

Notes of River Users Consultative Forum (Lower) Meeting
8th May 2009

Present:-

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| Captain Roy Stanbrook | RS | HM(L) - PLA |
| Captain Chris McQueen | CM | DHM(L) – PLA |
| Captain Julian Parkes | JP | HM(SMS) - PLA |
| Mark Towens | MT | DHM(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 |

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| Michael Shefras | MS | Assoc of Thames Y/C/RYA |
| David Brown | DB | Svitzer |
| John Skellorn | JS | RYA (SE Region) |
| Ian Dunkley | ID | RNLI (Gravesend) |
| Paul Rawson | PR | Essex Police Marine Unit |
| Phil Welch | PW | Met Police MPU |
| Daryl Godbold | DG | FSA |
| Peter H Smith | PHS | ARA |
| Richard Exley | RE | HM Port of Tilbury |

Meeting opened at 1035

1. Apologies

R Barker, Trinity House. K Harris, PLA. D Chard, London Ship Owners & River Users Society. D Bell, Svitzer. J Goddard, TEP. R Lukes, T&GWU. S Stricken, AC Bennett. A Hurrell, Watermen & Lightermen.

2. Minutes of River Users Consultative Forum Meeting 7th November 2008

iv. Access points. JP stated that the review has now been finished and formulated for whole area. This has been presented to the Emergency Services. JP updated list. Richard Lukes had commented that access points are difficult to be recognised. If any issues with access points, then this is down to emergency services, as it is their access to these landing sites that is crucial. Ultimately, they are the main drivers, but please inform us. This is an annex to the existing PLA plans It is now on the Intranet and will make it available as a separate document and covers Teddington to outer limits. CM, said sites in the lower district had also been reviewed by Lower Thames Critical Incident forum.

li. Inland Waterways national – grant – funding. Ian Dunkley has not followed up, but the funding is available.

JP commented on British Waterways – Olympics. British Waterways have delegated to us the responsibility for navigation from 1st June above Bow Creek, beyond our normal limits - A13 Bridge to Three Milns Lock. A Notice to Mariners went out regarding rules for navigation in that area and remain in place until January 2013. PLA will regulate traffic. Woolwich will be overseeing the traffic in that area.

Petrol facility – RNLI is now operational, Essex Police has not taken up offer to use facility.

RNLI / PLA joint presentation to Thurrock Yacht Club still to be arranged.

Action HML/ID

River works – fair record.

4. PLA Sitrep

i. Safety Management System

JP – Hazards to Safety Navigation list. Two new hazards have been added to the list in recent months. i) Operation of High Speed craft in the upper district ii) Hazards in Sunk area has now been re-incorporated following cessation of Sunk VTS. We consulted last summer on the proposed new Thames Byelaws 2009 which will replace the existing River Byelaws, the consultation went very well and 55 responses had been received and reviewed, with changes being incorporated in the byelaws. The byelaws will go to PLA Board for approval. Following this, the next stage of the process will be for the byelaws to go to Dft and the formal part of the consultation process, which can take a long time. The Byelaws are advertised for a month in local maritime and journals to seek any further comments.

Once consultation process is complete the Byelaws are confirmed by the Secretary of State and be made into law and should be in place by end of year or beginning of next year, depending on length of the consultation process.

One of the main issues being addressed through the Byelaws is the establishment of 12 knot speed limit through Central London due to increased usage and congestion i.e. commuter/passenger services. The bulk of the byelaws has not changed, but there are a lot of amendments to Colregs.

(Richard Exley – Port of Tilbury, joined the meeting 1055hrs)

RE asked whether changes would impact on Tilbury and their byelaws as Tilbury took the Byelaws from PLA 1991 Act. JP believes that as

Tilbury have their own Byelaws within the docks the new Thames Byelaws will not apply within Tilbury Dock.

JP discussed the 3 yearly review of General Directions. A number of changes have been proposed. We have had consultation feedback and will shortly be publishing our response to that, showing comments. Formal approval is then needed from the Chamber of Shipping, and the PLA Board for approval – September should be done.

JP – also under review is the Pilotage Directions which will be going to consultation within the new few months, no big changes are anticipated. Regs of PEC's will possibly change regarding certification requirements.

RS is in the process of reviewing the Ship Towage Code. RS stated that it has become apparent that the cost of towage in Thames is perceived to be high due to the number of tugs required normally by the code and for non-standard seamanship manoeuvres such as due to berthing ships stern to tide by certain operators. As a result the science behind tug allocation tables is being inspected in more detail on a berth by berth basis. We now have a project team working on it. It is a very extensive review.

JP stated we continue to work closely with London Gateway Port – on their safety management system which will dovetail with PLA safety Management system.

