

**PLA RIVER USERS CONSULTATIVE FORUM (UPPER)**  
**Notes of the meeting held at Watermen's Hall at 10:30 on**  
**Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> April 2016**

**Present:**

Mark Towens ( <i>Chairman</i> )	PLA, Harbour Master Upper (HMU)
Ryan Hall	PLA, Deputy Harbour Master Upper 1
Nick Evans	PLA, Deputy Harbour Master Upper 2
Darren Knight	PLA, Deputy Harbour Master (Safety Management)
Jon Beckett	PLA, Assistant Harbour Master Recreational
Denise Rowley	PLA, Environment Officer
Phil Harris	PLA, Licensing Enforcement Officer
Bob Bradley	PLA, Marine River Inspector

Terry Leach	HM Coastguard, London
Adam Stratford	Maritime Coastguard Agency (MCA)
Darren Tulley	London Fire Brigade (LFB)
Stuart Smith	London Port Health Authority
Jane Commons	London River Services (LRS)
Chris Livett	Livett Group
David Beaumont	DBA – The Barge Association
Derek Mann	Thames Clippers
Mark Robinson	Walsh Marine
Emma Crompton	CTRL Marine Solutions Ltd
Nick Toomey	City Cruises
Graeme Faulkner	GPS Marine
Steve Davies	RYA / North Kent Yachting Association
Bill Mitchell	Thames Regional Rowing Council (TRRC)
Pamela Chart	Association of Thames Yacht Clubs (ATYC)
Richard Hart	Docklands Scout Project and ATYC
Peter Finch	River Thames Society
Brian Clark	British Marine
Edward Langley	Complete Pleasure Boats
Colin Middlemiss	Watermen's Company
Robert Coleman	Woods River Cruises
Mark Wilson	Bateaux London

**Apologies for Absence**

James Trimmer	PLA, Director of Planning and Environment
Alistair Gale	PLA, Director of Corporate Affairs
Lucy Owen	PLA, Deputy Director of Planning and Environment
Phil Wilkinson	London Home and Water Safety Council
David Jones	Association of Thames Yacht Clubs (ATYC)
Harry Whelan	Kayaking in central London

**1. Matters Arising and Review of Action Points from the Minutes of the River Users Consultative Forum (Upper) held on Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> April 2015**

The minutes of the previous meeting were accepted and the actions reviewed:

- a. **Previous Action:** PLA Environment Team and HMU to send a formal letter, representing the members of the RUCF, in support of the Litter Campaign to Local Authorities and the London Waterways Commission.  
**Action Complete.** Letter was signed by the RUCF attendees and sent to the PLA Corporate Affairs and Environment teams for distribution.

- b. Previous Action:** A full review of reported wash incidents will be produced for future RUCF meetings.  
**Action Complete.**

## **2. PLA Update**

### **a. Regulatory and Marine SMS**

#### **i. Thames Byelaws**

We have completed two Informal Public Consultations on amendments to four of our existing byelaws. We are currently working towards getting them 'made' at the July PLA Board meeting, which will lead to a one-month period of the Formal Public Consultation on these proposed amendments.

#### **ii. General Directions**

The public consultation has been completed on revisions to the General Directions and it is expected that they will be 'made' at the May PLA Board meeting. It is therefore likely that the revised Directions to come into effect on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2016.

#### **iii. Passenger Vessel Code of Practice**

This Code is currently undergoing a scheduled three-yearly review and has been made more user friendly. It is currently out for Public Consultation until 12th May 2016 and we would encourage all comments on it. We expect that once the feedback has been analysed, it will formally replace the current Code in June/July 2016.

#### **iv. Code of Practice for Paddling on the Tideway**

We currently have a number of guides and Codes for various paddling activities on the tidal Thames and in an effort to bring these documents into one central repository we are in the process of developing this new Code of Practice. It will also be drawing on some of the useful guidance we currently provide to the Rowing fraternity and the formatting of the document will be in our new, more user friendly style.

#### **v. Recreational Users' Guide**

The PLA is looking to bring the review of the guide forward, bringing this in line with the issue of the annual 'Tide Table and Port Information' book.

If there are any comments on the current guide, or for advertising enquiries, please contact [SafetyManagement@pla.co.uk](mailto:SafetyManagement@pla.co.uk)

#### **vi. Pilotage Directions**

The PLA is currently reviewing the Pilotage Directions and recently held a Navigational Risk Assessment Working Group (NRAWG). This work continues and will be developed further throughout the year.

### **b. Port Security**

#### **i. ISPS Security Level**

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

#### **ii. Threat Level**

The national overall threat level has been increased to SEVERE and the current threats seem to be predominately around crowded spaces., so extra caution should be maintained during busy central London events.

#### **iii. Port Security Authority**

The Thames Port Security Authority met on 13<sup>th</sup> April 2016 and will next meet on 12<sup>th</sup> October 2016.

