

PLA Harbourmasters Recreational Navigation Group
Meeting 4: 7th October 2009

Present:

- David Snelson - Chief Harbour Master
- David Phillips – Harbour Master Upper (Dagenham to Teddington)
- Alexander Brown – River Manager Putney to Teddington
- Harry Whelan - Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea river provision and kayaking 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
- Paul Rayner - RYA from Tower on South Bank to the Estuary
- Tony Reynolds – Thames Regional Rowing Council Regional Water Safety Advisor
- Chris Kendall – PBDRC & rowing in middle district
- Kevin East – Canoe England

Apologies:

Roger Squires, David Beaumont

- New HM(U) team:
 - HM(U) – David Phillips previously DHM(U)1
 - DHM(U)1 – Terry Lawrence previously DHM(U)2 coming from a background of merchant shipping
 - DHM(U)2 – Steve Rushbrook previously worked in the PLA's marine services dept.
- 1. Minutes of Previous Meeting
 - a. Accepted – all actions to be covered by the agenda
- 2. Byelaw Update
 - a. These are still with the Department for Transport's legal division
 - b. PLA is working to try and get them through as quickly as possible but it is a lengthy process
 - c. PLA hopes they will be enacted by April 2010
 - d. An NTM with an advisory speed limit is already in place
- 3. Publications Update
 - a. Recreational Guide:
 - i. Free and available to all river users – although primarily aimed at Motor Vessel skippers
 - ii. The PLA is considering the possible use of advertising to defray costs
 - iii. Nearly 100 were given out at an ATYC and they were very well received
 - iv. Quality of document allows it to survive much better on decks and in clubs
 - v. Document revision cycle is usually three years but the PLA is looking to be more dynamic
 - vi. Positive and negative feedback is welcomed so that the document can be kept current
 - vii. AB to be point of contact for such feedback
 - viii. It is important to show the date and issue number clearly on this kind of publication
 - b. Passenger Boat Code:
 - i. This has now been released
 - c. A2 Folios:
 - i. The A2 folio of charts from Wandsworth to Woolwich has now been released and costs £45
 - ii. Ideally suited for passage planning in this area and as such is probably more suited to clubs than individuals

- iii. Folios covering the upper district and the lower district (up to the point where other charts become detailed) are also planned
 - iv. Berth names on these charts will be the ones used by VTS and the PLA is working to ensure consistency across the district
 - d. Bridges Book
 - i. A coffee table type book with diagrams and photos of every single bridge on the tidal Thames costing £21.50 + £1.50 p&p
 - ii. In part as a result of a recommendation in an incident inquiry
 - iii. PLA will contact RYA publications and see if they could act as a distributor
 - iv. If outside distribution goes ahead PLA may consider two tier pricing structure
 - e. Rowing Code
 - i. At recommendation of PHRNG the rowing code has been produced as a booklet and a new chart printed
 - ii. New code has been published and will shortly be handed out to rowing clubs
 - iii. No major changes from previous edition – but a lot more photos have been added
 - f. Paddlers Guide
 - i. This in house document produced in conjunction with local kayakers (including members of the PHRNG) has been published and about 30 copies have been sent out with requests still coming in for copies
 - ii. Recognised need to adopt similar, but separate missive for people in small boats such as skiffs and rowing cutters on the Tideway
 - iii. Canoe England were extremely helpful in giving quick decisions and featuring the guide in a copy of their in-house magazine
 - iv. The PLA's interface with the recreational community is the best it has ever been
 - v. The PLA acknowledges this but is aware that this must be an issue we keep working on
- 4. Events
 - a. Boat Race
 - i. PLA will ensure that the BRCL is aware that the PLA will object to Boat Races on Easter Sunday
 - b. River Closure Dates
 - i. Pairs Head 17th October
 - ii. Fours Head 14th November
 - iii. Vet Fours Head 15th November
 - iv. Sculler's Head 28th November
 - v. Schools Head 11th March
 - vi. Women's Head 13th March
 - vii. Eights Head 27th March
 - viii. Vet Eights Head 28th March
 - ix. Practice Starts for Boat Race 1st April
 - x. Boat Race 3rd April
 - c. Great River Race
 - i. Class V operators were not happy to have the piers closed as it lost them a lot of revenue
 - ii. Over a hundred competitors – all from a particular type of dragon boat went in the water
 - iii. This used up a great deal of PLA and GRR resource – lowering the safety cover being provided to the rest of the race
 - iv. GRR have been tasked to demonstrate that these dragon boats are safe to continue competing in the race
 - v. Some vessels arrived at Richmond Lock earlier than forecast resulting in the need for a slowdown
 - vi. The ability of those dragon boaters who were immersed is another question to be discussed

