the points raised did not fit the subjects in the table. We grouped these as 'other comments'. We received 37 'other comments' for this question. See [Annex 1](#) for the detail.

Question 5

Would you be interested in attending a workshop to help us shape our new proposals?

Of the 870 respondents to the consultations, 246 said they would like to attend a workshop.

5. Next steps

We will now fully consider the consultation responses to help us develop proposals for a 5-year charging plan for boat registration. We will also review our current boat registration charges scheme.

Our work will take account of customer consultation feedback to help us:

- review how the costs of our navigation operational activities and specific services provided across our waterways are recovered fairly and equitably from those who benefit by keeping or using a boat on the waterways
- review the service offer across our waterways to understand what services are important to local customers' needs and expectations and how much they are prepared to pay for them or see them reduce or stop
- review the current boat registration charges scheme - we recognise it can be complicated, is different for each waterway we manage, and has not been reviewed for many years
- review and simplify our charges scheme, introducing consistency where it makes sense to do so, and make it easier for our customers to understand and for our staff to apply

We will formally consult on our proposals and will engage customers throughout the consultation. Final proposals will then be sent to Defra, HM Treasury, the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and the Environment Agency Board for approval.

6. Annexes

6.1. Annex 1 - Full overview of responses to each question

This annex shows all the responses we received to the specific navigation questions we asked within the 'Environment Agency charge proposals from 2018' consultation.

Not all respondents used the consultation response format or answered all the questions, but we have captured all the relevant points made. Some of the responses only contained one point but the majority made a number of points. All the relevant points are included in the tables below.

Question 1

What factors do you think should determine how we calculate the boat registration charge?

There were 870 respondents to the consultations, 738 made relevant responses to question 1. We grouped the points made in the 'relevant responses' into subject matter and created a series of tags. We totalled up the tags for each question. The subject and number of times it was tagged are shown in Table 8.

Of the 870 respondents, we discounted 132 responses to this question as explained in section 3.

Table 8: Responses to question 1

Subject	Number of times tagged
Size of boat - length x beam (width)	196
Size of boat (no dimensions given)	128
Level / frequency of use	99
Type of use - residential or not	74
Type of use - commercial or private	70
Link to cost of all services	66
Type of boat - powered or unpowered	61
Size of boat - length only	60
More flexible registration options	59
Engine size / type / power	51
Link to level of service - facilities	48
Environmental impacts - wash	41
Link to level of service - lock keeper / assisted passage	35
Fairness / value for money / affordability	33
Environmental impact - fuel type / emissions	29
The public benefit of waterways - all users should contribute	27
Don't change - ok as it is	27
Where boat is kept or moored	27

Size of boat - other comments	23
Link to / same as Canal & River Trust / other Navigation Authority	23
More / better compliance and enforcement activity	22
Type of boat - unpowered should pay less	16
Distance travelled and / or length of available waterway	14
Discounts for clubs/groups / charities / historic boats / age (youth and OAP) / low income	13
Link to inflation / CPI	13
The waterway used	13
Fuel type - other comments	12
Should not include water management / flood risk activities	12
Size of boat - displacement	10
Size of boat - draft	9
One registration for all waterways	8
One charge for all boats	8
Value of boat	7
Remove sunken and / or unregistered boats	5
More / better availability of moorings	4
Improve information provision / marketing of waterways	3
Refunds - service levels not met	3
Discounts / incentives for new boaters	3
Link to congestion	3
Don't charge - should be free	3
Discounts e.g. for early payment	3
Age of boat	2
Charge for events on the waterways	2
Review of Boat Safety Scheme	1
Bonds for residential long term moorers	1
Online / digital registration service	1
Government subsidy	1

Some of the points raised did not fit the subjects in the table. We grouped these as 'other comments'. We received 8 'other comments' for this question.

Question 2

What would you like to see included within a revised boat registration charges scheme?

There were 870 respondents to the consultations, 568 made relevant responses to question 2. We grouped the points made in the 'relevant responses' into subject matter and created a series of tags. We totalled up the tags for each question. The subject and number of times it was tagged are shown in Table 9.

Of the 870 respondents, we discounted 302 responses as explained in section 3.

Table 9: Responses to question 2

Subject	Number of times tagged
More flexible registration options	98
More / better compliance and enforcement activity	91
Link to level of service - lock keeper / assisted passage	38
Online/digital registration service	36
Link to cost of all services	29
Fairness / value for money / affordability	29
Type of boat - powered or unpowered	28
More / better availability of moorings	27
One registration for all waterways	24
Where boat is kept or moored	23
Link to / same as Canal & River Trust / other Navigation Authority	20
Discounts for clubs / groups / charities / historic boats / age (youth and OAP) / low income	20
Link to level of service - facilities	19
Don't change - ok as it is	19
Level / frequency of use	18
Type of use - residential or not	18
Type of use - commercial or private	17
Size of boat - length only	16
Environmental impact - fuel type / emissions	16
Size of boat - length x beam (width)	15
The public benefit of waterways - all users should contribute	15
Type of boat - unpowered should pay less	13
More / better compliance and enforcement - moorings	13
Size of boat - no dimensions given	12