Portwide Notice to Mariner 10 of 2009 on publication of new PLA A2 charts has been issued. They are digital charts in paper form, there are 3 folios and will be published by end of the year, the first available shortly. There will be a charge for them, but feel it is an important step to enhancing safety. The cost is £45 per folio which consists of 10 – 11 charts in each folio. Plus annual charge for amendments which will be sent electronically through Hydrographic department.

Also, Mark Towns has been working with Hydrographic in concluding work for the Bridges Guide for Navigators. It is in A4 landscape format. It is a reference and practical guide and this will be announced within the next 2 months.

Action: MT

JP discussed the new Personal Watercraft Guide for the Thames Estuary and is due to be published shortly – fits in with proposed new byelaws. PWCs will be allowed on the river to Margaretness subject to them being registered with HM and having third party insurance etc. The red dots on the guide indicate authorised launch spots. David Brown noticed that Minster, Isle of Sheppey is not in the Guide!

Action: MT to check why Isle of Sheppey launch site is not in the guide.

MT showed the 'new Recreational Users Guide'. This has been put in map format, as opposed to chart so very user friendly. Will be in a plastic wallet so semi-waterproof. Geographical incorporated the comments from the Recreational User Guide. (sample proof was passed around the table) There are contact details of the various marinas and have broken into different parts of the river. Hope to be out within next few weeks. A Notice to Mariners will be distributed to inform people of this. There will be no charge.

RS asked if anyone would be in contact with the local teams from Yachting magazines and if so, could this be brought to their attention. JP suggested this be reviewed annually – any comments or suggested changes would be appreciated before final print.

Michael Shefras entered into a discussion regarding people coming upriver looking for places to stay. RS stated that as a result of this we have looked at local yacht clubs such as Thurrock that have got visitors moorings are being put on the Guide now. JP has been raising this concern at various meetings and it has been recognised. RS is working with Gravesend Sailing Club to provide additional mooring provision, JP – Richard Everitt has acknowledged and it boils down to money but PLA are actively looking into it.

ii. Port Security and ISPS Code

ISPS level remains at level 1. No change to Maritime UK Ports threat level. Port Security Directive – Transecs desire to have the Directive incorporated into UK law – we are now looking at July before its made to law, Transec will then go to consultation on a separate designation order. Port Security will change structure and remits on what will be the requirements of the Directive, but not anticipated until early part of next year.

iii. Environmental Matters

Katherine Harris was unable to attend the meeting, but asked that the introduction of the new PWC leaflet be discussed, which has been covered earlier in the meeting.

iv. General

RS discussed the current downturn in trade of the world and how it has had an effect on many, including the PLA. E.g. Containerships are being laid up and has affected port trade. We are looking at 17-18% downturn, although we still have a baseline trade that will keep us going, but to meet this downturn we have to be careful with our own finances and we are undertaking to reduce costs. There are various discussions going on which need a great deal of consultation.

Richard Carr – Pilotage Manager has now retired and Peter Steen has taken over that role. Geoff Buckby has taken over from Peter as Marine Services Manager and now looking to appoint a Deputy MSM at Denton. Rod Own our Pilot did comment that we are not as bad as other ports as we do have a broad portfolio.

5. Navigational Safety and Consultancy Matters

i. River Incidents

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| 09/11/08 | FALCON | Falcon outward bound off mid-Blyth. Engine had stopped and requested tug assistance. VTS contacted Coryton dock office and requested a Targe tug to attend. Main engine was restored. Pilot reported main engine had shut down due to lack of oil pressure. |
| 16/11/08 | PAULINE | Wash complaint received from Pauline alongside Purfleet Deep Water Middle. Vessel drawn off the berth as the STONES passed by resulting in the ships loading ramp damaging the railing on the RoRo pontoon. |
| 02/12/08 | ISARTAL | Isartal dragged anchor in Higham Bight after swinging on the tide. Vessel was informed of this by LVTS and advised to put more cable out. River Pilot dispatched. Vessel grounded on the south shore. Svitzer tug assisted in refloating the ship. Vessel aground for 25 minutes. No damage reported. |
| 06/12/08 | SAPPHIRE | Main engine lost power due to cylinder head failure during the swing for Vopak 2 and vessel set down onto lower dolphin. The flair of the bow made contact with the lower dolphin and damaged the berth navigation light structure. Tug assistance sought and MERCIA and ANGLIA towed the vessel to St Clements for repairs. |
| 10/02/09 | TRANS ALINA | TRANS ALINA suffered steering gear failure whilst approaching Fords. The vessel was in hand steering and was being steered by the pilot from the centre console. |