- vii. Other rowing events are looking at ways of ensuring a minimum level of competence amongst their competitors
- viii. Generally though competitors were very happy with the race in its new direction although the arrangements at the start caused concern
- ix. PLA is still in discussions with the GRR and other stakeholders as to whether it is appropriate to permanently reverse direction

5. Incidents

a. Commercial

- i. There has been no appreciable change in the level of commercial incidents
- ii. The interface on the river between commercial and leisure vessels continues to be an area of concern which the PLA will continue to work on

b. Recreational Incidents

- i. A small motor vessel collided with a traditional rowing cutter
 - 1. Resulted in serious damage to the cutter and injuries to those aboard
 - 2. PLA also considering how we cover this area in the summer
 - 3. This incident aroused considerable local interest and anger
- ii. The Hurricane Clipper collided with a traditional rowing cutter
 - 1. Resulted in serious damage to the cutter and injuries to those aboard
 - 2. The investigation is not yet completed.
 - 3. Whilst cutters are not numerous on the river their numbers have increased and the PLA will investigate methods of contacting them in a similar fashion to kayakers
- iii. An Octuple collided with Dove Pier on an ebb tide
 - 1. All crew and an accompanying coaching launch ended up in the water as a result
 - 2. This **specific** incident in this location was not identified as a particular hazard within the PLA's Safety Management System so it requires detailed, thorough investigation.
 - 3. School and HSE are investigating this incident as will the PLA
 - 4. PLA will pass on findings to the MAIB
 - 5. PLA's report on the incident will be in draft so that other interested parties can comment on any recommendations and how they interface with other aspects of how the river is used

6. Improving small vessel safety on the Tidal Thames

a. Narrow Boats and closed arches

- i. There has been a large increase in the number of narrow boats proceeding through closed arches.
- ii. It is apparent that many narrow boat owners do not consider themselves mariners and as such do not read NTMs
- iii. General communication with this class of mariners is difficult as most do not belong to any groups or bodies, but efforts continue as to the optimum way of getting the safety message across to this group
- iv. ATYC are working to foster a culture of improving boat handling skills through the introduction of a handling certificate
- v. This could possibly be endorsed down to the Tower as it is still very much a work in progress
- vi. NCBA has a tidal course which is currently under revision – but could also be a vehicle for getting the message across
- vii. Members of the committee will communicate this issue to the IWA and NABO

b. VTS

- i. RWSA will create a pamphlet for upper rowing clubs suggesting that VTS be contacted if a trip below Vauxhall Bridge is planned
- ii. This will also include a brief description of what VTS do

- iii. ATYC will look into informing members that they should contact VTS by VHF as they pass Vauxhall Bridge
- iv. VHF is certainly being increasingly used by Kayakers
- v. VTS need to judge what they announce on the broadcast
- vi. PLA will investigate what, if any internal policy we have on encouraging recreational users to contact London VTS and whether the capacity exists to cope with the additional demand on London VTS. **Action: DP**

