

PLA RIVER USERS CONSULTATIVE FORUM (UPPER)
Notes of the meeting held at Watermen's Hall at 10:30 on
Thursday 30th April 2015

Present:

Mark Towens (<i>Chairman</i>)	PLA, Harbour Master Upper (HMU)
Steve Rushbrook	PLA, Deputy Harbour Master Upper 1
Ryan Hall	PLA, Deputy Harbour Master Upper 2
Darren Knight	PLA, Deputy Harbour Master (Safety Management)
Jon Beckett	PLA, Assistant Harbour Master Recreational
Chis Healey	PLA, Marine River Inspector
Tanya Ferry	PLA, Environment Manager
Paul Watkins	MCA
Michael Greenwood	MCA
David White	London Coastguard
Janet Kelly	RNLI
Jane Commons	London River Services
Neil Caborn	Cory Environmental
Barry Dolphin	Cory Environmental
Steve Davies	RYA South East Region
Michael Shefras	RYA Thames Valley and London Region
Peter Finch	River Thames Society
Richard Hart	Association of Thames Yacht Clubs
Pamela Chart	Association of Thames Yacht Clubs
Mark Wilson	Bateaux London
Derek Mann	Thames Clippers
Geoff Symonds	Thames Clippers
Roger Flitter	Passenger Boat Association
Roger Squires	Inland Waterways Association
Brian Clark	British Marine Federation
Stuart Smith	London Port Health Authority
Graeme Faulkner	GPS Marine
Nicholas Toomey	City Cruises
Bill Mitchell	Thames Regional Rowing Council
Nick Beasley	Thames Gateway Marine Ltd

Apologies for Absence

Alistair Gale	PLA, Corporate Affairs
James Trimmer	PLA, Director of Planning and Environment
Cerwyn Phillips	PLA, Pilotage Operations Manager
Peter Steen	PLA, Director of Marine Operations
Tania Martin	MPU
Neil Withers	RNLI
Stuart Jenkins	MPU
Andrew Thompson	London River Services
Bob Prentice	Crown River Cruises
Charlotte Thompson	Thames Rib Experience
Darren Tulley	London Fire Brigade
David Jones	Association of Thames Yacht Clubs
John Spencer	GPS Marine
Kevin East	British Canoeing
Sean Collins	Thames Clippers
Phil Wilkinson	London Home and Water Safety Council

1. Thames Vision

The 'Have Your Say' initial engagement has begun for the Thames Vision project. This is to collect ideas on what the river is for and what the river should look like.

There will be open consultation through events, seminar and individual meetings.

There are a few key questions, them being "*What is the river for?*", "*What potential for growth does the river have?*" and "*How to different parts of the river vary?*"

Public meetings are coming up, with the first being at Putney on 14th May.

A concern was raised that there is a lack of moorings for recreational use, and access to the river is limited. MT spoke about the PLA's work to restore Bargehouse Causway.

Action: RM to ensure that moorings and access was considered in the Vision.

It was commented that the ownership of facilities is generally unknown to recreational users.

Action: MT to follow up on the use of access points on the river, who owns them and whether contact details for the facilities can be promulgated.

The engagement with the recreational communities by the PLA was praised.

2. Matters Arising and Review of Action Points from the Minutes of the River Users Consultative Forum (Upper) held on Thursday 10th April 2014

None

3. PLA Update

a. Regulatory and Marine SMS

i. Thames Byelaws

The PLA are currently undertaking a scheduled review of the byelaws, to ensure that they remain relevant and to see if there are any amendments required. It is likely that there will be a number of amendments and will be fully consulted on in due course.

ii. Code of Practice for Ship Towing Operations

The scheduled review has been completed and the revised code is due to be published imminently.

iii. Code of Practice for Craft Towing Operations

The 2015 edition was published and distributed to all operators in January.

iv. Recreational Users Guide and Personal Watercraft Guide

Both of these recreational users' guides have been updated in 2015 and were published in March 2015. Both are freely available to be downloaded from the internet and free to all TTNC members

v. Review of the Rowing Code of Practice

This publication is currently undergoing a scheduled review and is being made more user friendly. It is anticipated that the consultation process on the revised code will begin in June/July and published by September 2015, before the rowing season starts in earnest.

vi. Review of the Passenger Boat Code of Practice

This Code of Practice is currently undergoing a scheduled review and is being made more user friendly. It is anticipated that the code will be revised and published fully before the start of the 2016 season, your comments and suggested improvements will be most welcome, so please share them with Steve Rushbrook.

vii. Review of Dangerous Substances in Bulk Byelaws and Local Navigation Certificates

The PLA has conducted a scheduled review of both of these documents in the first quarter of 2015. The conclusion was that both remained current and fit for purpose. They are both now scheduled for review again in 2018.

viii. New SMS Team

Julian Parkes continues in his role of Deputy Chief Harbour Master but is now supported by a new SMS team in the form of Darren Knight as Deputy Harbour Master (Safety Management) and Sarah Broad as Navigational Safety Systems Coordinator. For any SMS, Publications or Consultation enquires, please do not hesitate to contact Darren or Sarah.

b. Port Security

i. ISPS Security Level

UK Ports ISPS Security Level remains at Level 1.

ii. Threat Level

The national overall threat level has been increased to SEVERE.

iii. Port Security Authority

The next meeting of the Thames Port Security Authority is on 13th May 2015.

c. Recreational Update

i. TTNC

A Pre-season briefing was held on the 18th March for members, which resulted in very good attendance with up to 50 people attending. A few presentations were given by us about the PLA, HM departments, special guest – John Pinder from Hydro, and what's coming up on the river regards to river works, TTT etc. The Q&A session afterwards proved very useful, with a few new ideas coming from it. One idea was 'river trips' for cruising clubs on the non-tidal Thames, so they could better understand the hazards of the tideway, the complexities involved with navigating through central London and the bridges, lights, traffic, etc. Membership – currently stands at 899 members, and currently increasing at a rate not seen before.

Future projects for the club include the ideas of a Forum and also an App, which could develop into a 'River Information Tool' where any works, notices to mariners or events are shown to the user on a map or chart.

ii. Online Events Calendar

A 'live' online calendar is looking to be produced in the near future. This is envisaged to possibly replace the annual rowing, paddling and sailing events notices which can become out of date during the year. This would benefit not only river users, but also event organisers looking ahead to plan events.

iii. PHRNG

Met last month on 24th March. Continue to discuss a variety of subjects for recreational craft, and is proving an extremely useful liaison. One of the current projects is the introduction of ID stickers or labels onto club kayaks.

iv. The Rowing Code

It's remained relatively unchanged since 2006, with only a minor edit in 2009, so it is long overdue a reboot.

I can describe the changes as the document 'becoming more of a Haynes Manual' of rowing on the tideway, rather than a 'set of rules'.

This update will also incorporate a 'Lower' or 'Greenwich reach' section, which explains the rowing patterns intended to be brought out in the Greenwich reach area. This is planned for an external consultation around June.

v. 'Vulnerable River Users' Campaign

A campaign to promote awareness of the port's smaller recreational vessels and encourage a mutual understanding across the various river users on the river is underway. The campaign predominantly focuses on a series of posters containing a variety of safety messages to both the smaller recreational river users and larger commercial operators.

This campaign is not only aimed at paddlers and rowers, in an effort to make them more visible and improve their river safety, but also at motor cruisers, sailors and commercial vessels, so that they are more aware of the impact they may have on small and vulnerable river users.

2 Posters currently being sent out – Needle in a Haystack and Amplitude Problem – hopefully the safety messages are clear.

d. Environment Update

- i. Reminder to notify the PLA if any incident is related to litter, bags, ropes & tyres etc.
- ii. The Quagga mussel is now not only in the reservoirs but also on the upper Thames, so recreational users are reminded to follow the 'check clean dry' guidance to avoid further transfer of the animal to other waters or the rest of the Thames. It can also foul piles and pipes so commercial operators should be aware of snagging piles etc. (*Environment Bulletin attached*)

Post-meeting notes:

Number of pollution incidents since RUCF last met, one major incident that required response, which include one swan rescued. This is currently under joint investigation with the Environment Agency, and Marine Management Organisation for potential prosecution. The team is also working on campaigns with river users & visitors to promote better use of the Thames, reducing litter, avoiding pollution and spread of invasive non native animals and plants

4. MCA District Safety

a. BML update

- i. New Boatmasters Licence has come into effect on 5th April, which includes a new type for restricted tidal waters and includes 'Ro-Ro's' as a new specialist endorsement.
The task record book has been amended to no longer include tasks with no underpinning knowledge.
- ii. The Medway is now an LKE area, and the Margaretness to Putney area has been split into 2 areas - downriver of London Bridge and upriver of Tower Bridge.
- iii. Concerns were raised over the resources required for LKE renewals

Action: MCA and PLA to meet and discuss the way forward.

b. DSMC

- i. The audit regime of the Domestic Safety Management Code (DSMC) is changing. Onboard audits will only be carried out twice in a 5 year period, with an office audit every 5 years, which is similar to the ISMC regime.

