

# What does my licence fee pay for and why do I have to pay it?

## Why was the licence fee introduced?

For decades local and national ratepayers had been subsidising the upkeep of the navigation because the legislation that controlled it was outdated and only allowed charges for navigation related to the value of the cargo being carried. This harked back to pre-industrial times when the primary use of waterways was for the movement of goods.

To address this and in recognition of the push from government for a move to a more justified position where the beneficiary should at least be contributing towards the cost's borne by a public authority the Commissioners felt the time was right to go through the costly and time-consuming procedure of updating the legislation to put them in line with other navigation authorities.

All this work culminated in November 2018 when the Middle Level Act was passed.

## What does it cost to run the navigation?

To maintain our one hundred miles of navigable watercourse, the six locks, employ two lock keepers and a navigation officer and cut weed and grass for navigation purposes the cost is on average well in excess of two hundred thousand pounds per annum. The figure will vary of course dependent upon the year and the remedial or improvement works required.

## Will the Middle Level Make a Profit from Charging for Navigation?

No, there is no likelihood of the licence fee covering anywhere near the cost of running the navigation for the foreseeable future, especially with the added commitment to improve it (described below) and there was an undertaking given to the House of Lords that would actually (at this time) preclude us from doing so. In addition, there is a commitment to spend 25% of all income on improving facilities on the link route to meet the current minimum recommendations of the IWA which remains in place until these are delivered.

## Are the MLC only going to meet the IWA minimum standards?

No, this is not the intention. In addition to this we have the following projects we are working on or supporting;

- Improved moorings on High Lode Ramsey - we have been working jointly with the Town Council and a local developer and have concluded a deal which will provide 120m of new moorings, a water point and rubbish disposal. It is expected to start work on these in the spring of 2022.
- Improved moorings in March town - we have been working with Fenland District Council on opportunities for improving the water frontage through the town and will continue to do so as plans linked with the successful market towns bid are developed.
- We delivered four temporary overnight rural moorings in 2021 and have plans to deliver at least four more in 2022.
- We have developed a residential mooring strategy working with Fenland District Council to address the need which exists for permanent moorings and for long stay moorings.
- We are project partners in the Great Fen and are in discussions with its team over what moorings can be provided within the Great Fen to allow visitors travelling by boat access to this unique area.
- We agreed with the Well Creek Trust to replace and take on their moorings at Salters Lode

lock. This work has been completed.

- Longer term we have started to look at plans for phased dredging through March, estimated to cost in excess of two hundred thousand pounds to undertake.
- We continue with the phased dredging of Well Creek with a further length planned to be dredged in the spring of 2022.

#### Why are the charges for navigation aligned to those of the Environment Agency?

It has been pointed out that the EA Anglian area have three and a half times as many navigable miles as exist in the Middle Level. But they also have 7000 vessels registered which is 14 times as many as are within the MLC waters, hence to operate our waters and to invest in them we do need to levy reasonable charges.

#### Where are you with negotiations with CRT and the EA on combined licences?

We concluded our negotiations with EA Anglian and the Conservators of the River Cam which led to the introduction of the Anglian Pass. With this pass anyone with an annual home licence with the MLC or other two partners (or with a CRT Gold licence) can purchase an Anglian Pass which will allow them access to all three waters. We are also in continuing discussion with CRT in a similar light in respect of arrangements in regard to their Gold licences to see if a deal can be reached which would allow Gold Licence holders without an Anglian Pass access to our waters.

I have further questions who should I ask?

The MLC employ a full time Navigation Officer, Kevin who can be contacted by email using the [enquiries@middlelevel.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@middlelevel.gov.uk) or by phone on 07725 134170