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| | | Pilot then requested the steering control to be transferred to the starboard console. This was done and it was at this point that the pilot noted that the vessel was swinging to starboard towards the SYMPHORINE. Changing back to centre console control the steering was re-established. The vessel passed very close to the SYMPHORINE. |
| 13/02/09 | ORASTAR | While the ORASTAR at Erith Oil works was being loaded with refined rape seed oil into number 2 starboard tank, the tank overflowed and approx 500 litres , of which between 250 to 300 litres went into the river. Loading was stopped and clean up onboard ship was started. TOSCA was tasked to attend but stood down in favour of HSL. Birds and fish cleared all. MCA & EA informed. |
| 03/04/09 | CLEMENTINE | A near miss incident. The STOLT KITE had cleared CTN1 to proceed outward bound keeping to the north side of the channel to pass the TRANS EXETER outward bound off Coryton. There were two inward bound vessels SIGAS CENTURION heading for CTN1 with the CLEMENTINE overtaking to the south approaching Calor. STOLT KITE ended up passing very close between SIGAS CENTURION and the CLEMENTINE. |
| 25/01/09 | CELENDINE | Dragged anchor in Z5 anchorage in high wind conditions and change of tide direction and grounded on the Shoebury flats. Vessel was refloated with tug assistance with no apparent damage. |

ii **Inland Waterways – national standards**

Dredging above Three Milns lock should be finished soon. Defra provided 2 million for infrastructure above Richmond Lock.

JP discussed Boatmen's Licence, PLA advised by MCA there would be changes, but nothing has materialised, RS stated that Jim Spooner will be giving an update shortly. JP said that on the vessel licensing latest MCA – 2010 before technical constructional side brought into law, but in the meantime the PLA will continue to license vessels within the port.

iii **Olympic Update**

A lot of interest is being shown in bringing cruise ships to be used as accommodation for visitors and people working on the site. RE had also been approached but on Tilbury's own initiative, had canvassed and had received serious enquiries regarding 5 – 6 cruise ships to be used as floating hotels based within the dock. June 11th there will be a big meeting in cruise terminal involving Transec to iron out security problems. Aware that this will be the 'Green Olympics' – so promoting the use of the trains from Tilbury town railway station so as not to use the A13. All coming together but will not using landing stage.

JP – meeting with Home Office who have taken over the management and co-ordination of the safety and security of Olympics, although all was fine, MCA has been asked by DfT to chair a recent meeting to look at Maritime Safety at London and Weymouth. It is anticipated there will be a large number of events taking place on the river as well as additional transportation and use of the river – will update in due course.

6. **Other Updates**

i. **RNLI (ID)**

ID stated that they are now operating the new 'Atlantic 85' very successfully. The new boat is slightly less capable to get inshore, but faster! Atlantic 85 attended the incident regarding 'Muddy Waters' off the groynes close to Tilbury Power Station which resulted in a successful rescue. Four people would have drowned if a power station worker hadn't called for the Coastguard. RNLI, were there within 6 minutes. One person was still in a sleeping bag. Lessons learned regarding life jackets. It was confirmed that the boat hit one of the groynes. RNLI have had a busy first quarter with incidents. One incident was found to be a serious hoax, which involved other agencies in the search, Police are carrying out a criminal investigation into the incident.

Airwave radios are now fitted to lifeboats, protocol are still being worked with Police. JP stated that PLA will be getting airwave radio which will be fitted to harbour service craft.

Lifeboats have been involved with MET Police with regard to the recent 'Tamil Tigers' demonstration on Westminster Bridge.

ii, Met Police

Phil Welch reported on the G20 – no intelligence. Demonstrations quite heated but all okay. The state of the economy has hit the Met also, everything is under review – dogs, horses, the upshot being it will be unlikely to be additional new resources for Olympics and will have to use what they already have. However they do have two new delta ribs. Thames Counter Terrorism Partnership – changes taking place to partnership and project work. Met is reviewing the need for own afloat officers to obtain generic BML qualification as part wider review by APCO of MCA boat codes

iii, Kent & Essex Police.

Paul Rawson – Kent Police reported that they will be running training courses on ribs with RN training as part of operation Badge. Kent are also feeling the pressures financially so additional resources expected. Change in structure of marine unit is expected to result in a dedicated Thames Unit. Which is expected to be manned round the clock during the Olympics by Essex and Kent.

PR then went on to discuss a new idea for crime prevention due to increase of theft of outboard engines. Essex Police are producing outboard covers/bags with the Police sign on. The owner of the engine removes the existing cowling from the engine which stored securely elsewhere and replaced with the police plastic version when engine is not in use. The engine if stolen the thief would then need to obtain replacement cowling which are expensive and only available from outboard engine dealers.

The cost of bags are £11 for 20hp, £14 for 50hp, £17 for 90hp. This will be advertised in clubs.

