

**Notes of River Users Consultative Forum (Lower) Meeting**  
**6th November 2009**

Present:-

Captain Roy Stanbrook	RS	HM(L) - PLA
Captain Julian Parkes	JP	HM(SMS) - PLA
Lisa Cockerill	LC	Asst to HM(L)
Martin Garside	MG	Corporate Affairs Manager - PLA
John Window	JW	Haven Master Canvey Island – PLA
Rod Owen	RO	Pilot - PLA
David Brown	DB	Svitzer
Kevin Boyd	KB	Svitzer
John Skellorn	JS	RYA (SE Region)
Ian Dunkley	ID	RNLI (Gravesend)
Phil Welch	PW	Met Police MPU
Daryl Godbold	DG	SFA Fisheries Liaison Officer
John Potter	JP	Company of Waterman & Lighterman
Alan Hurrell	AH	Alan L Hurrell
Richard Lukes	RL	TGWU
David Allen	DA	RAFT
Gary Jones	GJ	Joint Police Marine Unit (Essex & Kent)

**1. Apologies**

R Barker, Trinity House. K Harris, PLA. C McQueen, PLA. D Chard, London Ship Owners & River Users Society. D Bell, Svitzer. Michael Shefras, Assoc of Thames Y/C/RYA. Richard Exley, HM Port of Tilbury. Paul Rawson, Essex & Kent Police. David Gordon, RAFT. Marcus Pearson, from London Gateway Port.

**2. Minutes of River Users Consultative Forum Meeting 8<sup>th</sup> May 2009**

Ian Dunkley confirmed that funding for training for BML has been granted.

RNLI / PLA joint presentation to Thurrock Yacht Club still to be arranged. ID now discussing possible dates with the Club.

**Action: RS/ID**

The Bridge Guide for Navigators has now been issued.

Isle of Sheppey launch site will be added in the next issue of Personal Watercraft Guide for the Thames Estuary.

JP referred to Page 7 in last minutes – MCA amendment awaiting public consultation – ongoing.

Tilbury Landing Stage – further study conducted for the suitability of refurbishment, preference is to refurbish rather than replace.

### 3. Matters arising from 2

No matters arising.

### 4. PLA Sitrep

#### i. Safety Management System

JP stated that the biggest consultation is the review of the Pilotage Directions. Further consultations are expected December/early next year.

The new Recreational Users Guide is now published and available free of charge. Good response so far. JP invited feedback from the committee. Any corrections will be made in the next edition.

Thames Byelaws will replace the existing River Byelaws. They are now with DfT for their internal consultation process which should be completed by the New Year. The Byelaws are then advertised in the local maritime and journals to seek further comments. Once consultation process is complete the Byelaws are confirmed by the Secretary of State and made into law and could be in place by the middle of next year, depending on length of the consultation process.

Harbour revision order – to change elements in the Port of London Act – informal consultation first.

RS reported that the PLA is also in process of reviewing the Ship Towage & Safe Mooring codes.

Tug allocation tables need to be more berth specific and more equitable and flexible for ship owners. The code as it applies to Northfleet Hope Container Terminal Code almost finished and approved by PLA Pilots Operational and Advisory Panel, however, it has been challenged by a ship owner so therefore we are going to run a simulation process with them. Once all is agreed, publication can take place.

We are reviewing the approach to the allocation of tugs to tankers. This is now reaching the stage where it can be presented to Pilotage Operational Advisory Panel.

JP stated the new tug allocation tables will be a separate document from the Code of Practice for Safe Operations for Ship Towage. RL, T&GWU queried whether tugmasters would be consulted on tug allocation changes and emphasised the value of Tug Masters being involved in simulator exercises with Pilots.

**ACTION: RS**

JP showed the committee the Guide to Bridges. This is a very high quality guide with detailed data. It can be used by any craft navigating bridges to improve safety and assist in passage planning.

JP thanked all who contributed to the Guide and asked for feedback. The charge will be £21.50 + P&P and can be purchased over phone by credit card or via order form and cheque.

AH asked if bridge silhouettes would be in the new Byelaws. JP stated they will not be included, nor will the Colregs or lights. The new Byelaws is a much smaller book.

