



More information can be found at:

www.riversaccess.org

Canoe England, 18 Market Place,
Bingham, Nottinghamshire, NG13 8AP

Tel: 0845 370 9500

Correct as at March 2007



Why is there a campaign?

In England, unlike elsewhere in the world, the public cannot assume there is an automatic right to have access to rivers. People are incredulous when they are made aware of this situation.

The campaign is to secure this right as a matter of public interest. In the UK, Scotland already enjoys that right.

Research has revealed that prior to 1830, it was generally accepted the public had a historical right of access to rivers. Legal opinions since have continued to diminish this position and created a lack of clarity for such a right.

Who is the campaign for?

The campaign is not just for canoeists. It is for all members of the public who share the view that a legal right for access to and along water would provide enormous recreational, educational and economic opportunities.

A right of access will provide certainty for the future of water related sport and recreation. The campaign has gained support from many interest groups and organisations who seek more access to enjoy the natural water environment - swimmers, anglers, walkers etc.

Has the 'Right to Roam' not helped?

No. The legal position for access to and along rivers in England and Wales continues to be a contentious matter. Parliament has never passed legislation for access to and along water and excluded it from the Countryside Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000, despite the efforts of Canoe England.

What are we campaigning for?

Our aim is to achieve clarity through new legislation similar to the Scottish Land Reform Act 2003 (applicable to manually powered craft). The successfully implemented Act is codified by the Scottish Outdoor Access Code, giving responsibilities for access to land and water and protecting the rights of others and the environment.

Enjoying but also protecting the environment

Canoe England believes that action to improve access to waters should include measures to enhance and conserve biodiversity. Waters are an important resource for wildlife and habitats and would be protected through an Access Code developed to support legislation (such as a Public Access to Inland Waters Bill). Furthermore, increasing access to water would also help reduce carbon emissions from long car journeys that people currently take to get to accessible water.

Is there an alternative to legislation?

No. Voluntary access agreements have been tried and tested with extremely limited success – in the majority of cases the agreements are neither sustainable nor inclusive.

Out of 66,000 kilometres (41,000 miles) of rivers in England and Wales without a public right of navigation*, only 812 kilometres (504 miles) of highly restricted access has been negotiated. Some agreements are for just a few days each year. Ultimately access is in the hands of riparian owners and if they refuse to engage in negotiation, no progress can be made.

The Environment Agency commissioned the University of Brighton to investigate the viability of voluntary agreements. From a two-year study (2004 – 2006), a meagre 20 miles of complicated and restrictive access was gained. At this rate, the prospect of voluntary agreements delivering adequate access is poor.

Why do we need more access to water?

England and Wales have an extensive network of public footpaths and bridleways which bring people into the countryside, as well as widely recognised benefits for all in the community. Access to water could add to this important contribution by providing:

- Increased participation in sport and recreation, reaping the rewards that this brings to improving physical and mental health, and social inclusion
- More opportunities for outdoor education
- More opportunities for getting the nation fitter and reducing obesity
- Awareness and appreciation of the natural water environment
- A boost to recreational tourism and the local economy
- Medal success at Olympic and non-Olympic level

A new statutory, national approach would help people enjoy more of our natural heritage and environment with certainty. Access would support Government strategies for health, education, social and economic issues.

How can I help?

Contact your MP and make the case for legislation, the more people who demand change, the higher up the agenda the issue will get. To save you time, template letters can be found at www.riversaccess.org, just fill it in and send. Every contact made really helps!

More information can be found at:

www.riversaccess.org

or

Canoe England, 18 Market Place, Bingham, Nottinghamshire, NG13 8AP

Tel: 0845 370 9500

* From the Government commissioned report "Water Based Sport and Recreation – the facts" 2001.

For river access information in Wales contact

www.welsh-canoeing.org.uk

For river access information in Scotland contact

www.canoescotland.com

For river access information in Northern Ireland contact

www.cani.org.uk

