

PLA RIVER USERS CONSULTATIVE FORUM (UPPER)

NOTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT BAKERS' HALL ON TUESDAY 25TH MAY

PRESENT

David Phillips (DP)	Harbour Master Upper
Terry Lawrence	Deputy Harbour Master Upper 1
Steve Rushbrook	Deputy Harbour Master Upper 2
Mark Towens	Deputy Harbour Master Safety Management Systems
Alex Brown	Assistant Harbour Master Upper Richmond
Martin Garside	Corporate Affairs Manager
Sean Collins	Thames Clippers
Mark Thomson	Thames Clippers
Janet Kelly	RNLI
Adrian Bates	MCA Coastguard
Bryan Hopkins	MCA Coastguard
Rod Shaw	MCA London
Michael Shefras	ATYC RYA Thames Region
Peter Finch	River Thames Society
Steve Davies	RYA N. Kent
Colin Woodward	Water Recreation Environment Agency
Roger Flitter	Passenger Boat Association
Phil Wilkinson	London Home & Water Safety Council
Andy Roberts	City Cruises
C Thompson	Thames Rib Experience
Dean McGlinchey	Thames Rib Experience
Alan Clifford	London Duck Tours
Mark Brooks	Thames Executive Charters
Andy Griffiths	London River Services

APOLOGIES

Chas Newens	Newens Marine
Chris Livett	Livett's Launches
Larry Holyoake	LFB
Christine Connolly	Port Health
Inspector David Cottrell	MPU
Colin Middlemiss	CWL
Neil Caborn	Cory Environmental
David White	MCGA
Kevin East	BCU
Paul Wilson	City Cruises
Ed Langley	WPSA
Alex Hickman	T&GWU

1. Constitution of the RUCF
 - a. DP asked for suggestions from the floor as to how the RUCF could be reconstituted to allow for more feedback
 - b. No suggestions were made
 - c. DP will produce a terms of reference to act as a discussion starter
2. Minutes of Previous Meeting
 - a. Accepted
3. Regulatory Update

- a. Harbour Revision Order:
 - i. The three main aims of the above are as follows:
 - 1. The removal of obsolete sections of the act
 - 2. The clarification of unclear sections of the act
 - 3. Making it easier for the PLA to manage the river
 - ii. Formal consultation on the HRO closes 30th June
 - iii. As the HRO amendments are very broad in scope the PLA strongly urges commercial operators to review the "Explanation of Amendments" document and the copy of the Act to assess for themselves the possible effects on their operations
 - b. Byelaws
 - i. PLA believes a formal consultation from the Department for Transport (DforT) should happen in the next couple of months
 - ii. Making the document gender neutral and the election have both held this consultation up considerably
 - iii. Drinking and navigating byelaw for leisure users has proved difficult to get in as the hoped for update of R.A.T.S has not happened. A number of incidents recently have highlighted the need to toughen up on drinking on the river
 - iv. Over a year ago the DforT stated that it was planning on excluding vessels below 7m and incapable of more than 7 knots from a revised R.A.T.
 - c. Pilotage Directions
 - i. New directions will be going to N.M.T this month
 - ii. Vessels to the west of the Margaretness Limit of 40m or more in Length Overall, as the PLA may specify from time to time, may be granted a pilotage exemption subject to the requirements of the Harbourmaster, and for such period as the PLA may specify.
 - d. Publications
 - i. The Ship Towing and Safe Mooring Codes are in the final stages of review and will be published in the next few months. The updated 2010 Recreational Users Guide has now been produced and promulgated to leisure users.
 - e. Craft Towing Code
 - i. This is up for review in 2010. The recommendations from the recent MAIB report on the IJESLSTROOM and will be incorporated into the CofP as necessary.
 - f. BML
 - i. PLA has been involved in talks with the MCA following the recent consultation on the BML Revision. The PLA's position is that the LKE renewal should be via an examination process and not just revalidation on qualifying service time.
 - ii. From incident statistics it is clear that the LKE area from Margaretness to Putney is where the majority of incidents have occurred which further supports the need for examination on renewal and is the case for the PLA not making any amendments to the existing area limits
 - iii. The High Risk Specialist Endorsements (PAX, Fast Vessels, Towing etc) for the BML may be revalidated every five years based on qualifying service time and examination.
4. New Recreational Website www.boatingonthethames.co.uk
- a. An increase in the number of incidents involving small recreational vessels has prompted the PLA to increase the ways we reach out to the leisure community
 - b. A new website directed solely at the leisure user will host current and newly created content
 - c. The website is broken down into types of river users to ensure they are guided to all the correct information
 - d. Two navigation films have been made which show the best way for powered and unpowered craft to navigate through central London
 - e. Further films of the upper and lower district are planned