Every year, a self declaration will be made by a suitably qualified person within the company. If a risk is perceived however, the MCA may carry out an audit. Guidance will be published on how to self certify. DSMC certificates will be issued annually.

- ii. A 1 day DSMC awareness course will be available for apprentices.
- iii. A question was raised on whether the visibility from the conning position is checked during the audits. This was confirmed, and that additional lookouts may be required where visibility is reduced.
- iv. The Code of Safe Working Practices (COSWPs) is under review.

5. Navigational Safety

a. Incident Review

- i. Incident Review was circulated in advance of the meeting and attached as Appendix A.

6. Other Updates

a. Police MPU

- i. There was no representative from the LFB and no update given

b. Coastguard

- i. 1,025 incidents in 2014, which is the highest on record. There has been 163 incidents so far this year, with 7 lives lost.
Suicides are of a concern, with key agencies looking at this, as the RNLI initiative and signage has had some success upriver.
- ii. Exercise 'Blue Ditch', which was a table top exercised based around a plane ditch, involving local authorities and Cat 1 and 2 responders was found to be very useful. A live exercise is being planned for 2017.
- iii. The Thames Maritime Recue Coordination Centre at Walton will close in June, with the operations transferring to the National Maritime Operations Centre at Fareham.

c. RNLI

- i. Neil Withers has started with the RNLI as the new Thames Operations Manager
- ii. Tower Lifeboat had a total of 540 calls last year, and has seen 121 launches so far this year.
- iii. It is expected with the increase in the number of passenger journeys on the Thames, there may be more onboard incidents where the RNLI may be required to attend.
- iv. The RNLI offered to participate in exercises with operators and also to educate crews on how to deal with onbaord incidents.

d. London River Services

- i. 10.02m passenger journeys in 2014, up from 8.4m, with a reduction in passengers using the Woolwich Ferry.
- ii. Class V Crew Forums are being held jointly with the PLA, and are aimed at improving customer safety and service. There has been good feedback from the courses. (This work would contribute to the update of the Passenger Vessel Code.
- iii. Bankside, Westminster and Embankment Piers are expected to undergo extensions by March 2016.
- iv. The link spans at the Woolwich Ferry are being refurbished, to be completed by the end of the summer.

e. Fire

- i. There was no representative from the LFB and no update given

f. Environment Agency

- i. There was no representative from the LFB and no update given

- g. Port Health**
 - i. No update

7. River Works

a. Central/Navigational Channel Arch Closures at:

i. Battersea Railway Bridge

1, 2 and 5 arches are closed to navigation. Works in number 5 arch expected to be completed in June. 1 and 2 arches will be completed by the end of September. Local Traffic Control in place until no.2 arch reopens.

ii. Chiswick Bridge

Post-meeting notes:

Concrete repair works within the centre arch have been completed, as per NtM U3 of 2015. No. 1 arch – the buoys and mooring arrangements were installed on Tuesday 28th April, remaining until 19th May.

Additional night closes in centre arch are planned between 20th and 25th May, utilising an under bridge unit, and local traffic control will be in place between 22:00 and 10:00.

b. Battersea Power Station / Nine Elms Reach

- i. 750,000 tonnes from BPS and significant tonnage over the life of the Northern Line Extension project
- ii. Battersea Power Station likely to start within the next couple of months – likely to be from the river wall inside BPS main jetty
- iii. Northern Line Extension likely to start August 2015
- iv. Initially this is likely to be 1 barge a day removed from site until the tunnel boring machines start in May 2016 when peak output will be 5000t per day from the main jetty.

c. Baynard House

- i. Works are expected to be finished by 17th July.
- ii. There may be some difficulty in removing the 8 king piles, however they will need to be completely removed due to the new Blackfriars Pier.

