

Toll Payers Questionnaire 2009 – analysis of results

This is a summary of the results from the 2009 survey of toll payers. A preliminary analysis was compiled in June and since then an independent statistical analysis of the results has been carried out. A copy of the full report is available from the Authority's website. The Navigation Finance and Tolls Review Group has recommended that the relative charges for different sized boats and the hire boat multiplier be reviewed in time for any agreed changes to be implemented in April 2011, following consultation with the key boating organisations and having due regard to the full results of the toll payers questionnaire. The intention is that these results are made available for that process.

A large number of helpful written comments were submitted with the survey and further reports will be prepared looking at how the Authority can respond to the points made and use some of the good ideas suggested.

1. Scale of Response

The Authority distributed 10,162 forms and received 1,293 back, the majority in paper form and 168 via the Internet. This represents 12.7% and for this type of survey is an excellent response. This return is down on the 15.3% received for the 2005 survey when the Authority sent out 9,861 forms and had 1,508 responses, but nevertheless is very pleasing. The responses were verified against the database of registered toll payers and only the 1,167 which could be matched are included in the sample which forms the basis for this report.

The statistical analysis indicated that there is no significant difference in the proportion of owners of powered and unpowered boats in the verified questionnaires and the database of boat owners. Of the 1167 responses, just over half (52%) were from owners in Norfolk, 16% from Suffolk, 8% from Essex, 2% from each of Kent and Hertfordshire and the balance spread across the country.

949 of the 1,167 respondents class themselves as powered boat owners, and of these 545 put themselves in the large category. The reverse is true for the unpowered boat owners, where the majority class themselves as small boat owners.

2. Fairness of tolls between different sized craft

The analysis shows that there is a significant statistical association between the responses and the county of residence and size of boat with those living outside Norfolk and Suffolk and larger boat owners having a higher proportion believing the present charges are fair.

N=1,122	No	Yes
<i>Question 1. Do you think the present charges between small and large boats are fair?</i>	45.5%	54.5%

There is a significant statistical association between the responses to the next two questions, with those living in Norfolk registering higher support for lower tolls for small craft than those living in Suffolk or outside the County. Those with unpowered and smaller craft are more supportive of reducing tolls for smaller boats and increasing them for bigger craft compared to owners of powered larger craft. So for example, 56.9% of owners of unpowered craft believe that larger boats should pay more compared to 25.6% for powered craft owners.

	Less	Same	More
<i>Question 2. How much do you think smaller boats should pay compared to the current toll?</i>	43.2%	48.8%	8.0%
<i>Question 3. How much do you think the larger boats should pay compared to the current toll?</i>	14.2%	54.6%	31.2%

Question 4 asked “How much do you think the following vessels should pay for a year’s toll, compared to the figures for 2009/10?”

The results are summarised in the following table.

Vessel (2009/10 toll)	Even Less	Less	c. 2009/10	More	Even More
Canoe (£25.86)	43.9% (<£20)	35.9% (£25)	15.2% (£30)	3.6% (£35)	1.4% (>£40)
5 m ² Dinghy (£43.60)	29.2% (<£35)	32.3% (£35)	28.8% (£45)	7.4% (£50)	2.2% (>£50)
5 m ² Motor Boat (£87.20)	12.8% (>£70)	23.1% (£70)	45.2% (£90)	15.3% (£100)	3.6% (>£100)
18m ² Auxiliary Yacht (£130.56)	8.0% (<£120)	19.8% (£120)	46.8% (£135)	16.4% (£160)	9.1% (>£160)
11m ² Motor Boat (£127.88)	4.7% (<£110)	12.5% (£110)	48.8% (£130)	22.6% (£150)	11.4% (>£150)
25m ² Motor Boat (£222.80)	7.5% (<£210)	11.6% (£210)	34.3% (£230)	26.0% (£250)	20.6% (>£250)
38m ² Motor Boat (£310.94)	7.9% (<£300)	9.1% (£300)	26.2% (£320)	22.8% (£350)	34.0% (>£350)

The statistical analysis throws up a similar pattern to the first three questions. Those living in Norfolk are more supportive than those in Suffolk or out of the County of a reduction in tolls for canoes and increases for the bigger motor boats. 49.3% of those living in Norfolk favour reducing the toll for canoes to under £20 compared to 36.6% for those living outside the county while 40.1% of Norfolk residents favour raising the tolls for the 38m² boats to over £350 compared to 25.2% for boat owners out of the County. Owners of powered and large boats are less supportive of reductions for small craft and increases for the bigger boats. So for example 52.6% of the smaller boat owners believe that 38m² motor boats should pay over £350, compared to 19.1% of those owning a large boat.

Question 6. What do you think the priorities should be for future expenditure and activity?

Here is a table showing the percentages selecting 'High Priority' for each category.

	2005 Survey	2009 Survey
Dredging	33.4%	61.0%
Free 24-hour moorings	37.6%	38.0%
Facilities at Moorings	23.8%	23.9%
Improved Water Quality	17.6%	45.1%
Bank side tree and scrub clearance	24.5%	33.9%
Patrolling		28.3%
Enforcement of byelaws	25.7%	34.3%
Access for small craft	14.7%	27.5%

A greater proportion of the owners with larger boats give a high priority to dredging and free 24-hour moorings while the owners of smaller boats give greater priority to improved water quality and access for small craft.

Compared to 2005 more toll payers gave a "high priority" score to a number activities particularly dredging, improved water quality, bank side and scrub clearance, enforcement of byelaws (separated out this time) and access for small craft with dredging receiving the highest proportion giving it a "high priority".

Question 7. What do you think of the Authority's performance in terms of offering toll payers good value for money?

	2005 Survey	2009 Survey
Excellent	3.0%	6.7%
Good	34.0%	40.9%
Fair	44.5%	35.0%
Poor	15.1%	15.3%
Don't Know	3.4%	2.1%

The statistical analysis shows that there is an association to the answers to this question and the county in which toll payers are resident with those living outside Norfolk giving more positive results for the value for money provided (Excellent 8.9%, Good 47.4%).

Question 8. A range of statements about the Authority and its services.

	2005 Survey		2009 Survey	
	Agrees	Disagrees	Agrees	Disagrees
The Authority listens to the concerns of toll payers	28.7%	25.6%	38.2%	22.5%
The Authority lets toll payers know what it is doing	61.0%	17.0%	78.4%	8.3%
I know the full range of services the Authority offers	25.8%	34.3%	44.9%	20.1%
I know how to contact the Authority when I need help or information	83.3%	7.0%	87.8%	4.1%
The Authority provides a good response when I request help or information	46.9%	7.7%	43.6%	7.6%
The Authority is remote and impersonal	22.8%	40.8%	21.3%	43.0%

Five of the six indicators have moved in a positive direction. The Authority has worked hard on communications over the last year and it looks as if it has paid off with many more toll payers saying that the Authority listens to toll payers and lets them know what the Authority is doing. There is much more to do.

The Authority does a Good Job.

	2005 Survey	2009 Survey
Strongly Agree	7.5%	11.8%
Tend to Agree	47.2%	51.2%
Neither Agree or Disagree	26.6%	22.0%
Tend to Disagree	10.3%	9.2%
Strongly Disagree	4.4%	4.0%
Don't Know	4.0%	1.8%

The percentage agreeing that the Authority does a good job increasing to 63.0% of respondents compared to 54.7% in 2005. The 556 respondents who live out of Norfolk are even more positive with over 70% agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement.