

FOI Ref  
9620

Response sent  
24 Sep 20

### **(CCC) Businesses on the River Cam**

At its council meeting in July 2020, Cambridge City Council made a unanimous commitment to address racial inequality and promote equality of opportunity in the City.

The River Cam is an important shared local amenity and has undergone much commercial development over the last 15 years. This has included an increase in the number and type of commercial enterprises on the River, including

- An increase in the number of companies offering punt tours on the River, with the introduction of the 'La Mimosa' punting station.
- A subsequent increase in the number of punts able to be operated at the La Mimosa station
- The introduction of a new 'eco tour' boat from Camboats Ltd
- The expansion of the pontoon at Mill pond by Scudamores Punting Company

These developments would presumably have required Council support to go ahead; specifically, permission to use council owned riverbank for commercial purposes.

I am therefore requesting the following information, under the Freedom of Information Act 2000:

1. Does the council collect information on the ownership of businesses on the River who have commercial agreements or permissive access to the riverbank with the council, in order to support its commitment to equality of opportunity?
2. What is the council actively doing to promote equality of opportunity on the River Cam, a local amenity with high commercial barriers to entry?

If this request is too wide or unclear, I would be grateful if you could contact me as I understand that under the Act, you are required to advise and assist requesters. If any of this information is already in the public domain, please can you direct me to it, with page references and URLs if necessary?

If the release of any of this information is prohibited on the grounds of breach of confidence, I ask that you supply me with copies of the confidentiality agreement and remind you that information should not be treated as confidential if such an agreement has not been signed.

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**Response:**

Thank you for your request for information above, which we have dealt with under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

I hope the following will answer your query:

**1. Does the council collect information on the ownership of businesses on the River who have commercial agreements or permissive access to the riverbank with the council, in order to support its commitment to equality of opportunity?**

We collect information necessary to enter into agreements with these businesses. This information does not include protected characteristics of applicants as defined in the Equality Act 2010. You may wish to direct your enquiry to the Conservators of the River Cam who may hold further information in relation to licensing of boats, vessels, and individuals.

This is a link for the information that we collect in relation to businesses.

<https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/search/?q=commercial+mooring>

The City Council recognises that there would need to be a voluntary response when collecting such information and that some operators are companies, therefore there would be of concern to us that the information would not be robust enough to base future decisions on. For example, there are significantly more employees and sole traders on the river than there are businesses.

**2. What is the council actively doing to promote equality of opportunity on the River Cam, a local amenity with high commercial barriers to entry?**

The City Council periodically market tests commercial opportunities, for example the recent occasion where we sought expressions of interest in relation to a commercial mooring. Further information can be found using these weblinks

<https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/7508/jubilee-gardens-commercial-mooring-details.pdf>

<https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/search/?q=commercial+mooring>

The Council's Comprehensive Equalities and Diversity Policy is published online and sets out its commitment to promoting equality and diversity, including through its role as an employer and a provider of services to the public. It can be found here:

<https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/6722/comprehensive-equalities-and-diversity-policy.pdf>

With regards punting there are six recognised punt stations on the middle river, four owned by City Council and they are subject to commercial property contracts and appropriate legislation and so the Council has limited opportunity to change the current arrangements. These commercial arrangements will include requirements for the operators to comply with legislation, including The Equality Act.

There are several landowners along the river including the Council and colleges and there is limited capacity.

The Council is preparing to review the Code of Practice for the punting industry, including a consultation on the topic and this consultation will include questions on equality of opportunity on the River Cam and equalities monitoring of respondents.

To undertake equalities monitoring it must be for a purpose for example, to identify groups less likely to apply for licence to inform where to advertise availability of punting licences.

Not linked to equalities monitoring but in general discussion with operators there may be opportunities to raise awareness within businesses as to different channels they can advertise for staff that may reach people from diverse backgrounds.

The review of the Code of Practice will require us to complete an equalities impact assessment. We complete equalities impact assessments on existing policies and practices as part of our Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act) where we are made aware of any emerging issues impacting on those with protected characteristics and when existing policies and practices are periodically reviewed.

Further queries on this matter should be directed to [foi@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:foi@cambridge.gov.uk)