d. Garden Bridge

- i. A high court appeal was successful, and is now undergoing a judicial review.
- ii. Borehole surveys are currently taking place.
- iii. There are a few issues with move of the HQS WELLINGTON slightly downstream, as there may be a necessity to move it further out into the river that the PLA are resisting.
- iv. The tender for the works has closed, and the contract has been awarded, to be announced shortly, with construction to begin early 2016, which should see completion before TTT works.

e. Thames Bridge

- i. An overview of the bridge proposal at Limehouse / Cuckolds Point was given, highlighting the obvious issues of the height required, cruise ship transits. It is likely to be a bascule bridge.
- ii. A feasibility study will be conducted in 2015, planning in 2016 and construction in 2017/18.

f. Nine Elms Bridge

- i. Over 80 submissions of the design of a bridge in Nine Elms have been reviewed by the PLA, only a few which met our criteria.

- ii. The aim of the design competition was to identify a design team that will now look to produce something more sensible in conjunction with the PLA.

g. Silvertown Tunnel

- i. Design and construction will be taking place for the Silvertown Tunnel between 2018 and 2022.
- ii. Material will be removed by river from Thames Wharf or Instone Wharf.
- iii. Apart from spoil removal activities, there should be minimal impact of the project on the river.

h. Thames Tideway Tunnel

- i. Noise and air monitoring will take place at Downings Roads and Hermitage moorings. A small buoy will be in place for 2 days.
- ii. Preliminary works are being planned for the move of HMS PRESIDENT and Tattershall Castle 100m up river, and Blackfriars Pier to move below Blackfriars Bridge.
- iii. **Blackfriars Pier**
Sheet piles will be installed between July and September 2016. Dredging will then take place between September and November and piles for the pier will be installed from November to January 2017.
- iv. **HMS PRESIDENT**
The vessel will be moved in August, with dredging taking place in October. The vessel will relocate in April 2016, with the new facility being complete in May/June.
- v. It was asked whether the concrete segments would be brought up by river. The London Freight Plan was mentioned, and the commitment to the 'More By Water' initiative.

8. Commercial Vessels

a. Visibility of Class V Sterns

- i. Class five owners were reminded that all visible markings on the stern of a vessel should be in compliance with GD9. Those who were unsure on the GD or the size of their marking should contact DHMU 2 at the first instance. The team will be contacting owners who do not comply directly.

b. Reporting Vessels in C.London

- i. A ground up review of current limits for pusher tugs will take place on 22nd May
- ii. **Capacity Study**
This is a study to examine how much growth the Thames can accommodate, and to identify areas of congestion and how these can be reduced or managed. It is expected to be complete around June / July this year.
- iii. A question was raised over the possible use of holding berths or access to other berths when moorings are occupied, to reduce congestion. MT agreed that more work is needed to look at where craft wait for berths, and that perhaps space needs to be created / set aside for this.

9. Events

a. Review of events from 2014

- i. New Years Eve was a successful event, and the closure was well maintained. Smaller recreational vessels were advised to keep away from this area, due to the high density of class V vessels.
- ii. The Boat Race was also a successful event. There will be a higher tide next year, which will be good for the class Vs and would remove the issue of people stranded on the foreshore.

- iii. 60 cruise ship calls to PLA facilities in 2014, with the Harbour Service Launch in attendance.

b. Forthcoming events for 2015

- i. There are plans for an 'Illuminated River', installing lights on all bridges from Tower to Albert Bridge.
- ii. A large amount of filming is planned between Westminster and Vauxhall Bridges, most taking place at night.
- iii. The Clipper Around the World Race is scheduled for August.
- iv. The swimming events on the May – November events list was queried. The measures put in place to ensure the safety of participants was explained, such as the swimming taking place outside of the channel, safety boat cover, risk assessments and water sampling taking place before the event.

10. AOB

a. Commercially Hired Narrow Boats

- i. After a series of incidents involving narrow boats, it was found that commercially hired narrow boats were operating on the tidal Thames, and they don't meet the requirements for Category C waters.
- ii. Work is progressing with the PBA, APCO, BMF and the PLA to achieve the appropriate requirements.
- iii. There will be 2 areas of operation
Brentford to Teddington – A set of requirements have been agreed, which will come into action in the next couple of months.
Limehouse to Brentford – Full compliance with Category C requirements will be needed.
- iv. A tidal Thames guide is also being produced to aid the hirer in navigating between Brentford and Teddington.

c. Date of Next Meeting

10:30, 26th November 2015, HQS Wellington