



Notes of River Users Consultative Forum (Lower & Estuary) Meeting

12 November 2015 at London River House

Chair

Cathryn Spain CS Harbour Master Lower - PLA

Attendees

Simon Phillips	SP	Deputy Harbour Master Lower - PLA
Darren Knight	DK	Deputy Harbour Master (Safety Management) – PLA
John Window	JW	Haven Master Canvey – PLA
Captain Rod Owen	RO	Pilot – PLA
Linda Potter	LP	London River Users
Gaurav Minocha	GM	MCA
Alan Hurrell	AH	Waterman
Richard Lukes	RL	Svitzer
Kevin Drury	KD	Svitzer
Mike Sharp	MS	Shoebury Waterman's Association
Michael Shefras	MSh	RYA Thames Valley & RTA
Jason Carroll	JC	RNLI
John Green	JG	RYA
Doug Harding	DH	Kotug
Stuart Strutton	SS	Kotug
John Gore	JGo	MSBA
Richard Hart	RH	AYTC

1. Welcome & Apologies

Apologies were sent from the following:

Tanya Ferry, Phil Wilkinson – PLA, Colin Hitchcock – London Gateway Port, , Toni Barlow – Thurrock Council, Archie Turnbull – MCA, David Jones – ATYC, Colin Middlemiss – Watermen, Chris Edwards – RYA, Peter Finch – River Thames Society, Neil Withers – RNLI, Stuart Smith – City of London Corporation, Geoff Holland – Port of Tilbury Ltd

- HML explained that Julian Parkes (Deputy Chief Harbour Master) has taken up a 9-month secondment as the Project Director for the new Thames Skill Academy. In the intervening period Cathryn Spain had been seconded as the Harbour Master Lower, taking on statutory responsibility of the lower district harbour master and will also be providing oversight to the Safety Management and Vessel Licencing teams.

2. Minutes of last RUCF (Lower & Estuary) Meeting 21 May 2015

Minutes from the previous meeting were agreed

3. Matters Arising

It was noted that the DCHM had discussed the issues of small boats having difficulty hearing and understanding VHF transmissions from London VTS, with some VTSO's not repeating messages, only acknowledging – however it seemed that there had been little improvement.

Action: HML to discuss again with the VTS Manager.

4. PLA Update

a) Marine Operations

PLA trade still remains broadly flat since the last RUCF(L&E). There is no news of any major development or changes to trade at this time.

London Gateway

Work on Berth 3 remains on schedule and the berth is due to be operational by Summer 2016. The 4 new quay cranes are due to be delivered in May 2016.

b) Navigational Incidents

There were 90 incidents recorded in the last 6 months compared with 80 in the previous six months. This includes 3 serious incidents, compared with 5 in the previous 6 months, and no very serious incidents.

There was a significant rise in machinery / equipment deficiencies, with engine failures being the most common deficiency. However, the causes of these failures vary widely and no particular trends have been identified at this time.

There was a significant drop in pilot ladder deficiencies compared to the previous 6 months from 9 to 2.

The number of contact incidents and groundings remains steady and there were no collisions during the period.

Other incidents include a barge breaking free from moorings, a bollard being pulled out on a jetty, a rudder falling off, a line caught in a vessel's bow thruster, ordnance and a breach of General Directions. It also includes 7 reported laser light incidents, most of which were from the Canvey area.

Of the 90 recorded incidents, there were 7 recreational incidents, as follows:

- Small cabin cruiser grounded on groynes in Gravesend Reach
- Tender adrift from a fishing vessel in Holehaven Creek
- Cabin cruiser fouled prop and was put onto a mooring by the RNLI
- Dutch barge inappropriate navigation in Sea Reach, during a delivery voyage from Medway
- Outbound cabin cruiser erratic navigation, embarrassed a dredger in Erith Reach
- Yacht grounded south of Princes 2 buoy
- Dutch barge had difficulty manoeuvring off Customs Pier, having intended to go to Town Pier

c) Navigational Matters

Lower Thames Crossing

There have been no further communications on this matter since the last RUCF.

Pilotage & PEC exams – leisure vessels

DHML explained that during both Pilotage and PEC exams the PLA are now asking more questions about what they would expect from leisure vessels and where they might encounter them during the passage in the examinations. This was warmly welcomed by the RUCF (L&E) members present.

d) **Risk Assessments**

A Navigational Risk Assessment Working Group (NRAWG) was held to review Pilot Boarding and Landing Operations at the North East Spit. This resulted in 9 recommendations, which are currently in the process of being implemented.

Following a couple of near miss incidents involving large vessels passing on bends, the PLA will convene a NRAWG in the New Year to look at this issue.

Regulatory Update

Thames Byelaws

The PLA has undertaken an Informal Public Consultation on amendments to four of our existing byelaws. However we are now looking at a new additional byelaw and we will be holding another Informal Public Consultation in due time to consult upon this additional byelaw. It is anticipated that by early 2016 we will be in a position to go to Formal Public Consultation on all five byelaws, prior to hopefully gaining approval by the DfT in mid-2016.

