

Question



Dr Roz Savage

Liberal Democrat

South Cotswolds

Commons

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, which legislation created the requirement for individuals to obtain permission from every riparian property owner to pass through their land while using a waterway; and whether he plans to (a) clarify and (b) amend existing guidance on public access to rivers.

[^ Hide full question](#)

Answer



Emma Hardy

Labour

Kingston upon Hull West and Haltemprice

Commons

Answered on

21 January 2025

Determining access rights onto rivers is complex. There is no general waterway access right and the matter has not been tested in the courts. It is not government's role to offer legal advice, and at present those seeking to navigate inland rivers for recreational purposes where there is no navigation authority should establish that they have a legal right to do so, either through voluntary agreement with riparian landowners or otherwise.

The Government is considering the approach to improving access to nature and is committed to working with stakeholders as this develops. A further update will be provided in due course.

(Green) being very supportive. Now, with a different party in power, seemed the right time to see if we could get a different answer. It seems not. The first answer to Savage, in an answer from Defra Parliamentary Under-Secretary Emma Hardy, contained exactly the same words as had been used by Rebecca Pow (Con) to Thomas and Fabricant.

We have been publishing answers that appear misleading, evasive, dishonest or show a difference in approach to the needs of boaters from that towards walkers, anglers or other interests so that there is a record for future reference. An increasing problem is the sheer number of MPs asking questions about waterway access, which bring answers only about green spaces or do not answer the question asked. Not giving an honest answer is one thing. Giving a dishonest answer is another.

The first answer to us this year repeats answers in the past, for which no justification was offered. Our pursuant question referred to Magna Carta but the response referred only to the reply to the initial question, which did not mention Magna Carta.

The increasing number of questions about countryside access, either about water access or about contrasting attitudes to land access, is now getting too large to print them all. Some of the more relevant answers have been to

John McDonnell, Hayes & Harlington, Ind, Dec 20th

Dick Timothy, N Suffolk, Con, Jan 6th

Liam Conlon, Beckenham & Penge, Lab, Jan 21st

Roz Savage, S Cotswolds, LD, Jan 21, Mar 3rd and Apr 3rd, 16th and 29th

Uma Kumaran, Stratford & Bow, Lab, Feb 11th

David Taylor, Hemel Hempstead, Lab, Feb 24th

Anna Sabine, Frome & E Somerset, LD, Mar 7th x 2

Alice Macdonald, Norwich N, Lab, Mar 19th

James McMurdock, S Basildon & E Thurrock, Ref, Mar 25th

Question



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Liberal Democrat

South Cotswolds

Commons

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will provide clarity on the law on the public rights of navigation on non-tidal waterways; and if he will make a comparative assessment of his policy and Magna Carta.

Answer



Emma Hardy

Labour

Kingston upon Hull West and Haltemprice

Commons

Answered on

3 March 2025

I refer the Hon Member to the reply previously given on 21 January 2025 to PQ [24394](#).