



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

21 May 2015 at London River House

Chair

Captain Julian Parkes JP Deputy Chief Harbour Master – PLA

Attendees

Captain Cathryn Spain	CS	Deputy Harbour Master Lower - PLA
Captain Rod Owen	RO	Pilot – PLA
Darren Knight	DK	Deputy Harbour Master (SM) – PLA
John Window	JW	Haven Master Canvey – PLA
Sarah Broad	SB	Navigational Safety Systems Coordinator - PLA
Tanya Ferry	TF	Environment Manager – PLA
Richard Hart	RH	ATYC
Ben Bowler	BB	Kent Police
David Ravenden	DR	Kent Police
Andy Rudge	AR	MCA
Robert Telford	RT	Medway & Swale Boating Association
Geoff Holland	GH	Harbour Master - Port of Tilbury
John Green	JG	RYA
Chris Edwards	CE	RYA East
Kevin Boyd	KB	Svitzer
Nick Dodson	ND	Trinity House
Alan Hurrell	AH	Waterman

Minutes

Raj Kehal RK PA to CHM – PLA

1. Welcome & Apologies

Apologies were sent from the following:

- David Jones ATYC
- Stuart Smith London Port Health Authority
- Archie Turnbull MCA
- Alan Turner Port of Tilbury
- Michael Shefras RYA Thames & London Region
- Mick Sharp Shoebury Waterman Association
- Roger Barker Trinity House

2. Minutes of last RUCF (Lower & Estuary) Meeting 27 November 2014

Minutes from the previous meeting were agreed

3. Matters Arising

No matters arising

4. PLA Update

a) Marine Operations

PLA Trade is up and down, with the expectation it will be broadly flat. As previously reported there is activity in the Estuary windfarms with vessels bringing in aggregates and stones to backfill scour holes of a number of turbines. Furthermore extension of Kentish flats is underway.

London Gateway

London Gateway are still seeking new trade/business which is a slow process, with them receiving 7-8 ships a week. Berth 1 and Berth 2 are operational and work is underway on Berth 3. The jetty side of Berth 3 is complete and has been used for a number of vessels. The infrastructure and cargo container handling infrastructure at back of Berth 3 is still being developed, and expecting rail container cranes in November/December and 4 new key cranes April with view that Berth 3 will be operational by end of 2016.

b) Navigational Incidents

In comparison to the previous 6 months there has been a sharp increase in machinery deficiencies from 6 to 20, most of which were main engine failures. There has been a significant reduction in contact incidents from 20 to 9. However there were 3 groundings and 1 collision, whereas there were none in the previous 6 months.

Pilot Ladder Deficiencies

9 pilot ladder deficiencies were reported during the last 6 months, and one issue with access from the pilot ladder along the deck. There were 4 reported in the previous 6 months, and 12 in the 6 months before that.

Near Miss Incidents

These included 3 occasions where the incorrect information was supplied by the agent, 5 traffic management incidents, 2 regarding provision of tugs, 1 involving a laser pen, 2 as a result of engine failure, 1 slight misjudgement during unberthing of a vessel and one involving the failure of the Master / Pilot exchange.

'Other' Incidents

Incidents in the 'Other' category include Gravesend Rowing incident, 1 personal injury to crew member on a tug, a pontoon which came adrift from its mooring and a case where the wrong pilot station information was supplied to the vessel by the agent.

Recent Incidents

Since 1st May there have been 10 further incidents, which include 5 machinery / equipment / nav aids deficiencies, a near miss due to vessel planning, a tug grounding, a sunken barge, a pilot ladder deficiency and a wash complaint.

Recreational Incidents

Only 3 reported Gravesend Rowers, wash complaint at Johnsons, Dutch barge inappropriate navigation.

c) Navigational Matters

Buoyage in the Middle Deep

PLA met with Trinity House to discuss Buoyage in the Middle Deep, currently received surveys from PLA Hydrographic and these buoyage moves should be complete in coming month.

Shoaling in the Mouse

No update since the last meeting.

d) Risk Assessments

There have been a number of ColReg near misses incidents in North East Spit area in the last 6-7 months (converging traffic in the area of the pilot station).

PLA have decided to look into the navigation in the south east estuary and a working group will convene to look at navigational matters in the North East Spit area. The

focus of this group will be navigation in the pilot boarding, landing stage and anchorages with a view to assess issues which can be improved.

There was a risk assessment review of Berthing & Unberthing Operations at Calor Gas in Canvey Island. Conclusively useful recommendations were formulated which will be discussed at the Navigation Management Team meeting in June. Furthermore Calor have agreed to undertake simulation work to support the risk assessment.

PLA have been working closely with Port of Tilbury on Berthing & Unberthing in river berths and simulation work has been done for Tilbury Landing Stage, Tilbury RoRo facility and the Grain Terminal. Next month more work will be conducted on parameters leaving and arriving at Tilbury Lock.

e) Regulatory Update

Thames Byelaws

The PLA are currently undertaking a scheduled review of the Thames 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.

Code of Practice for Ship Towage Operations

The 2015 edition has been published and distributed to users in May.

