

PLA Harbourmasters Recreational Navigation Group  
Meeting 3 9<sup>th</sup> April 2009

Minutes

Present:

- David Snelson - Chief Harbour Master
- David Foster – Harbour Master Upper (Dagenham to Teddington)
- David Phillips – Deputy Harbour Master Upper
- Alexander Brown – River Manager Putney to Teddington
- Harry Whelan - Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea river provision and kayaking in the middle district
- Martin Spencer – Representing rowing in the middle district
- Banny – Senior Trainer National Community Boats Association
- Mike Shefras - Royal Yachting Association down to Tower Pier & Association of Thames Yacht Clubs
- Roger Squires - Chairman of the Inland Waterways Association London Region and St. Pancras Cruising Club
- Paul Rayner - RYA from Tower on South Bank to the Estuary
- David Beaumont – Dutch Barge Association
- Tony Reynolds – Thames Regional Rowing Council Regional Water Safety Advisor
- Tamsin Phipps – Canoe England gvt. and public affairs manager

1. Terms of reference explained

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting

- a. Kayakers and Canoeists – to be discussed under standing agenda item
- b. Brentford Canoe Club – Kevin East has made contact and had a meeting with them
- c. Night Time Navigation – to be discussed under Kayakers and Canoeists agenda item
- d. Action Plan Kent Coast – Plan is still out for comments but should not affect anything above Dartford Bridge. There will be a public meeting to discuss the plan in about a month – contact [chris.drake@kent.gov.uk](mailto:chris.drake@kent.gov.uk) for info
- e. London wind farm array work is stalled
- f. Thanet wind farm construction will be starting shortly
- g. Passenger Boat code has a comment on the difficulty in seeing small craft from the bridge of Class V Passenger vessels
- h. River Signage – most narrow boats are aware of CEVNI and the differences between that and the signage on the Thames can lead to confusion.
- i. The signs are well established, marked on charts (PLA & IMRAY) and explained in leisure guide; bearing in mind the costs involved the PLA do not envisage need for change.

3. Byelaws Update

- a. The Consultation process has finished – all responses to public comments can be found on the website.
- b. Some of the byelaws have been adjusted to take account of comments received
- c. The PLA board has approved the final draft and it will now be sent to the DfT
- d. A major public consultation will then occur – which will be confirmed by NTM
- e. Byelaw changes/additions as relevant to the recreational community as follows:
  - i. A Byelaw added about wash
  - ii. A Speed limit of 12 knots to Cherry Garden Pier
  - iii. Some vessels will be eligible for a Dispensation to exceed the speed limit between Cherry Garden Pier and Margaretness

- iv. Such vessels will be required to follow the High Speed Passenger vessel code as well as other International Safety Management Code
- v. Swimming will be now formally banned in Central London.

#### 4. Recreational Users Guide

- a. Will be in the form of a large fold out chart
- b. Final draft is currently being completed and will be produced by the PLA Hydrographic Department
- c. Addition of bridge arch diagrams with examples of bridge signage will be investigated

#### 5. Passenger Boat Code

- a. In final stages of production
- b. Advice to Class V operators on how to run their vessels
- c. Will be available to non-commercial craft

#### 6. Rowing Code

- a. Has been revised and updated – but main themes have remained basically unchanged
- b. PLA undecided as to whether this will be an electronic only document
- c. Many on committee feel that printed versions are useful for many users, for increasing the visibility of the document
- d. Also concern that plan to update the document constantly will result in most following out of date versions
- e. The creation of printable and readable versions is suggested – possibly in a ring binder format so people can update their personal copies

#### 7. Other publications

- a. General Directions are currently out for consultation
- b. A detailed book on bridges over the Thames is shortly to be released – although its highly technical nature makes it unsuitable for the average recreational reader
- c. Folio of A2 colour charts will be released shortly – the charts include proper bridge soundings. A Notice to Mariners will be issued shortly with details.

#### 8. Events

- a. Boat Race 2010 is currently scheduled for the afternoon of 3<sup>rd</sup> April – Easter Saturday
- b. Boat Race Company has been informed that the PLA is not comfortable with the event being over the Easter Weekend as it throws up a number of issues both internal and external
- c. PLA does understand BR has a set of very strict criteria as to when it can run the race
- d. Recreational users not happy with a boat race over the Easter weekend, but confirmed that Thursday and Saturday closures were less of an inconvenience than Friday and Sunday closures. Meeting agreed that the 2010 event should go ahead on 3 Apr 10 but future Races are not to be held over the Easter Bank Holiday.
- e. The PLA's support of events is being reassessed as a result of the present financial climate
- f. The majority of river closure events receive a hidden subsidy from the PLA and this may no longer be possible