Review Boat Safety Scheme	10
More transparency - charges / income / budgets / costs	9
Refunds - service levels not met	8
Size of boat - other comments	7
Distance travelled and/or length of available waterway	7
Better access for small boat - slipways / launching sites / portage points	6
Reduce charge	6
Environmental impact - wash	5
Refunds - boats out of the water	5
Type of boat - unpowered should pay more	5
Remove sunken and/or unregistered boats	5
More toilets / facilities	5
Streamline the renewals process	4
Don't change - charges already too high	4
Engine size / power	4
Improve information provision/marketing of waterways	4
Link to inflation	3
Support a 5 year charging plan	3
Charge for events on the waterways	2
A base charge plus additions	2
Annual customer satisfaction survey	2
Government subsidy	2
Type of boat - unpowered should be free	2
Charge for tenders	2
Higher charges for visitors	1
Size of boat - displacement	1
Fuel type - other comments	1
Discounts / incentives for new boaters	1
Don't charge - should be free	1
Reporting of incidents and offences	1
Licence recognition software	1
Phase in charges	1
Age of boat	1

Some of the points raised did not fit the subjects in the table. We grouped these as 'other comments'. We received 17 'other comments' for this question.

Question 3a-f

Please rate the following elements of service based on how important they are to you - channel dredging; tree and vegetation clearance, assisted passage (staff to operate locks); routine patrolling by staff on patrol launches; compliance and enforcement checks and provision of facilities (e.g. moorings / water / refuse and sewage disposal)?

This question asked respondents to choose services provided by the Environment Agency as part of Navigation, from a list of options. They were asked to rank the services for importance from 'Important' to 'Unsure'. The number of responses received are given below. This table also includes the number of blanks recorded for each service, this is where a respondent has ranked at least one of the services.

There were 870 respondents to the consultations, 814 ranked at least one of the services in the table.

Of the 870 respondents, we discounted 56 responses as explained in section 3.

Table 10: Importance ratings of navigation services

Service	1. Important	2. Like	3. Don't mind	4. Could manage without	5. Don't want or need	6. Unsure	Left blank
Channel dredging	482	169	56	41	41	13	12
Tree & vegetation clearance	483	215	47	28	30	7	4
Lock operation	191	186	128	163	117	10	19
Patrols	125	196	169	161	123	21	19
Compliance & enforcement	340	190	123	69	60	12	20
Other services - moorings	507	157	48	40	43	8	11

Question 3g

Other (please specify)

This was an additional question at the end of question 3a-f which asked respondents to tell us about other services they considered important.

Of the 870 respondents to the consultations, 233 made relevant comments to this part of question 3. We grouped the services suggested in the 'relevant responses' into subject matter and created a series of tags. We totalled up the tags for each question. The subject and number of times it was tagged are shown in Table Services identified in the relevant comments are shown in Table 11.

We discounted 637 responses from this question as explained in section 3.

Table 11 Responses to question 3g

Subject	Number of times tagged
More / better compliance and enforcement activity	43
More / better availability of mooring	27
Tree clearance lock cuts / dredging	25
Remove sunken and/or unregistered boats	22
Better access for small boat - slipways / launching sites / portage points	16
Staffed locks	14
Maintenance of locks	12
Protect the environment	8
More / better compliance and enforcement - mooring	7
Refuse services with recycling facility	7
Water and sewage disposal service	6
Navigation advice	6
Services / value for money	6
Online / digital registration service	5
Lavatories / showers	5
Visible signs	4
Availability of electric charge points	4
Camp sites / car parks	4
Invasive species control	3
Channel marking	3
Pump out services	3
Reporting of incidents and offences	3
Flow rate	2
Improve information provision / marketing of waterways	2
Use more volunteers/communities	2
Environmental impact - fuel type / emissions	1
Environment Agency fulfil obligation	1
Review Boat Safety Scheme	1
Better Environment Agency presence at events	1
Disabled access facilities	1
Flood warning scheme	1
More flexible registration options	1

Some of the points raised did not fit the subjects in the table. We grouped these as 'other comments'. We received 9 'other comments' for this question.

Question 4

Do you have any other comments on the above plans to review navigation charges and the boat registration charges scheme?

There were 870 respondents to the consultations, 432 made relevant comments to question 4. We grouped the points made in the 'relevant responses' into subject matter and created a series of tags. We totalled up the tags for each question. The subject and number of times it was tagged are shown in Table 12.

Of the 870 respondents, we discounted 438 responses from this question as explained in section 3.

