

Notes of River Users Consultative Forum (Estuary) Meeting
25th November 2010

Present:-

Captain Roy Stanbrook	RS	HM (L) - PLA
Captain Chris McQueen	CM	DHM (L) – PLA
Captain Julian Parkes	JP	HM (SMS) – PLA
Lisa Cockerill	LC	Assistant to HM(L)
Rod Owen	RO	Sea pilot - PLA
Andrew Rudge	AR	MCA
Archie Turnbull	AT	MCA
Simon Hiscock	SH	Kent Police Frontier Ops
Simon Lofting	SL	Essex Police Marine Unit
Kamal Achuthan	KA	University College London
Nippin Anand	NA	Nottingham University
Tom Sims	TS	RYA South East
Chris Edwards	CE	RYA East
Michael Shefras	MS	ATTC

1. Apologies

M Dodson, Trinity House. R Barker, Trinity House. Steve Seabrook, Joint Police Marine Unit (Essex & Kent). Daryl Godbold, Fishermans Assoc. Martin Garside, Corporate Affairs Manager PLA. Nichie Jenkins, Environment Manager PLA.

2. Minutes of River Users Consultative Forum Meeting 21st May 2010.

Minutes of last meeting agreed.

3. Matters arising

CE commented that RYA had not received copies of the suggested amendments about the Medway for River Users Recreational Guide. JP stated this had been distributed via email. MS stated the document didn't go to RYA Head Office and this should be addressed to Guss Lewis.

ACTION: JP

RS had stated at last meeting that the Harbour Revision Order had been completed. This, however, has not been completed yet and is on going.

The issue of standard mooring plans for berths was raised. CM stated that these are not likely to be practical because it is difficult to standardise due to the wide range of ship sizes using the berths. However the issue is still to be considered by the safe mooring group.

ACTION: HML

MS praised the 'Boating on the Thames' Website. The website is a new initiative which aims to provide leisure users access to relevant information so they navigate safely on the Thames. This can be found under www.boatingonthethames.co.uk.

PLACID (the incident management database) has now been replaced by a new database called 'PERSPECTIVE' which seems to be working well.

Under Navigation Safety and Consultancy Matters ii: Should read 'Sunk VTS' not TVS.

Harwich power boat race on 31st July did not have a great attendance. Next year it will be held over a 4 day 'World Formula 1 Event' based around Harwich.

Medway Yacht Assoc, suggested PWC incident links be made between MY Assoc website and PLA's leisure user website. A discussion took place regarding PWC use on the Thames and Medway. CE is to send copy of policy to RS. Medway Ports are sticking to their own byelaws. The main difficulty Medway has in enforcing byelaws is the issue of getting names and addresses of offenders.

SL asked if PWCs had been banned in the Medway. TS stated it's back to stage 1 – it's an ongoing problem but not as bad as it use to be.

SH – problems from Kent side. Very limited reports from Kent's perspective. Defined areas where you can launch, cuts down on problems.

CM outlined initiative from owner of Smallgains Marina who over the last 18 months raised the possibility with PLA, Castlepoint Council and local yacht clubs of allowing PWCs to be launched from the site for a small charge. The owner has developed a set of rules which he also enforces. PWC owners who do not comply with the rules are banned from launching from the Marina. The eventual aim is to form a club at some point.

The first season went well with no PWC incidents being reported to PLA.

Benfleet Creek, Environment Agency and Castlepoint owned slipways but following complaints last year have now been blocked by the owners of the sites, so PWCs cannot be launched from there.

JP introduced two new attendees to the forum as observers. Mr Kamal Achuthan from the University College London and Mr Nippin Anand

from the University of Nottingham. They are researching business continuity and resilience in ports in the UK. It is a two year project to look at Port of London and how resilient it is to disruption e.g. fuel strikes, pandemics etc. This work coincides with what the PLA has been doing in developing business continuity plans with the research team aiming to get a better understanding of how the port works.

