

NAVIGATIONAL ADVISORY PANEL REPORT

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| NAP Date: | 15.06.2011 | Owner: | David Phillips | NAP Ref: | 40 | NAP Title: | Commercial Kayaking on the Tidal Thames |
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Panel Members:

| Name | Organisation | Name | Organisation | Name | Organisation |
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| David Phillips | PLA | James Hinves | Canoe England | | |
| Chris McQueen | PLA | Kevin East | Canoe England | | |
| Mark Towens | PLA | Harry Whelan | Cremorne Riverside Kayaking Center | | |
| Alex Brown | PLA | Dan Gillard | London Kayak Tours | | |

| Detail / Terms of Reference | Observation/Recommendation |
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| <p>Establish a way ahead for officially allowing people to operate paddling tours on the Tidal Thames.</p> <p>Canoe England's (CE) in-draft guidelines for paddlesport hire companies to be the basis for an approval system.</p> <p>Current inspection criteria for paddlesport vessels to be reviewed for fitness of purpose.</p> | <p>General safety of paddlers on the Tidal Thames has improved as a result of combined PLA/CE/local club efforts, but serious incidents still occur. Launching a kayak is very easy, and there are many access points which are only suitable for kayaks.</p> <p>CE currently operates a system of approved centres, but is moving towards a system of 'Approved Paddlesport Providers' (APP). Currently the Adventures Activities Licensing Authority (AALA) which is part of the HSE provides a framework of licensing for those working with minors, but there is currently no provision for adults. There are a number of voluntary coaching qualifications which people have, and these will also be drawn into the guidelines. CE is also producing local 'Get on and Paddle' guides with routes, contact details and other points of note which would definitely be useful on the tidal Thames. CE has no statutory power to make paddlesport clubs join their organisation and currently a little over half of the paddlesport centres in the country are affiliated to the British Canoe Union*(BCU). Nevertheless on initial looks, the APP should provide a base standard that with some further, minor adaptation will be suitable to apply to commercial operations to ensure a common and satisfactory level of safety to the public.</p> <p>Whilst the CE's scheme will be voluntary, centres will be able to use it to demonstrate good management and high levels of safety; the PLA will insist that potential commercial operators on the Thames are APP accredited. AALA will be wound up shortly, as it has done the job it was intended to do, so CE's scheme will be the only serious option for</p> |

assessing individual operations. This makes everything neater, as previously centres were assessed by AALA but the coaches' qualifications were through the BCU.

Whilst the PLA has the powers to regulate commercial paddlesport operations, we do require guidance from subject matter experts on which qualifications and boat types are appropriate.

The PLA currently has no specific guidelines with regard to Commercial Kayaks; however these operations currently sit somewhere between the draft Hire Boat Code and the IW Small Passenger Boat Code. As a result the PLA need to be involved in the initial start up of these operations, including risk assessments, passage plans etc. CE have undertaken to add in the PLA's requirements for local knowledge examination, high visibility clothing by day and appropriate lighting by night and other PLA licensing requirements and the need to contact the local navigation authority about their requirements.

The PLA notes that CE is a competent body to set safety standards for general paddlesport, but needs to include specific standards and requirements to facilitate its licensing of commercial kayaking tours on the Tidal Thames.

No interim measures will be taken formally to allow Paddlesport for hire or reward on the Tidal Thames, with the intention that this system should be put in place as soon as possible. However any organisation looking to engage in commercial kayaking tours should discuss their operation with the district Harbour Master and the PLA's Marine Surveyor. CE state that their draft guidelines should be finalised and published within the next month or so.

All different types of paddlesport tours – including dragon boating – will be held to this standard, although the HM will be able to judge one day events on their merits.

To move this project forwards the following actions need to be taken:

- A working group consisting of Alex Brown, James Goodfellow, Tim Prior, Harry Whelan, Dan Gillard and James Hinves will be formed to take the below actions forward.
- After NMT consideration and decision, a summary of the NAP report will be created and sent to the local clubs
- There is no CE standard against which paddlesport craft may be assessed so a 'fitness for purpose' standard will be created (geographical limits to apply to certain types of craft) against which PLA surveyors will assess craft.
- Standards for passage plans will be set by the PLA district Harbour Master
- Standards for local knowledge are absolute.
- Establish the difference between guided tours and teaching
- Difficulties of various standard passages will be assessed and graded
- The draft hire boat code needs to be examined and considered when setting up this system
- Method of issuing official accreditation to be confirmed

NMT are requested to endorse the following process for licensing paddlesport tours on the tidal Thames:

- To operate ‘paddlesport craft of whatever shape and size for hire’ the tour operator must be an Approved Paddlesport Provider who fulfils all the requirements of Canoe England’s guidelines for paddlesport hire companies
- Risk assessments and passage plan will be assessed by the local Harbour Master or his representative
- All those acting as guides will undertake an oral Local Knowledge Examination convened by the District HM
- Paddlesport craft will be assessed for ‘fitness of purpose’ (against the standards recommended by the working group) by the PLA Vessel Licensing department
- With all the above in place the operator will be licensed to run paddlesport tours on the tidal Thames

*The British Canoe Union is the overarching governing body and is the body responsible for the qualifications, but Canoe England is the funded body.

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| Panel Chairman: | David Phillips | Signature: | | Date: | |
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