#### ii. Port Security and ISPS Code

ISPS level remains at level 1. No change to UK Ports threat level.

Security regarding the Olympics has moved up a gear. Lot happening at government and agency level.

ISPS – New Port Security Regulations 2009 came into effect on 1<sup>st</sup> September. The regulations are now finally incorporated into UK law. A new Port Security Authority for the Thames could be in place by April next year.

#### iii. Environmental Matters

DG commented that 'Natural England' is looking at creating a conservation area in Lower Thames in the Margate Sands area. Fishermen have concerns because it is a very large area.

#### iv. General

RS discussed trade – projection for end of year is under 50 million tonnes – not lot changed since the last meeting.

Personnel movements – Jeremy Smith retired. He will be missed by all for his leadership of the PLA London Gateway team. His role as Director of Engineering and Technical Services does not exist anymore with a lot of his work being taken on by other senior Managers, the majority by Peter Steen who is now Director of Marine Operations as well as his existing responsibility for Pilotage.

New launch 'Lambeth' – trials have shown that craft is a good boat, seaworthy and much more fuel efficient than her predecessors and well suited for her role as lower district harbour launch. Lambeth has still to prove that she is suitable to undertake Pilotage cutters duties trials are still continuing.

5. **Navigational Safety and Consultancy Matters**

i. **River Incidents**

24/07/09	BRO SINCERO	Bro Sincero sailed CTN3 head down on ebb tide with tug CASTLE POINT fast on starboard quarter. Berthing pilot had agreed unberthing plan and the master was advised of the strong ebb tide flowing at the time. Master was to back the ship off the berth using azipod drive and bow thruster. The tug, whilst fast, was to standby until clear of berth and inline of CTN4. However, the Master on clearing the berth, immediately thrust to starboard and the vessel set down on to the upper dolphin. Full engine power was used to clear the dolphin with the tug running alongside the vessel.
28/07/09	CLEMENTINE	CLEMENTINE sailed PDWLW at LW to proceed outward bound. Vessel cleared berth but did not angle herself sufficiently and the vessel kept close up to CM, the northern pier of Dartford bridge and Vopak berths passing within 70 metres. Whilst speed of the vessel was low (in the order of 7 to 8 knots) the draw off effect passing vessels on the berths caused them to range. The AASNES on CM parted a mooring line and the shore gangway was damaged. Error was on his part and largely due to his misjudgement of tidal effects and wind strength leaving berth.
06/08/09	JET SKI A	Essex Police attended Benfleet slipway Ferry road following a call from Benfleet Y/C of PWC causing a nuisance in the creek. Police spoke to the owner who admitted he was a driver of van and had launched three PWCs from slipway. The owner was informed

		he would be reported for illegally launching PWCs from Slipway. Formal warning was issued. This incident has highlighted the fact, it is not a byelaw offence to launch and recover a PWC from a non authorised site.
06/08/09	JET SKI B	Essex Police attended Benfleet slipway ferry creek following a call from Benfleet Y/C about PWCs causing a nuisance in the creek. Police spoke to The owner who admitted under questioning that he was the owner of a van and that he had launched 2 PWCs from the slipway.
06/08/09	MARCO POLO	MARCO POLO inward bound between Oaze and West Oaze was running along buoy line close to the 10 metre contour line and 9.7 metre patch when the vessel sheered to ort towards the inward bound bulk carrier SEA BOSS. SEA BOSS altered course to create more sea room between vessels and allow time for the MARCO POLO to regain control. MARCO POLO was travelling at 18 knots through the water with 3 hours ebb height of tide at Southend 2.5m.
07/08/09	STEN HIDRA	STEN HIDRA swung off Vopak 2 on flood tide and made approach to go alongside Vopak 1. Master was handling slip to pilots advice. Approached berth at too steep an angle. Vessel speed in the order of 2 knots. Whilst an attempt was made to control angle of approach and speed vessel landed heavily on jetty causing damage upstream fendering. No damage to ship reported.
08/08/09	FAIRBREEZE	Motor cruiser FAIRBREEZE anchored in the Oaze Precautionary Area midway between Oaze and West Oaze buoys and in the main channel. Craft was anchored for an hour with persons in the water