4. PLA SITREP

i. Safety Management System

JP gave an update. New Thames Byelaws are still with the Department for Transport, progress is very slow. Resulting from discussions held by Guss Lewis at RYA, amendments to the byelaws have been made accordingly. PLA are in discussion with Dft to get the byelaws in place as soon as possible. There have been a number of changes with the structure and terminology. The PLA is ready to go to formal public consultation as soon as there is DfT clearance. JP will email all reps on all three RUCFs to make people aware of formal public consultations.

ACTION: JP

New General Directions 2009 came into force from last September. There are a few new and minor amendments to General Directions being considered internally which will be going out for wider consultation shortly. The two main directions being considered are 1, requirement for commercial vessels to use authorised channel above Margaretness and 2, safe mooring of passenger boats.

Harbour Revision Order. This will focus on changes to the Port of London Act 1968, to bring it up to date and to delete sections of Act which are no longer relevant – now looking at going to formal consultation in the new year.

JP stated that the Craft Towage Code of Practice, which was first issued 3 years ago, internal review has commenced. Ship Towage Code is at printers and will shortly be issued.

ii. Port Security and ISPS code

ISPS Security level remains at Level 1.

JP gave an update on new Port Security Directive. The new government has decided not to press ahead with the new London wide Port Security Authority and current arrangements will therefore remain in place for London. One reason stated was the difficulty in defining designated areas for London, as well as London having existing security structures already in

place and established. The existing Port Security Committee will look at ways it can improve and develop. Transec have reduced, by half, the number of port security authorities.

Olympic security and safety – the PLA are involved in a number of forums on key matters concerning maritime safety and port security issues.

For 2012 a clearer view is needed on visiting recreational users to the Thames. BW and EA have completed a survey of likely interest in UK and NW Europe: 1200 people responded. The PLA is looking at locations for additional recreational moorings.

JP reported that many yachts may want to cross the channel in 2012. Working with Kent & Essex police, MCA and Medway on an initial leaflet for Recreational users to UK and NW Europe giving the message 'come and enjoy but need a berth/mooring to go to'!

MS expressed his concerns regarding recreational boats using their own tenders. RS said that this issue needs to be considered further.

Concern with competency standards of leisure users was discussed in the context of Olympics and crews boarding and landing from their boats on moorings in the fast flowing river using their tenders. ID commented there had been 30 recent incidents involving people transferring using tenders. The use of tenders would be discouraged and arrangements would be put in place for dedicated taxi service.)

iii. Environmental Matters

Nicola Jenkins PLA's Environmental Manager, was unable to attend today's meeting.

CE asked about the Project Balanced Seas Marine and whether PLA had been consulted. The Project covers an area from the mouth of the Deben to the Dorset Border and includes the Thames Estuary is looking at existing Marine Conservation Zones and future MCZs, looking at impacts as part work for the implementation of the Marine Coastal Act 2009. The Regional Stakeholder group is sub divided into three local groups, Essex Thames & North Kent, Sussex & South Kent and Solent, Isle of Wight, Hants. Local meetings have been held with local stakeholders, gathering information on species and marine activity data. The data will be used to produce proposals for new MCZ's, work on protective measures that will be applied to MCZ's and the impact that will have on mans activities is to be determined. Outcomes of the project could lead to restrictions,

for example, anchoring in MCZ for recreational users, promulgation of MCZ's and their restrictions are still to be determined.

Simon Hiscock discussed the Balanced Seas newsletter produced following a meeting 2 months ago (this can be found on www.balancedseas.org). CE commented that very little by way of comment and feedback from the meeting had been incorporated. A general feeling of low confidence was shared regarding the accuracy of the data gathered and concern that some organisations are not being consulted. RS stated he will investigate whether the PLA had been consulted. It may be due to changes to staff in PLA's environment team, causing it to have been missed.

ACTION: RS

iv. General

RS discussed trade – Trade has picked up substantially since September, which has put a strain on the Pilotage department's ability to supply pilots to meet demand. 2 new trainee pilots have just joined the PLA and it is planned that 4 more trainee pilots will be taken on next year.

Crossrail is going ahead with the spoil going to Wallasea Island in Crouch. PLA are working closely with Crouch Harbour Authority to resolve pilotage, buoyage and other issues related to the movement of spoil to Wallasea Island by ship. RO asked about the number of ship movements that are expected. RS stated 3 to 7 ships per day depending on the size of vessel to be used. 6 companies have tendered for the work offering different solutions.