Covers are available through Marine Watch website, local clubs and Burnham Police. ID stated that it would be good to have them for this side of the river. This was thought a very good idea by all.

Iv, Tilbury

RE – staying for another year. New Wave, the outsource company who operate the lock contract is being renewed for another 3 years. Review of Safety management system is to be carried out looking at all operations, One minor incident on Grain terminal, resulting in some contact damage but nothing more. Lot more barge traffic is expected to start shortly running to Tilbury with Green Barge company and Cory's starting new berths in summer. Tilbury will be looking for temporary mooring sites for barges waiting outside, Tilbury Lock being investigated. Fast ferry Speed One which was under arrest has been released by the Admiralty Marshall. Two jack-up rigs in the dock will shortly leave to take up work at Shellhaven. Financially December was a good month for Tilbury but the company is actively trying to save

cash where it can. Diving survey of lock gates to be undertaken shortly
Options are being investigated with a view to replacing lock gates.

Tilbury Landing stage – Prices has been obtained for interim refurbishment of TLS which has Grade 2 listed status Tilbury are looking at options for a full refurbishment of the landing stage and wider use of the stage for vessels other than cruise vessels including expansion of the upper Ro Ro berth to take larger car carriers. P&O which is running a successful service from within the dock are looking for a riverside berth and are interested plans for lower Ro Ro berth on the landing stage

7. River Events

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| 24 th May | Pre-season Scratch Race |
| 25 th May | Southend Airshow |
| 31 st May | Erith Race (Ladies) |
| 6 th &7 th June | Gravesend Town Regatta |
| 13 th June | 79 th Thames Sailing Barge Match |
| 3 rd July | Junior Regatta |
| 4 th July | Gravesend Summer Regatta |
| 5 th July | Dartford Bridge Race |
| 7 th July | Lower Thames Challenge |
| 12 th July | East Blyth Estuary Race |
| 20 th September | 20 th All Champions Race |

ID asked whether Allhallows Power Boat race at Gravesend would be taking place this year. RS reported heard nothing as yet, it was thought not likely.

8. River Works

i. London Gateway construction, work has started on new oil jetty, but work is proceeding very slowly. The second part is the construction of bunds for the container terminal. Rod Owen commented lights on construction barge off Shellhaven are still very poor. Tidal Works Application 2 still to be approved work on going, LGP local management awaiting decision and outcome of strategic business from parent company on whether project will proceed according to plan. Tense time for us all, still keen.

JP working with LGP on their safety management system. As commented in PLA Sitrep.

ii. Monitoring buoys now appearing are ‘red-line-monitoring’ buoys Which will be used to measure increase in marine turbidity in the water column. If the water quality deteriorates beyond set agreed limits, dredging will be stopped.

Daryl G has volunteered to be fisheries liaison officer for the fishing community with London Gateway Works. He produced diagrams outlining dredging sites, works for use by fishermen and recreational users. Diagrams will be updated regularly together with dredgers position and names.

People becoming aware of changes are encouraged report changes. Any info from Dubai Ports will pass onto Roy. Mr Marcus Pearson would like to attend meetings. RS thanked Mr Godbold.

- iii. Belvedere – jetty moving on at a pace! Completion due approx 18 months. Cross Rail – wish to take waste from CR to Wallasea Island Crouch.
- iv. Marina developments— Greenhithe Marina failed to get planning permission due to parking. Plan has been re-submitted to Local Authority for consideration. Covingtons jetty – Rainham Waste Site – proposal as a result of promise of money from Veolia to fund waterside development – need approval. Proposals grasped by Rainham Councillor. Did drawings – all berths across the tide! Need a proper view of how to achieve. Adventure centre ideas for the site – good idea.
- v. Wind Farms... 4 generators approved – by end of next year.
- vi. Canvey LNG... RS spoken to partners – still keen for LNG facility – go through risk assessment.
- vii. Northfleet jetty – all quiet.
- viii. Lower Thames Crossings – Next generation – three possible sites being considered. 1) Broadness, ii) Gravesend East Tilbury iii) Hoo Peninsula – Canvey direction. 2 western bridges preferred. 1 eastern – tunnel preferred.

9. Any Other Business

Daryl G – new SPA – conservation area sand banks – next meeting – marine conservation, seabed Beachy Head.

JW – Barge traffic in Holehaven Creek is on hold because of economic conditions are thought to have made the operation unviable at this time. CM commented in light that no barge traffic is moving in the creek RSPB's plan to monitor effects on the birds in the creek of barge traffic needs to be reviewed with Veolia

Woolwich ferries. Reduced number of ferries available for service as they are being dry-docked one at a time .

10. Time/Date of Next Meeting

Friday 6th November 2009 @ 1030 LRH.