7. River Works

- a. Tower Bridge – will be worked on throughout next year
- b. Southwark Bridge – will be worked on throughout next year
- c. Blackfriars Bridge
 - i. 2 of 3 navigation arches will remain open all of next year
 - ii. Large barges will be delivering building material and will be moving between arches on a short notice basis
 - iii. How this information will be promulgated is still being assessed
 - iv. A road closure sign is being used in conjunction with the correct PLA sign as this appears to be the only effective method of stopping narrow boaters
 - v. Specific NTMs will cover the dynamic changes – the PLA hopes traffic control will not be necessary
 - vi. The centre Arch (No 3) will be closed for much of Nov 2009 to March 2010
- d. Barnes Bridge
 - i. Work on the center arch has now started
 - ii. This will reduce the headroom by 1m
 - iii. Work will be finished by April 2010
 - iv. Side arches also have reduced headroom but are not being closed
- e. Chiswick Bridge – a large refurbishment project is in the pipeline details not yet known
- f. Kew Revettment – Plan of works is in flux but might involve a jackup barge
- g. Richmond Bridge – works will finish at end of this month
- h. Twickenham Riverside
 - i. It appears that the council still plans to install timber fendering at the wall here
 - ii. With the maintained level in mind this could be a good place for a visitor to moor on the way down river if waiting for the wiers

8. Kayakers and Canoeists

- a. Kayakers with beginners have been seen using closed arches as they feel it is safer
- b. PLA will clarify the position on this
- c. Some Kayakers have been using the wrong side of the river between Tower and Lambeth
- d. PLA has agreed with representatives of kayaking community that this is not safe and will ensure that this information is more widely promulgated
- e. HSL will be tasked to contact offenders out on the river and direct them appropriately
- f. Day out with clippers was immensely useful for the kayakers and rowers
- g. With new reps shortly to be put in place for the new Canoe England regions it would be a good thing if it could be repeated

9. PLA Charging Policy

- a. Events
 - i. PLA's income is down approx 15%
 - ii. As a result all charges across the board have been scrutinised
 - iii. Established river events involving river closures will continue to be subsidized to a total of 50%
 - iv. This will result in a slight increase in cost
- b. Richmond Lock Charges

- i. Lock costs approx £400,000 a year to run
 - ii. Non-slip matting has been placed around the boat rollers making them much safer to use
 - iii. It is hoped that charges will reduce frivolous use of lock and the abuse of the Lock Foreman by casual users
 - iv. Skippers are often kept waiting at the lock and do not know how to contact the foreman
 - v. PLA will look at how to improve this situation **Action: AB**
- 10. Development of Limehouse Quay
 - a. New Marina being developed with access to the Olympic site
 - b. PLA will contact BW for info **Action: AB**
- 11. Environment Agency Strategic Project for Water Related Recreation in the SE and London
 - a. Paul Rayner outlined project and how it will affect recreation
 - b. Group members expressed concern that sporting governing bodies were not part of this group
 - c. Paul will inform PLA if there are issues that will affect our areas of concern
- 12. AOB
 - a. The Lower District's interests will continue to be covered by downriver forums. The PHRNG will continue to concern itself only with middle and upper district issues. Terms of reference will be checked to confirm this **Action: AB**
 - b. HM(U) would like PHRNG to be more executive and agile in helping PLA with decision making. As such members of the group will be asked to comment on proposals and reports outside of meetings by emails and phone. This idea will be further developed and PHRNG members are encouraged to contribute their ideas.
 - c. Riverbed erosion between Tower Bridge and the Barrier does appear to be partly the result of the Clippers' unique wash characteristics. PLA is monitoring the situation and it does appear to have stopped. Mud has also been observed to be accreting in new positions. Water quality is currently re-balancing.
 - d. PLA do not think that the Water Framework Directive will have an effect on recreational use in the area. If anything does appear likely to effect us PLA/PHRNG will inform each other.
 - e. River users are aware of "burps" of sewage in the Mogden area and are not pleased with EA's apparent hand in glove approach with Thames Water. PLA supports the promotion of long term solutions to this problem and will discuss with Port Health at next available opportunity. **Action: DS**

DNOM 8th APRIL 2010 1030 BAKERS HALL