CE commented on plans for 44 new buoys to be put in the River Crouch, and signage on existing buoys needs to be improved.

5. Navigational safety and Consultancy Matters

i. River Incidents

Date	Name of craft	info
16/06/2010	LADY FRANCIS	Fishing vessel LADY FRANCIS engaged in fishing in Lower Hope Reach impeded the passage of inward bound vessel FRI OCEAN. Warning letter issued.
29/06/2010	YASMINE	YASMINE outward bound passing London Gateway construction works, near to Cliffe fleet buoy, failed to reduce

		speed sufficiently and as result a 1.5m wave hit the tug ODIN working on the LGP site.
02/07/2010	CARPATHIA	ODIN reports excessive wash from passing outward vessel CARPATHIA off London Gateway. Carpathia's speed passing site only 8.3 knots. No further action.
02/07/2010	VESPERTINE	VESPERTINE outward bound in Sea Reach passed Friston down and tow at speed causing damage to Friston Down's barges.
02/07/2010	MISANA	MISANA outward bound in Sea Reach passing Friston Down and Tow at speed causing damage to tow due to wash. Misana was following Vespertine outward bound with ground speed of 19.7 knots.
15/07/2010	BEN	Tanker BEN in ballast landed heavily causing damage to jetty and minor damage to ship. Line squall was passing through when vessel was berthing.
16/07/2010	OASIS	Motor tank barge OASIS outward bound in the Lower Hope Reach contacted with the anchored survey vessel GEMS RESEARCHER causing some damage to both vessels. Formal warning issued to Master of OASIS. Failure to keep a proper look out.
27/07/2010	TORM CLARA	Tanker inward bound for Shellhaven B took a sheer passing London Gateway works opposite Shell G, tugs were used to recover sheer. Vessel then proceeded to berth without further incident.
04/09/2010	NORTH STACK	NORTH STACK outward bound crossed ahead of PELICANA causing a close quarter situation I the vicinity of Sea Reach 5 buoy, earlier similiary crossed ahead of inward bound HEKLA. Formal warning issued to master NORTH STACK.
19/09/2010	GRANDE AMERICA	Oil was observed to be leaking from the GRANDE AMERICA. Area affected Canvey to Tilburyness. Oil pollution plan activated and TOSCA deployed for afloat clean up. Local Authorities carried out clean up of beaches off Southend and Canvey. No enforcement action taken.
26/10/2010	IVY	IVY inward bound in Princes Channel

		<p>started to track slowly to the south side of the Deep water channel. VTS intervened and instructed vessel to move to north side of the channel and keep to starboard side of channel in vicinity of P7 buoy. Ship inspection carried out charts publications in good order.</p>
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CE asked if there had been any recreational incidents. CM informed there hadn't, but added a yacht moored at Thurrock YC had been severely damaged by GPS tug colliding with it following the mate being incapacitated for short period.

ii. Sunk VTS

AR commented it seems to be running quite well, although transiting French fishing vessels are using the same route.

6. Other Updates

i. MCA

AT briefed the meeting. 1000 incidents had occurred in the year, Harwich Festival was cancelled due to a fatality. AT also updated the meeting about various changes at the MCA, including the new Chief Executive, Sir Alan Massey.

Direction Finding Equipment at Coastguard stations is to be discontinued from 1st December due to financial reasons, this happened without consultation. The cost of replacing the DF's is £8 million pounds for the 18 stations, with maintenance costs of £60 million over the next 10 years.

The Coastguard will be replacing their radio system next year around the coast.

The government is planning a wide spread re-organisation of the MCA Coastguard which will include closures of coastguard stations. Proposals have been submitted, there will be a 12 week consultation period to be completed in March 2011 with full implementation of plan being completed by March 2015.

AT informed that the 4 ETV's stationed around the UK are to be discontinued. RS stated that because of the increase in structures at sea, ranging from rigs to windfarms, the number of incidents is likely to increase. This may lead to an increased requirement for the services of salvage tugs. AR responded by stating that it was the new government's view that government should not be providing this service and that it is a matter for salvage operators to resolve should a

ship get into difficulty, SOSREP has powers to force towage on the vessel.

