**Work of the Conservancy**

As well as being responsible for the licencing of all vessels, the enforcement of the byelaws, and providing a 24/7 emergency call-out service for 364 days per year, the Conservators of the River Cam are responsible for a whole range of maintenance on what is a special river, with a unique set of management challenges, which [currently] include:

* Obstructions to navigation, including the removal of whole trees, bikes, trolleys, vessels which are adrift or abandoned. [Mainly lower river]
* Weir clearance on behalf of the Environment Agency [Jesus Lock or elsewhere?], weed harvesting [Lower river], invasive species control (floating pennywort). [Lower river – as other stretches are done by others [Volunteers clear floating pennywort from 10km of the River Cam - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/volunteers-clear-floating-pennywort-from-10km-of-the-river-cam)]
* Re-floating sunken vessels. [Presumably this mainly applies to powered / residential craft?]
* Soft revetment works to banks, steel sheet piling, concrete piling. [Lower river – and is this a statutory function?]
* Servicing/maintenance on Jesus Lock and Baits Bite Lock which includes the hydraulic running gear at BB lock, the guillotine gate and vee-doors, the slacker doors, and their linkages etc. [Presumably this mainly benefits powered craft]
* Grass cutting of the towpath, including management of the wellbeing of our protected species (e.g. water voles), tree management including pollarding, felling, re-planting and emergency call outs to deal with windblown trees, as well as regular hedge cutting. [Lower river – and is this a statutory function?]

[Have they carried out a high level review of their activities, considering relevance to their core purpose, allocation of staff hours, costs incurred, income derived etc?]

In total there are around 1200 recreational, live-aboard, and commercial boats kept or used on our 7.5 mile stretch of the River. Our legal requirement to licence vessels includes checks on the safety and insurance status of boats on the river, and a means of identifying craft in the event of incidents. The charges, which are levied in accordance with the byelaws, fall on those who most benefit from the navigation services we provide. [A vague generalisation which is contradicted by the list of work areas above]

**Financial Background and Outlook**

During the past 12 months, the Conservators have been looking for ways to both increase income (from some small outside works projects) and reduce costs, with some re-structuring plans already in process. We are very much aiming to become a tighter and more efficient ship. For several years, the Conservancy has been running as tight budgets as has been possible, with some essential maintenance and necessary renewal of assets being delayed because of insufficient funding. In the past 12 to 18 months, we have reduced some of our regular river maintenance works because the Covid 19 pandemic caused the income stream, on which we depend, to be unreliable. Irrespective of the effect of the pandemic, the Cam Conservancy would face a substantial annual shortfall if there were no increases in registration fees over the next three years. (There is no evidence of this shortfall) This would have severe implications for the level of service we were able to provide [Mainly lower river], and the Conservancy would not be able to continue adequate and forward-looking maintenance of the river in accordance with its statutory obligations [Statutory obligations haven’t been identified / defined, whilst the list at the top appears to include a number of big ticket items which may be non-statutory – i.e. optional at best].

In normal circumstances, vessel registration fees contribute over 70% of the Conservancy annual revenue. This is income is used to keep our waterway open and safe for use by both recreational and residential boaters, and for those who rely on the river for their business, as well as fulfilling our statutory responsibilities [Again, not defined. How do they go beyond keeping the waterway open and safe?]. Unlike neighbouring navigation authorities such as the Environment Agency and the Middle Level Commissioners, the Conservancy receives no form of outside funding whatsoever and it is essential that our financial security is established to deliver a sustainable navigation service into the future.

The total revenue generated from the proposed fee increases is the minimum required to ensure safe and efficient operations as well as having the required money set aside each year for repairs and renewals, and to meet the cost of more serious potential failures of equipment and our locks in the future. [No financial analysis in support of this, so how can one gauge the reasonableness / realism of the proposals?]