

PLA RIVER USERS CONSULTATIVE FORUM (UPPER)

NOTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT BAKERS' HALL ON TUESDAY 10TH NOVEMBER, 2009

PRESENT

David Phillips (DP)	Harbour Master (Upper)
Julian Parkes (JP)	Harbour Master (SMS)
Terry Lawrence (TL)	Deputy Harbour Master (Upper)
Steve Rushbrook (SR)	Deputy Harbour Master (Upper)
Alex Brown (AB)	River Manager (Putney/Teddington)
Martin Garside (MG)	Corporate Affairs Manger
Sandra West (SW)	Assistant to HM (Upper)
Neil Caborn (NC)	RAFT
Chris Livett (CL)	Thames Luxury Charters & PBA
Janet Kelly (JK)	RNLI Tower Lifeboat Station
Steve Davies (SD)	RYA North-Kent Region
Colin Woodward (CW)	Environment Agency Sports & Recreation
Derek Mann (DM)	Thames Clippers
Larry Holyoake (LH)	London Fire Brigade
Paul Wilson (PW)	City Cruises
Adrian Bates (ABa)	MCA
Chas Newens (CN)	Company of Watermen & Lightermen
Sean Collins (SC)	Thames Clippers
Michael Shefras (MS)	Association of Thames Yacht Clubs
Andy Griffiths (AG)	London River Services
Christine Connolly (CC)	London Port Health Authority
Phil Wilkinson (PW _i)	London Home & Water Safety Council
Edward Langley (EL)	Complete Pleasure Boats

David Phillips advised the meeting of David Foster's departure and his taking over as Harbour Master (Upper). He also introduced Steve Rushbrook as the new Deputy Harbour Master (Upper).

1. Apologies for Absence

Alex Hickman, T&GWU
Roger Flitter, PBA – represented by Chris Livett
Russell Robson, EA – represented by Colin Woodward
Katherine Harris, PLA
Andy Roberts, City Cruises
Colin Middlemiss, Company of Watermen & Lightermen – represented by
Chas Newens
David White, London Coastguard – represented by Adrian Bates
Gary Davies, London Home & Water Safety Council – represented by
Phil Wilkinson
Kevin East, British Canoe Union
Rod Shaw, MCA
Bryan Hopkins, MCA
Peter Finch, River Thames Society

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 21st May, 2009 were held to be a true record.

3. Matters Arising from Previous Minutes

DP noted there were two action notes from the last meeting. Firstly the change in presentation of the incidents figures – see item 7 and the information for the Marchioness anniversary which took place in August.

4. PLA

(i) Regulatory Update

(a) SMS & Port Security

- Thames Byelaws 2009 – passed by PLA Board and with DforT who are currently holding internal informal government consultation. This will perhaps be completed in the New Year and will then be taken forward by the Secretary of State. The Byelaws should be published by the middle of 2010.
- Pilotage Directions – may have second consultation to reflect further changes – in New Year.
- PLA to raise Harbour Revision Order to revise their powers. Informal consultation during December.
- Mariners Guide to Bridges on the Tidal Thames now available. It is designed for all users of the river. Will help with passage planning. Bridge silhouettes will not be in the new edition of the Byelaws.
- Revising Code of Practice for Ship Towage Operations on the Thames and reviewing the Code of Practice for Safe Mooring for Vessels on the Thames
- Mooring operations at Greenwich Ship Tier – PLA will be holding a Navigational Advisory Panel to establish a new approach to mooring on the tier
- JP advised that the Port Security threat level had not changed. PLA heavily involved in Olympic security matters.
- Richmond Lock charges are to be increased to £5.00 for daily return passage. This will be applicable to all vessels. Boat rollers can be used for rowing boats, etc.

(b) Marking Class V Sterns

General Direction 9 refers to marking of passenger vessel's stern in high visibility orange coating but for some time vessels have shown a white reflective material which does not show up in daytime. CL advised that the orange wore off too quickly and the white works well at night and in poor visibility; SC agreed. It was suggested that the reflective tape be continually lit. British Standard number would be good idea. Perhaps high visibility coating to be put on sterns of barges etc.

(c) Vessel Names

DP asked why names on vessels were becoming smaller. Reasons given was vessel design, due to size of craft, IMO lettering requirements too big sometimes. DP said this was causing problems when incidents occurred, names too small to be identified.

(ii) Rowing and Recreational Update

- a. Guides and Codes of Practice will be free; new Kayakers guide has been issued, possibly looking at making this more available. Personal Watercraft in the lower district have to be licensed with the PLA.
- b. Updated Rowing Code 2009 published with accompanying chart, TRRC are distributing to their members. Anti-wash signs are being used. Rowers are being reprimanded when AIS proves Class Vs have been in correct position following complaint. DP advised generic risk assessment for upper district will soon be available. PLA working on videos taken from different vessels to go on to the website showing view of vessel's passage. CN said rowing clubs used to have watermen to teach the members how to conduct themselves, AB said TRRC are now going to have exams. Steps are being taken to get PLA information into recreational magazines. MS advised 2010 AIWA Festival will take place next August Bank Holiday weekend at Pangbourne. Between 600-700 boats expected.

(iii) Corporate Update

- Public meetings continuing, hope to extend to recreational public
- Marchioness anniversary took place
- Tidal Thames journal being published, three issues a year.