		swimming. HSL dispatched to intercept and move craft out of the channel .
21/08/09	PEMBROKE FISHER	PEMBROKE FISHER outward bound in Northfleet Hope needed to take a round turn to avoid a close quarters situation due to congestion with various vessels manoeuvring in the Reach. CFL PROMISE swinging for TGTI having passed wide of the JORK RANGER waiting for Tilbury Lock to clear of NHCTL and SAND FULMAR approaching Halls Northfleet, ID INTEGRITY inward bound approaching Tilburyness. VTS records reviewed, pilot and master of the Pembroke Fisher felt the best course of action was to turn the vessel in Northfleet Hope due to the number of vessel movements in the reach and not being able to see a clear path through them
26/09/09	CLEMENTINE	Outward bound CLEMENTINE overtook the GRANDE BRASILE rounding the ovens despite GRANDE BRASILE pilot refusing permission, due to inbound traffic in the Lower Hope.
15/10/09	MSC MIRA	Serpentine outward bound in Sea Reach channel overtook outbound container vessel MSC Mira on the north side of channel between SR3 and SR1. On clearing the MSC Mira the Serpentine out across the bow of the containership with less than a ships length between the vessels and passed south of SR1.
22/10/09	MARK PRIOR	Erratic navigation by Mark Prior whilst inward bound for Brewery Wharf. Mark Prior went between tanker and mid blyth buoys, did not respond to warning calls from VTS and then crossed over to the north side of the channel and closed Shellhaven A again VTS had to call again before Mark Prior altered course so clearing the berth.

Incidents involving the launch of PWCs in areas where PLA signage states that launching is prohibited have brought into question whether an offence has been committed. This has prompted the PLA to look at its byelaws.

RS stated that there have been a couple of incidents with ferries. The first in Gravesend Reach involving the overtaking of an outbound containership when despite being asked by the pilot not to do did continue to overtake the containership. RS reported this incident to the ferry company who in turn took their own internal investigation and action.

A couple of months later a similar incident in Sea Reach: an outbound containership was asked if it could be overtaken by a ferry between SR3 and SR2 but then cut very close across the bow of the containership to go to the south of SR1. Obviously this was a very dangerous manoeuvre and the Masters PEC was suspended whilst the incident was investigated. The Master was required to be re-assessed by an assessing pilot before his PEC was re-instated.

RO commented that the Masters of ferries are confident in their abilities of what they can do but may push the parameters a little too far on the river. RO had experienced an incident where there appeared to be a language problem. RL agreed with this and stated that there seems to be a change of people driving them. RS stated there are different nationalities.

Worries were tabled concerning the use of tugs by PEC holders and the requirement for their training. The requirements of the new PEC regime were explained, but it was felt that there was a gap in the system for current PEC holders. Svitzer suggested a crib card for use when employing tugs. It was agreed that a meeting would be set up between the operators and PLA to decide the way ahead.

**ACTION: RS**

ii **Inland Waterways**

Nothing to report.

iii **Olympic Update**

JP advised that a Maritime Safety forum has been convened to cover Weymouth & Thames. This will demonstrate to the Government and give them reassurance that maritime safety is being managed appropriately. Police are focussed on security and PLA focussed on navigational safety.

MG asked for an update on cruise ship berths. RS said there are thoughts of berthing a cruise ship at Northfleet Terminal. JP stated there needs to be appropriate security for this. Tilbury still looking at up to 5 passenger vessels. Depending on Transec's approval of security arrangements, Transec has stated they will not be regarded as floating hotels.

DA commented on cargo aspects. Bennetts are running a weekly service in and out with containers, primarily for Veolia for waste and recycling away from the site. Talking to suppliers regarding fitting out materials and how the containers will be delivered to and from the site. The Wharf is fully operational with own crane and there is now a need to generate traffic in and out of there. A visit by the Queen to the site took place recently.

## 6. Other Updates

- i. MCA – no updates.
- ii. Environment Agency – no updates.
- iii. RNLI (ID)

ID reported it has been RNLI's busiest year so far. He also discussed the need to ensure RNLI rescue statistics do not give an impression that navigational safety is being questioned. He stated that it had now been agreed within RNLI that Thames managers will review what is put out and to give PLA prior siting.