Table 12: Responses to question 4

Subject	Number of times tagged
Link to cost of all services	78
Fairness / value for money / affordability	62
Better / more compliance and enforcement activity	59
The public benefit of waterways - all users should contribute	34
Link to / same as Canal & River Trust / other Navigation Authority	33
Don't change - charges already too high	28
Don't change - ok as it is	25
More flexible registration options	23
Locks - staff and / or safety	20
Increased charges equals increase service	13
Online / digital registration service	11
Should not include water management / flood risk activities	10
Improve information provision / marketing of waterways	9
Unpowered boats - encourage use / free	8
More transparency - charges / income / budgets / costs	8
Link to inflation / CPI	7
One registration for all waterways	6
Type of use - commercial or private	5
Involve customers / listen to customer feedback	5
Size of boat - length x beam	5
Size of boat - no dimensions given	4
Type of use - residential or not	4
Type of boat - powered or unpowered	4
Phase in charges	4
More / better availability of moorings	4

More / better compliance and enforcement - mooring	3
Environmental impact - fuel type / emissions	3
Environmental impact - wash	3
Refunds - service levels not met	3
Discounts for clubs / groups / charities / historic boats / age (youth and OAP) / low income	3
Don't link to Canal & River Trust	2
Engine size / power	2
Government subsidy	2
Where boat is kept or moored	2
Charge for guidance documents	1
Size of boat - length only	1
Distance travelled and / or length of available waterway	1
One charge for all boats	1
Reward good boat behaviour	1
Type of boat - unpowered should pay more	1
Discounts / incentives for new boaters	1
Remove sunken and / or unregistered boats	1

Some of the points raised did not fit the subjects in the table. We grouped these as 'other comments'. We received 37 'other comments' for this question.

Question 5: Would you like to attend a workshop?

Of the 870 respondents to the consultations, 246 said they would like to attend a workshop.

Additional comments made as part of the consultations

Some respondents made additional comments as part of the consultation.

Of the 870 respondents to the consultation, 27 made relevant additional comments. We grouped the points made in the 'relevant responses' into subject matter and created a series of tags. We totalled up the tags for each question. The subject and number of times it was tagged are shown in Table 13.

A total of 843 responses were discounted as explained in section 3.

Table 13: Summary of additional comments

Subject	Number of times tagged
More / better compliance and enforcement activity	7
Fairness / value for money / affordability	7
Link to cost of all services	4
Remove sunken and/or abandoned boats	3
Better access for small boat - slipways / launching sites / portage points	2

Link to / same as Canal & River Trust / other Navigation Authority	1
Review Boat Safety Scheme	1
The public benefit of waterways - all users should contribute	1
More transparency - charges / income / budgets / costs	1
More / better availability of moorings	1
Camp sites / car parks	1
Improve information provision / marketing of waterways	1

Some of the points raised did not fit the subjects in the table. We grouped these as 'other comments'. We received 8 'other comments' for this question.

6.2. Annex 2 - List of consultation participants

The following is a list of the companies, groups, associations and organisations that took part in the consultation. Individuals and anonymous respondents are not included in this table.

Organisations and groups that were happy to declare their participation in the consultation:

A Thames Skiffing Club
Barbel Society Regional Officer, Angling Trust member, PAG member
British Marine
British Rowing
Broom Boats Ltd.
Cambridgeshire Marine Industries
Commercial Boat Operators Association
Cotswold Water Park Trust and the WILD Partnership
Cumbrian farmer flood group. Member of NWRFCC. Member of CSFP
DBA-The Barge Association
Dittons Skiff and Punting Club and the Thames Punting Club
Dovecote Afloat (narrow boat project for young people on the Oxford Canal and River Thames)
East Anglian Waterways Association Ltd.
Erith Group
Grantham Angling Association
Harleyford Estate Ltd.
A hire boat business
Huby Angling Club
Jones Boatyard
Kingston University
Kirby Grindlay the Management Company Ltd.
Kris Cruisers
London Underground, for Greenwich Power Station

Magdalen College, Oxford
National Bargee Travellers Association
Nauticalia Ltd
Norfolk Rivers Trust
P. H. Hardwill Ltd
Peterborough City Rowing Club
River User Group 6 - Part of the EA's Customer Advice group
St.Neots Rowing Club
Stevenage Borough Council
Stockton-On-Tees Borough Council
Stroud Valleys Canal Company
Sunbury Junior regatta
Surface Engineering Association
Swallowfield Fishing Club
Test and Itchen Association
Tewin Fly Fishing Club
The Association of Waterways Cruising Clubs
The Canal & River Trust
The CLA
The Committee of The Windsor Yacht Club
The Company of Proprietors of the Stroudwater Navigation
The Cotswold Canals Trust
The Gt. Ouse Boating Association Ltd.
The Inland Waterways Association
Torbay Council Waste and Natural Environment team
Tudor Farms
UK Chamber of Shipping
Union Canal Carriers Ltd.
X-Press Boat Club a community rowing club based in Cambridge UK

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