5. Passenger Boat Association – Great River Race Issues

A lot of problems and expense to Class V operators was caused by the Great River Race being run in the opposite direction and PBA needs to mediate with GRR to discuss ramifications. DP would like both parties to come back to PLA with results of said meeting as the race would need to be run in the same direction next year. DP also said the race is actually safer being run upriver rather than down but it requires bigger input of PLA resources. Next year the Thames Festival would like the race run to coincide with the festival weekend – 11/12th September - if that works it would be a spectacular event for London. Possibility of an early meeting with Mayor of London to discuss. Possible start at Millwall slip at 1315 – Tower Pier at 1420. PW asked whether the race could be changed to the south side – possible point of discussion between PBA/GRR.

JK advised the RNLI had video footage of the dragon boats during the race, certain type of dragon boat seems to have problems – to be looked at. JK asked whether the safety boats could cope – numbers as agreed by risk assessment, but PLA looking at ways of improving safety.

6. MCA District Safety

No report available

7. Navigational Safety - Incidents

Incident numbers for the year are up but it may be more incidents are being reported and activity on the river is going to increase. Most categories were average but three Class V's speeding and two Class Vs bridge strikes during the year. No conclusions why August was bad. Significant incident at Richmond. Maybe licensing of recreational vessels would help and the nature of the harbour service we run in that area could change.

There was also an incident between a passenger boat and cutter in central London – both these parties will receive draft reports next week – we need to reduce likelihood of this happening again. SD would like the type of vessel to be shown in the statistics, i.e. recreational or commercial and the “contact” incidents will in future show what the contact was with, e.g. bridge, buoy etc.

The drunken master incident – breath testing is to be revised but PLA can only tell master to stop navigating if the test is positive. PLA are looking at their own processes, both sides need to be breathalysed and more formal closure and feedback required. The PLA write a report and send drafts to both parties, the way the MAIB does, and a new reporting system will assist.

8. Other Updates

- (i) Police – there was no representative from Marine Policing Unit attending – DP to write requesting attendance
- (ii) RNLI – first line responders for injuries and illness – SC thanked RNLI for quick response during recent incident also DP thanked them, and fire and police for assistance during recent incident at Hammersmith Bridge. New boat in April, few wash problems, now seem resolved. London Coastguard – MCA is working under restricted action still. New Chief Executive soon but CE leaving may try and get this matter settled before he goes.
Airwave – limited service
Riverside CCTV
Critical Incident Forums running well.
Major exercise next year, May 6th, to be held just below Tower Bridge. SAR and partial evacuation, will be looking to the PBA for a vessel.
634 incidents to end of October, Class V incidents very few.
- (iii) LRS – Passenger numbers up 10%, incidents down.
2012 Olympics - Planning continues with ODA re Greenwich Pier and O², based on existing timetables with enhancements downstream in the mornings.
Progressing plans for extension of Tower Pier and roof on Greenwich Pier pontoon, subject to a financial contribution from ODA.
Continuing to monitor passenger boat operators mooring is compliant with the recently issued Code of Practice

Woolwich Ferry – ongoing problems. Oil leak from a propulsion unit, hope to have two boats back in service shortly. Five year surveys taking place at a total cost of £3m. Staff reductions at Woolwich Ferry but should not affect the public. As far as future is concerned, with cancellation of Thames Gateway Bridge, LRS have looked at many ways of crossing the river, possibility of ferry at Gallions Reach.

- (iv) Fire – no information for the meeting on this occasion
- (v) EA – Spatial strategy for water-related recreation in the S.E. – a briefing note was handed out (copy attached). A number of workshops are going to be held in January, EA would like PLA to attend, also PBA. Brighton University, consultants for the strategy, to contact James Trimmer, PLA's Head of Planning & Partnerships. DP asked that HM(U) and HM(SMS) be included in contacts list.
- (vi) Port Health – nothing to report on this occasion

9. Future Events

5th September 2010 has been requested by the EA for the full day barrier closure next year, earlier than usual, PLA to discuss with EA.

10. River Works

- Thames Tunnel boreholes sampling to stop in December, hiatus within Thames Water. Hope to return in April but more likely June
- Thames Gateway Bridge now cancelled
- Prescott Lock now called Three Mills Lock. It is worth talking to Kim Milnes of British Waterways, who wants to get freight and other river traffic moving through the lock
- Tower & Southwark Bridges programme continues. Southwark Bridge will not start on centre arch until 2011 (arch 3), arch 2 will start next summer. Tower Bridge looking at working on walkways and keeping river open. They will speak to contractors working on Blackfriars and come back with method statement
- Thameslink/Blackfriars Rail Bridge work incredibly important to London, work has got to happen. It is being split into five sections, first ends December and second between December and June, information will be available at beginning of December. This will give PLA time to look at it and pass on to passenger boat owners – arch 3 only closed in winter. Looking at details of closure programme, trying to keep arches 2 and 3 open. Closing central arch 13th November to 5th December, open for two weeks until 21st December then closed again. Notice to Mariners being published. 60/70% of steel coming in by river, PLA putting in moorings, will be discussing with passenger boat owners.
- Barnes Rail Bridge given permission to do work to the entire bridge, must be fully open by Easter weekend
- Battersea Rail Bridge work starting next year, having to review their process, down to single arch either 2 or 3. Pass this on to people for advance notice.
- Waterloo Bridge reducing every arch by 1.3m January to February 2010 (7.3m above)

- Chiswick Bridge has similar project as Barnes Bridge, probably coming up next year.

11. Format and Nature of RUCF (Upper) in future

- River Works information to be written and sent out with agenda, which would give more time to discuss other matters
- Would like feedback as to how the meeting could be changed/improved or are the members happy that the meeting is to consult and make executive decisions.
- DP was thanked for PLA participation at PBA AGM.

12. Time/Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will take place on Tuesday 25th May, 2010 at 1030.