Code of Practice for Craft Towage Operations

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

Recreational Users Guide and Personal Watercraft Guide

Both of these recreational users' guides have been updated in 2015 and were published in March 2015.

Review of the Rowing Code of Practice

This publication is currently undergoing a scheduled review with the consultation process to begin in July and published by September 2015.

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.

A new Safety Management System (SMS) team has been recruited comprising of Darren Knight as Deputy Harbour Master (Safety Management) and Sarah Broad as Navigational Safety Systems Coordinator.

f) Port Security

Thames Port Security Authority meeting chaired by JP was held on 13th May 2015. UK Ports ISPS security level remains at Level 1, and the national overall threat level has been increased to severe.

g) Environment Matters

Ballast Water Management Convention

Concern and uncertainty amongst shipping companies as it will enter into force 12 months after ratification, but the method for exemption could take 18 months and is not currently guaranteed in the UK ports. PLA is working with affected operators, and the MCA .

River Basin Management Plans

The Environment Agency have consulted on River Basin Management Plans and PLA have responded. There is significant concern around the mitigation measures for the navigational sector which the PLA managing where we can.

WFD Assessment Guidance

The Environment Agency are reviewing the Water Framework Directive assessment guidance (Clearing the Waters) for application beyond dredging to all works.

Marine Conservation Zones

The tranche 2 list of sites did not include the Thames however did include Swale. Eels have been removed from the list of conservation features which means the Thames MCZ remains to protect Smelt and the Tentacled Lagoon Worm.

Quagga Mussel

Quagga Mussel have been recorded in in fresh water tidal area in November 2014. In order to prevent the spread of this and other non-native invasive it is important, to adopt Check-Clean-Dry practices (<http://www.nonnativespecies.org/checkcleandry>).

Litter Forum

The PLA have established a Litter Forum with the aim of reducing the amount of marine litter in the river. This forum is in partnership with Thames 21, charities, academics, users like RYA, BMF and LRS. Sharing information for example about amount of plastics in animals stomachs (70% of animals found).

Additionally the PLA is working on a campaign to try and reduce the amount of litter entering the Thames to start with. The target audience for this campaign is London visitors.

Pollution

There have been no reported oil spills in the district in the last six months. However there was a significant spill that was only reported by one person, so please remember to report to VTS any incidents or oil sheen.

h) River Works

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

Littlebrook Power Station – Formally closed end of April 2015, it has been decommissioned and advised by owners they will retain the jetties. A tanker recently came in to Littlebrook to remove residual fuel oil, with the last one to come in August.

Tilbury RoRo – Ongoing work at RoRo berth which started a couple of weeks ago.

West Street Pier – Currently in poor condition and working with owner to improve/replace structure.

London Gateway Port – Work continues on the jetty faces as well as berth 3.

London Paramount – Initial meeting with marine consultant and at early stages of communications on proposal. However there has not been any communication with London Paramount as of yet.

i) River Events

Upcoming events are:

- Thorny Bay Raft Race 21st June
- Annual Nore Race 11th July
- Round Canvey Raft Race 18th July
- Southend Barge Match 22nd August
- Clipper RTW Race 30th/31st August
- Dutch Marines Rowing 11th/12th September
- EYC Trafalgar Race 3rd/4th October

PLA website has information of all Upper and Lower river events.

5. Members' Feedback & Questions

Small boats are having difficulty hearing and understanding VHS transmissions from London VTS. Some operators do not repeat the message, only acknowledge it.

Action: JP to discuss VTS issue with VTS Manager

6. Members' Updates

a) Maritime & Coastguard Agency

MCA Surveyor Brian Hopkins is currently off on long term sick. There is a search for a new location for Orpington office operations.

The new Low Sulphur regulations require the MCA to undertake fuel sampling, which will be introduced in 2016.

MCA drew attention to a serious incident in the Medway area whereby an individual fell off the gangway. The conclusion was the safety netting was not wide enough resulting in injury.

On 1st June 2015 MRCC Thames station will close and their area of responsibility will be transferred to the National Maritime Operations Centre opened in September 2014.

RAF Wattisham is closing down in July 2015 and will be replaced by a civilian SAR service.

b) Environment Agency

Environment Agency were not present to provide an update

c) Trinity House

Trinity House highlighted it is imperative for yacht racing organisers to use proper race markers as opposed to navigation marks, using the latter can be the cause of a potential serious incident.

d) Port of Tilbury

Nothing further to update as topic of RoRo covered earlier by JP

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 have reduced marine operations to one boat and one rib to cover Kent area.

h) RNLI

RNLI were not present to provide an update

i) Royal Yachting Association

No further update

j) Recreational Clubs & Associations

No further update

k) Vessel Operators

Svitzer

Svitzer have invested in two new 80t Bollard pull tugs one at London Gateway and one at Felixstowe. The London Gateway tug should be delivered in October 2015 and operational before Christmas.

l) Others

No further update

7. Any other Business

No further business

8. Date of Next Meeting

Thursday 12th November 2015, 10.30 at London River House, Gravesend