Code of Practice for Rowing on the Tidal Thames

The 2015 edition has been published and promulgated. It is a considerable improvement on its predecessors and more user friendly, which will set a precedent on how all future Codes of Practice should look and feel. It is important to note that the revised Code includes a new section on rowing activities in the Greenwich Reach area.

Stand Up Paddle boarding on the Tidal Thames

We have recently issued some revised guidance on how and where you can SUP on the tidal Thames. However work continues to incorporate all paddling sports into a new Paddling on the Tideway Code of Practice.

Guidance to Berth Operators and Mariners Guide to Bridges

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

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.

2016 Review Schedule

Early in 2016 the following PLA publications are subject to their 3-yearly review, they are; Code of Practice of Commercial Vessel Operations, Code of Practice for the Safe Mooring of Vessels, Code of Practice for Embarkation and Disembarkation of Pilots. In the second half of 2016 the General Directions and the Pilotage Directions are also due for their 3-yearly reviews. If you have any comments and suggestions, please share them with Darren Knight

e) **Port Security**

Threat Levels

The UK threat level for International Terrorism remains at SEVERE.

UK Ports ISPS Security Level remains at Level 1 (low), however incidents outside of the UK demonstrate that there is a credible maritime capability within some terror organisation.

Port Security Authority

The Thames Port Security Authority met on 14th October 2015 and will next meet on 13th April 2016.

A Port Authority Security exercise is planned for 17th November 2015.

f) Environment Matters

Cleaner Thames Campaign

The PLA have recent launched the Cleaner Thames Campaign in partnership with Thames 21, Tideway and the Thames Litter Forum which is being headed by a video campaign with Paul Rose.

g) River Works

Phoenix Jetty – work continues with owners to remove dangerous parts of the structure to avoid hazard to navigation.

West Street Pier – pier now is a stable condition. Owners establishing a repair and maintenance programme.

London Gateway – continued work on jetty faces and berth no.3.

London Paramount – initial meetings have now taken place between London Paramount and the PLA. LP have intimated that they would like the bulk of building materials to be brought in by river. This will likely have an impact on traffic volumes in the area.

Consideration is also being given to a ferry service linking Paramount to central London.

Dartford Creek – there are currently 3 proposals underway for bridges around Dartford Creek;

- Cycle bridge adjacent to the flood barrier
- Vehicle access bridge over river Cray
- Cycle/pedestrian bridge down stream of lock on river Darent.

Erith Causeway – PLA to effect repairs to damages steps.

Drones – there has been an increase in application to utilize drones for survey and filming. The use of drones is subject to additional scrutiny on a case by case basis by the Harbour Masters department. Unless additional permissions are sought drones are not permitted to fly within 50m of a structure, person or vessel.

h) River Events

Due to the time of year and the season recently finishing the PLA has not as yet received a full list of recreational and or commercial events. We hope to be in a position to inform the group more fully at the next meeting.

5. Members' Feedback & Questions

No comment.

6. Members' Updates

a) Maritime & Coastguard Agency

MCA Surveyor Brian Hopkins is still off on long term sick and Mike Greenwood is the interim Surveyor in Charge.

The Orpington office has now been moved across the road from the old one but nothing substantial has changed.

From the 1st January 2016 surveyors will begin random sampling of fuel oils on board ships.

MRCC Thames has now closed and all the usual functions have continued without issues now that it has been transferred to the National Maritime Operations Centre. The call sign for Thames remains active and is unlikely to be discontinued in the near future.

BML LKE examinations are going to change in 2016, with the MCA not attending the revalidation exams. How these will be conducted will be confirmed shortly in a MIN.

It was noted that there is a lot of hear-say that ships are breaking down due to the revised fuel requirements, however there is no conclusive evidence to support this.

b) Environment Agency

Environment Agency were not present to provide an update

c) Trinity House

Trinity House were not present to provide an update.

d) Port of Tilbury

Port of Tilbury were not present to provide an update.

e) Peel Ports – Medway

Peel Ports (Medway) were not present to provide an update

f) London Gateway Port

London Gateway were not present to provide an update

g) Police

Kent Police were not present to provide an update

h) RNLI

RNLI are currently undergoing a Thames wide review, which will be running for the next 12 to 18-months.

i) Royal Yachting Association

RYA are currently looking at disbanding the Thames Valley group, but no decision has yet been made.

j) Recreational Clubs & Associations

No further update

k) Vessel Operators

Svitzer

A new Svitzer tug has arrived on the Medway and should be in operational before Christmas. This may serve London Gateway.

I) Others

Rod Owen requested that Svitzer or Kotug share the responsibility of hosting the Operational Liaison Group meetings moving forward.

A Svitzer Tugmaster highlighted that in the Code of Practice for Ship Towing Operations, Section 6.1, the wording needs to be amended.

7. Any other Business

No further business

8. Date of Next Meeting

Thursday 19th May 2016, 10.30 at London River House, Gravesend

02.12.15