#### 9. Incidents

- a. Incidents involving recreational users have dropped

- b. Rowing incidents are discussed three times a year when analysis of any patterns is carried out (Part of the memorandum of understanding between the TRRC and PLA).
- c. There has been a dramatic increase in the amount of wash complaints from the lower district – however few of these have been properly formatted incident reports
- d. The PLA will only follow up written reports – telephone calls are not sufficient
- e. The rowing community has a very efficient online reporting tool and these can come through to the PLA much more quickly than was previously the case
- f. The PLA will always investigate incidents involving rowers vs. non-rowers
- g. The rowing boat ID scheme (as initially formulated in conjunction with the PLA) has now gone nationwide

#### 10. River Works

- a. Tower Bridge – one of 3 main arches will be closed until 2011
- b. Southwark Bridge – the same
- c. The center arches of both the above will not be closed in the summer period
- d. Blackfriars Bridge – one of the 3 main arches will be closed until 2012
- e. Albert Bridge – one of the 2 center arches will be closed for about the next 18 months from the Autumn of 2009.
- f. Barnes Bridge – one of the 2 side arches can be closed and there will be a height restriction in the center arch. The work is due to finish before next year's boat race
- g. All the above are mentioned in NTMs. Other bridges are also due

#### 11. Thames Tunnel

- a. The Survey work is starting now, with major borehole work starting in May
- b. Borehole work will stretch from Putney to Beckton (although likely to extend up to Hammersmith in time)
- c. Work will involve three jackup barges working for 3 to 4 weeks on each hole
- d. There are 86 holes on the list – those in awkward positions will be subject to a further NTM
- e. London Gateway Bridge will not be built
- f. Crossrail project will be discussed at the next meeting
- g. There will be an extended road closure across Tower Bridge as part of the works – this is likely to be winter 2010/11

#### 12. Upriver Shoals

- a. There have been no new notices to mariners on shoals
- b. Fulham flats has been stable for the last 30 years
- c. Battersea and Kew shoal are not stable and have both recently reached the trigger heights for a new dredging program
- d. Battersea shoal has just been dredged – the post dredge survey should be shortly available
- e. Kew Shoal can not currently be dredged due to contamination
- f. However Kew is only slightly over the trigger height so the charts are still accurate

#### 13. Kayakers and Canoeists

- a. A lengthy email correspondence was held about all issues associated with kayaks on the river
- b. The main topics discussed were
  - i. Making kayaks more visible
  - ii. Hand held vhf highly recommended
  - iii. River crossing and paddling on the wrong side of the channel

- c. The first two were agreed by all at a previous meeting, but the PLA still needs to discuss the final issue
- d. Sharing good practice is very important but quite difficult
- e. Local clubs have met to discuss good lighting practice and are continuing to work on this
- f. David Phillips has undertaken to get some paddlers an educational trip out on the river on a class V
- g. Alex Brown has created a draft pamphlet giving both advice and warnings to those who wish to paddle on the river at night
- h. The intention is to publish this on the PLA and Canoe England website
- i. Pamphlet felt to be a good start but language needs simplifying
- j. Comments to be received by 1<sup>st</sup> May
- k. Safety chains alongside river walls are put in at the volition of local boroughs or riparian land owners; the PLA have no power to enforce
- l. PLA does insist when new works are created that chains are attached

#### 14. Tree Cutting Works

- a. The PLA has created a management plan for the stretch of riverbank it believes it owns between Beverley Brook and Kew Road Bridge
- b. Work has already started on those trees that were categorised as urgent by the arboriculturalist that the PLA has retained
- c. Tree management plan is a very large project that is currently planned to last at least 15 years and encompasses re-planting as well as felling
- d. Sailing Dinghies are still being seen stuck with their masts stuck in riverside trees

#### 15. Re-opening historic Thames Marine infrastructure

- a. A report has been sent through which highlights the following:
  - i. A lack of safe layover moorings
  - ii. The need for extra gates on Gravesend basin
  - iii. The lack of safe opportunities for safe slipping in and out of the river
  - iv. c.30 sites where access to the river could be available and is not
- b. the report is with our Head of Planning and Partnerships
- c. DS will talk to the HM(L) about the need to publicise existing safe layover moorings **(Post meeting note from HM(Lower): 'The majority of yachtsmen sailing from bases on the river are aware of the presence of such facilities. Visitors normally use one of the yachting almanacs (Reeds etc) which give details of visitors moorings available at yacht clubs. We put in some visitors moorings at Greenhithe a few years ago but these, despite advertising, are rarely used; I've now let some of them long term. The details of available moorings will also be put on the new PLA recreational guide in course of production'**
- d. Different boroughs have very different policies on river access and the PLA does not own most

#### 16. AOB

- a. A "Who's Who" is available for the Thames from the ATYC
- b. CHM will consider representation for the lower district on the PHRNG

DONM 7<sup>th</sup> October 2009 10:30  
 (14<sup>th</sup> October not possible)