- iv. Police (Joint Marine Unit)

GJ stated that there are two Police forces covering the PLA area. From the QE2 Bridge upwards is the Met Police and from the QE2 Bridge down it is the Joint Marine Unit which is an amalgamation of the Kent and Essex Marine Policing assets.

Met Police

PW stated that the Olympics are a key driver for activity. Working groups have been set up to focus on and address marine security. The Met have been asked to come up with a plan for Olympics by May next year. One key area is how to implement measures around small, private craft on the Thames during the Olympics.

GJ emphasised the importance of neighbourhood policing and showed a poster, similar to that of Project Kraken asking people to be vigilant, especially with the run up to the Olympics.

Discussion took place about the staffing quality of Police control rooms for incident reporting calls. The issue was raised in relation to common language between these control rooms and VTS for example.

GJ stated that Airwave is a secure radio communications channel being used by police and emergency services. The radio channel will work on specialist handsets by the services and can be used for joint operations. With lead up to Olympics, joint operations for all relevant agencies on the water is the way forward for the UK Government and

to that end the Police will be assisting the PLA with a joint enforcement operation shortly.

JW discussed PWCs being launched illegally in the Canvey area. EA has now acknowledged that one of the causeways is theirs and have blocked it with sand bags. The other is council owned.

DG questioned if there are any permanent staff at Two Tree Island as anyone can launch from there and this should be looked at.

## **7. River Events**

6th November 1930hrs	Fireworks Gravesend
7 <sup>th</sup> November 2000hrs	Fireworks Southend
12th November	Public Meeting Canvey
14th November 1730hrs	Fireworks Southend
17th November	Public Meeting Gravesend

## **8. River Works**

i. London Gateway construction There was discussion of press reports that funding is being sought from European Investment Bank for dredging work. RS reported that the project is on hold awaiting full reassessment of the project.

ii Belvedere Waste & Crossrail - RS stated that Belvedere Waste is nearing completion. Meeting will be taking place regarding delivery of 150 tonne turbine to the site, but all going to plan.

Crossrail – no news other than spoil going to Wallasea Island to form a wetlands site for birds and looking to start at front end next year.

iii Marina developments — Greenhithe Marina plan has been turned down on appeal by Dartford Council. The developers have been looking at other possible sites for the access to get over the objections by Dartford Council which was mainly one of transport and parking. Rainham – potential for a development which is being promoted by the local authority. A number of consultants have been asked to tender for work.

iv Wind Generation, riverside locations - RS summarised current developments. Kentish Flats – operational and reliable. Gunfleet still being constructed but is online and generating electricity. Thanet – under construction. Greater Gabbard – OK. London Array – due to start construction in March 2011.

It has been noted by the Crown Estate that the gap between round 2 and round 3 windfarms will be too great: causing an employment problem in wind turbine factories. The plan is to

have a 'Round two and a half' which in effect, will be extensions to round 1 and round 2 windfarm sites.

PLA have been approached already for first initial consultation on extending Kentish Flats, Gunfleet, Greater Gabbard and Thanet windfarm sites. If goes ahead Crown Estate said that any additional development must be proportionate. In ten years, there could be more than 1000 wind turbines in the Thames Estuary.

- i. Town Pier Gravesend – Application for planning permission for a pontoon at the end of Town Pier. Responses due end November.
- vi. Lower Thames Crossings – Nothing to report.
- vii. Newbridge Causeway – Just finished refit and new piles.

## **9. Any Other Business**

DB reported they have a new tug 'Milgarth' and will get another in new year. Improved access to website has been facilitated.

DG asked re. Britned Cable - delayed. End November there will be a pre-lay Grapnel run out to Princes and will lay that section. It will now be laid by cable ship now so quicker. A Notice to Mariners will be published.

RL raised concerns about handling of ropes for vessels entering Tilbury Lock. RS to speak to HM Tilbury.

**ACTION:RS**

RL asked about the Towage liaison committee set up in 2007 which John Sheridan chairs. RL feels there needs to be a wider spread of pilots, skippers etc. DB – Svitzer to wider distribution.

**ACTION: Pilots /Svitzer**

## **10. Time/Date of Next Meeting**

7<sup>th</sup> May 2010 - 1030hrs – London River House