### **c. Recreational Update**

Recreational incident numbers continue to be on a downward trend. Thanks to the representatives from the leisure sector for their continued efforts.

There was a single fatality involving a recreational vessel in December 2015, which is covered within the Incident Review. A Safety Bulletin was issued after this incident address the use of Kill Cords and Life Jackets – Wear them and look after them!

**i. Paddling Code of Practice**

A new paddling code is being designed which will combine the current paddle sport guidance into one document, similar in style to the new Rowing Code. Once a near final draft is produced, this will be circulated to commercial operators for their comment.

Please continue to be mindful of your wash when passing small craft.

**ii. TTNC Action Matric – (Tidal Thames Navigators' Club)**

The Tidal Thames Navigators' Club is a club setup by the PLA. There are various benefits in being a member, such as an online forum, river trips on our Harbour Launch and also pre-season briefings, covering upcoming changes on the river and advised on matters of safety.

After this year's briefing, the Q&A session included grievances on 'Wash' and the lack of Visitor Moorings.

The PLA is currently undertaking a project to determine where additional visitor moorings can be installed by the PLA, which would be bookable in advance for a nightly charge. The PLA also intends to improve the awareness and visibility of these and current visitor moorings on our website.

**d. Environment Update**

**i. The Marine Management Organisation's (MMO) Marine Plan**

The MMO are starting consultation works on the Marine Plan for the South East Inshore area, which includes the tidal Thames. The MMO are encouraging anyone with an interest in the marine area, or whose business relies on it, to get involved.

The PLA will be engaging but we are only one voice so would also encourage everyone to put forward their views.

Once published, regulators will have to comply with the Plan when licensing certain activities.

Post-meeting note - Further details on the Gov.uk website -

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/consultations-for-next-phase-of-marine-planning-opens> where you can also sign up for their newsletter.

**3. MCA District Safety**

**a. Boatmasters Licence**

The MCA is busy with BML examinations, with a couple of exam days booked per month.

There has been a marked improvement in the standard of candidates.

If there are any operators willing to offer any venues for the exams, or any vessels for the practical assessments, please contact the MCA.

**b. Local Knowledge Endorsement**

The MCA continue to carry out first-time LKE assessments, but revalidation of LKE holders is now being undertaken by the PLA..

The PLA thanks Thames Practitioners for the assistance on LKE revalidations, which are being conducted every Wednesday during 2016. There has been a lack of candidates coming forward, so the PLA request operators to encourage candidates to approach the PLA early. It should be noted that the PLA/MCA introduced referral system so that candidates who don't quite meet the standard can be re-assessed within 4 weeks without losing their endorsement.

A further issue was raised regarding the requirement to demonstrate an additional 60 days qualifying service time for LKE on successful completion of the BML. Operators

see this as restrictive and unnecessary and would like to look at a change to this process. HMU noted that the BML structure in place was as a result of significant dialogue and discussion. Any change to these processes would need to be undertaken after consultation with all users.

**c. Domestic Safety Management Systems (DSMS)**

Passenger boat operators are required to apply for vessel DOC Audits by 31<sup>st</sup> August. Only 1 company has approached the MCA thus far. Class V operators should contact the MCA to arrange Office Audits. Certificates will now be issued annually and there will be a charge.

**4. Navigational Safety**

**a. Incident Review**

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

A fatality occurred in December 2015 involving a recreational speed boat at Wandsworth. The police investigation is ongoing.

**i. Prosecutions**

There have been 3 recent prosecutions, one of which made the National News. 2 RIB masters were prosecuted for dangerous navigation – one of which collided with a motor cruiser. The other case involved a recreational speed boat owner, who failed to attend court or submit a plea and a warrant for his arrest has been issued.

**ii. Wash**

Wash trials have been conducted at houseboat sites on the river, in order to review and develop Passage Plans. An online reporting system has been setup to aid in reporting.

**5. Other Updates**

**a. Police MPU**

There was no representative from the MPU and no update given

**b. Coastguard**

Terry Leach introduced himself as the London Rescue Coordination Centre Manager, successor to the recently retired David White.

There will be an increase in London-trained staff in the near future, with 7 officers from the south coast undergoing familiarisation with London Coastguard.

Where necessary, control can be devolved to these trained people remotely.

The manuals for the London Emergency Services Liaison Panel (LES�P) and the Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Programme (JESIP) are being reviewed and re-written. These give guidance on how London's emergency services work together.

The Garden Bridge Trust has been approached regarding incorporating drowning prevention equipment into the design of the bridge.

**c. RNLI**

There was no representative from the RNLI and no update given

**d. London River Services**

The Thames reached 10.3m passenger journeys in 2015, so well on target for the 12m journeys by 2020.

2 new pier controllers have been recruited.

**e. Fire**

The development of training and the introduction of new LFB vessels is ongoing. The requirements for the new vessels will be going out to tender soon.