CE – commented that Direction Finding Equipment at Coastguard stations wasn't needed anymore because lifeboats and helicopters are all fitted with DF, the question was asked how can CG justify RNLI being called out to use their DF to locate a casualty?

The BML consultation is underway and due to finish mid December 2010.

The Ship to Ship Transfer legislation is on hold whilst the new government carry out some further consultation with key industry stakeholders.

AR advised he had attended a seminar on the subject of reduced sulphur content bio mass fuels that are to be introduced in 2011 and the issues this poses for marine transport users, recreational and small workboats and passenger vessels. There are problems over storage as the fuel has a limited lifespan as it deteriorates over time, bugs which can lead to blocked filters, damage to marine engines, damaged seals. Fuel suppliers state that all users will have to carefully manage storage and use of fuel. Fuel suppliers will have a responsibility to supply correct fuel.

MCA is taking a proactive stance over staff fatigue on vessels and prohibition and improvement notices are being issued if shortcomings are found following a MCA ship inspection.

MCA are putting a new ship inspection regime in place for 2011, and will be targeting ships with poor safety defect records. Inspections will take place every time ships enter UK ports, others will be inspected at two yearly intervals.

ii. Environment Agency – no attendance.

iii. RNLI – no attendance.

iv. Medway – no attendance.

v. RYA East/South East/Kent

Toms Sims – Hoo freezer yacht race over on 28th February. Medway Dinghy Regatta 2/3rd July.

vi. Medway Yacht Association

TS commented on long term procedure of escort for commercial vessels during Medway Regatta and an incident that took place of some yachts ignoring the escort.

vii. Police

SL from Kent & Essex Joint Police Marine Unit informed the meeting that he had operational problems with the 'Grand Design' houseboat, unlicensed safety etc, the owner is in denial. Issues over safety, parties etc.

Castle Point Council are seeking to carry out prosecutions of unlicensed fishing vessels and are seeking support for a multi agency approach.

SL – On the river Roach there is an ongoing problem with people illegally fishing the privately owned clam beds, which has lead to a lot of local tension in the area.

RS A meeting Castle Point Council over PLA childrens education programme with Canvey island schools over hazards of playing near to the river with a focus on jumping off into river from Holehaven Pier and risking their lives evading security measures to gain access to the pier.

Simon Hiscock – Kent Police - Project Kraken is ongoing and is now nation wide. If you see suspicious activity, or illegal activity you are encouraged to report such activity to the Police using published number.

Olympics – PLA are working closely with Police on river security issues.

viii. Others – nothing to report.

7. River Events

Thames Sailing Barge Match 23rd July 2011.

8. River Works

i, London Gateway

Dredging work and the land reclamation work is progressing well. CM outlined current progress. New Shell jetty construction is complete and fitting out of berth has commenced.

ii, Windfarms

RS reported there is a lot happening at present in the Estuary. Gunfleet Sands is now complete. There is a proposal for 2 demonstrator turbine units SW of site. There is resistance to this proposal from Crouch Harbour

and PLA because of the turbines close proximity to approaches to the river Crouch which will impede traffic.

Kentish Flats – application is being proposed for an extension to the existing wind farm – This is an interim measure to support the wind farm industry to keep the wheels of offshore industry turning before round 3 starts – will comprise of 17 turbines.

Red aviation light for wind turbines – a trial using LED morse flashing W red light on North Hoyle wind farm off north Wales coast is underway.

Thanet Wind farm extension is not going ahead.

iii. Brit Ned Cable

Cable has been laid, but the burial of the cable was not successful because required burial depth was not achieved, work is ongoing to bury the cable to the correct depth.

9. Any other Business

SL asked about changes to limits for PWC. RS said that changes are part of the new Thames byelaws which are yet to come into force.

SL wished to thank PLA staff for their help with the recent protest/demonstration at Coryton.

Tom Sims –Asked about proposal for a marina in Robins Creek. It was thought the proposal for the project to go ahead was remote.

11. Time/ Date Of next meeting

1030 / Thursday 19th May 2011.