Please continue to report all fires on the river, whether they are already dealt with on scene or not.

Darren Tulley explained that he has been given a promotion and will shortly be working in another area.

RUCF members thank Darren for all his efforts and congratulations on his promotion!

**f. Environment Agency**

There was no representative from the EA and no update given

**g. Port Health**

The Port Health Authority will be carrying out additional noise patrols in the summer.

The authority continues to work with local Boroughs on this issue.

**6. River Works**

**a. Central/Navigational Channel Arch Closures at:**

**i. Hammersmith Bridge**

The tender for the full refurbishment of Hammersmith Bridge has been postponed until 2017.

Works are expected to last around 12 months.

Due to the nature of the works there will most likely be the need for a piled structure to span part of the river, with Local Traffic Control in force for the duration.

The PLA will ensure that sufficient bridge height and channel width remain for commercial vessels.

Additionally, there will be some short term works at the bridge this August, utilising the under-bridge cradles that have been used previously.

**b. Baynard House**

The sheet piling works are complete. The piles will be cut off at bed level and capped, in readiness for dredging for the new Blackfriars Pier.

Works to install the new pier will begin in July 2016, to be commissioned in September 2016.

No.2 arch of Blackfriars Bridges are Closed to Navigation until October 2016.

**c. Garden Bridge**

Works are continuing on the relocation of the Wellington and moorings at the Embankment.

Works are intended to start towards the end of 2016 and run until 2018.

The majority of the works will be confined to the 2 pier sites, with limited impact.

The bridge will be built using 5 pre-constructed sections which will be lifted into place.

12 hour closures are likely.

There may be conflict with the Tideway Tunnel works, so a Cumulative Navigational Risk Assessment (CNRA) has been carried out to consider the impact on normal river traffic and additional traffic for the tunnel sites. This report has been received and is currently being reviewed by the PLA.

**d. Thames Bridge**

There has previously been a proposal for a lifting bridge at Limehouse, however there has been little progress recently due to the mayoral elections.

**e. Fulham Football Club**

The construction methodology has been reviewed, and a Navigational Risk Assessment and consultation is currently being undertake with leisure users.

A start date for the works is unknown at the moment as there may be refinements to the design of the riverside stand.

**f. Thames Tideway Tunnel**

Muck away has started at Chambers Wharf.

There has been a slight delay in the moving of Tattershall Castle – this is expected to happen in January 2017.

Jetty construction at Carnworth Road and Kirtling Street are expected to begin in Q4 2016.

Works at Putney to construct the new slipway is expected to start on 27<sup>th</sup> November.

An extensive Cumulative Navigational Risk Assessment for the Tideway Tunnel works is underway.

The next Tideway Passenger and Freight Forum is on the 16<sup>th</sup> May.

**7. Commercial Vessels**

**a. Passenger Vessels**

**i. High Visibility Sterns**

Operators are reminded of the requirement under General Directions to have a clearly visible and lit orange stern of the required area. Thanks to those that have addressed this. These will be checked during MCA surveys.

**ii. Code of Practice**

The Code of Practice for Passenger Vessels is currently undergoing Public Consultation, ending mid May. Please supply any comments before the closing date.

**b. NRAWG 56 - RIB Operations**

A Navigational Risk Assessment Working Group (NRAWG) has been setup to look at RIB operations below Tower Bridge.

Various restrictions have been included in the Passenger Vessel Code of Practice, including 'No Manoeuvre Areas' and a minimum time and space in between vessels. The recent TTNC Pre-Season Briefing included grievances regarding RIB operators passing too close to recreational users and causing excessive wash. The Harbour Service Launch will be monitoring RIB activity and recreational traffic during bank holiday weekends.

**8. Events**

**a. Review of events from 2015**

The Events Review was circulated in advance of the meeting and attached as Appendix B.

Nick Evans was introduced as the new DHMU2 and the various changes in the Harbour Master team were explained.

Nick thanked the group for accommodating the various events throughout the year.

**b. Forthcoming events for 2015/16**

An online events calendar has been setup and is hosted on the PLA website.

The Viking Star will be arriving at Greenwich Ship Tier next week for a naming ceremony.

On 11<sup>th</sup> June, there will be a precession for the Queen's 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday between Westminster and Tower, coinciding with the gun salutes at 13:00. (This is not an open event).

**9. AOB**

**a. Tower Bridge Resurfacing**

With the closure of the footpath, the need for a ferry service was questioned.

The contractor is putting in place measures for a worst case scenario, which will be assessed through the normal River Works Licensing process.

**b. Pre-1992 Passenger Vessels**

There is a review of the standards which govern pre-1992 passenger vessels. A working group will be meeting in June; although it has been noted that there is currently poor representation from Thames operators.

**Date of Next Meeting**

16<sup>th</sup> November 2016 at 10:30. HQS Wellington