- f. An interactive facilities map of the river based on the architecture of Google maps has been created
 - g. A chart showing who is responsible for which areas of river in the Greater London area will be created
 - h. The website is being widely promoted by Corporate Affairs through our neighbouring agencies and multiple boating publications and websites
 - i. DP will be talking about safety of navigation at Beale Park festival
5. Rowing & Recreation Update
- a. A lighting trial was carried out at Shadwell with a number of different lighting systems tried by volunteer kayakers
 - b. The best systems either involved flashing lights or diving torches with a diffuser on them
 - c. The PLA will be creating a lighting guide for small craft which will likely recommend flashing lights and diffusers in some form
 - d. London Swimathon has been advertised on the radio with the slogan swim the Thames – PLA will follow up
6. Environmental Issues
- a. No issues at the moment
7. MCA District Safety
- a. The District safety meeting has now been amalgamated into the RUCF as they were both covering the same ground
 - b. MCA briefing will be appended to the minutes of the RUCF
 - c. MCA felt that the Bridges guide was a very useful and should be recommend to all at the meeting
 - d. Still awaiting a final decision on the way forward for the BML and there are moves to make the Thames a special case
 - e. As there will be over 500 people needing to renew in January 2012 it is highly recommend that as many people as possible apply early
 - f. Tickets of those who renew in advance will still be valid from five years from the 1st January 2012
 - g. MCA will be out on the river looking at best practices especially with reference to mooring
 - h. Those caught doing bad practice are likely to be subject to on the spot prohibition orders
8. Incidents
- a. 73 recorded incidents in total
 - b. 6 Rib incidents
 - i. 1 involving injury, remainder were inappropriate navigation
 - ii. MAIB are again focussing on the use of commercial and recreational RIBs
 - iii. PLA will be looking out specifically for people not:
 - 1. sat on seats and
 - 2. holding onto ropes instead of handles
 - 3. not using 'kill cords'.
 - iv. MAIB report will be fed into RIB code
 - v. Newens Marine are concerned about people not being allowed to sit on tubes in ribs
 - vi. Thames Rib Experience give two safety briefings and ensure that their passengers are properly seated
 - vii. Thames Clippers feel that most commercial RIB skippers seem to be operating in a safe manner, however there are few individuals who do not seem to
 - viii. PLA requests that anyone who sees wake hopping, passing close, doughnutting on the wrong side of the river or, any other dangerous manoeuvres to report it

- ix. When the new speed limit is in place RIB companies will have to conform to a very high standard of safety before being granted a 'Certificate of Compliance' and allowed dispensation to exceed it
 - x. When ribs first came to the river Thames they voluntarily agreed to conform to the DSMC
 - xi. They have not been audited for this by the MCA since then
 - xii. PBA has authored a high speed RIB guide in two parts – first part is on best practice for running a rib and applies to any user
 - xiii. Second part is on how to run a commercial RIB company including self-auditing
 - xiv. Guide is with the MCA who are overseeing its production and the PBA ask that is released as soon as possible
 - xv. MCA confirmed that this was currently not a high priority item due to work being put into BML
 - xvi. Private RIB ownership is becoming a lot more popular and many RIBs are not kept on moorings, but are taken about from river to river by trailer
 - xvii. PLA is aware of a number of issues associated with ribs and is working on them
- c. Man overboard incidents
 - i. PLA asks all operators to look at their mitigation for preventing MOB incidents
 - ii. Masters of vessels need to ensure that their crew are alert to risks
 - d. Three bridge strikes and one grounding
 - i. All of these were as a result of poor passage planning
 - ii. Class V operators have been asked to submit their passage plans
 - iii. So far only two properly formatted passage plans have been submitted
 - iv. Passage plans are not only important navigationally but can also be used as a marker to measure your crew against
 - v. Passage plans stored with the PLA can be referred to when projects are being planned and can help ensure a minimum amount of disruption to services
 - e. Nine incidents involving rowers, two of which involved non-rowing vessels
 - f. Navigation inside moorings or piles/spars
 - i. Operators whose passage plans state that their vessels must not go inside the above must confirm that their masters are not doing so
 - ii. Notice to Mariners M5 of 2010 refers
 - g. Eight incidents involving navigating through closed arches
 - i. Four recreational vessels and four class Vs
 - ii. Commercial vessels complained that arch closure signs could not be seen
 - iii. PLA is now insisting that closed arch signs are suspended in the arches as opposed to above them.
 - h. Your incident reports are valuable to us to allow us to identify trends enabling us to focus our resources to specific areas working for a safer river, resulting in fewer incidents and reduced costs to you. Please keep reporting.

9. Other Updates

- a. MPU
 - i. Absent
 - ii. PLA are working closer with the MPU. The forum agreed that MPU attendance at the RUCF is very important.
 - iii. Thames Clippers feel that Operation Boatman causes a disproportionate amount of disruption
 - iv. It is suggested that it would be simpler to moor the vessel on a pre-designated safe mooring and embark the land police by boat
- b. Coastguard
 - i. Sir Alan Massy is the new CEO of the MCA

- ii. Industrial action at the MCA will shortly enter its 3rd year – although as currently this should not effect the services received by river users
 - iii. MCA have advertised vacancies for permanent staff in London but a government freeze on external recruitment has put this on hold
 - iv. Loss of MPU control room at Wapping has meant some emergency calls going astray but this situation is steadily improving
 - v. Exercise Orange Tree will now take place on the 30th of September and will continue into the hours of darkness
 - vi. MCA now have access to high quality CCTV coverage of most of the river upstream of Cherry Garden Pier (including the MPU helicopter)
 - vii. This will only be used for SAR purposes
 - viii. The majority of calls that the RNLI have responded to have not been navigational
- c. LRS
- i. Passenger numbers are 7% on last year (which was 26% up on previous years)
 - ii. 4.2 million passenger movements is the official figure for march 09-10
 - iii. LRS feel that this number is a considerable under count and are working on a method of capturing all boarder numbers
 - iv. Thames Clippers had a proprietorial boarding system that has now been integrated with AIS that could be rolled out to other users
 - v. Dredging at Blackfriars was rather disappointing in terms of results
 - vi. Greenwich pier roof is almost ready for planning application to go forward – the aim is to roof the entire length of the pier
 - vii. This is planned for this winter – subject to planning and improving the pier fixing arrangements
 - viii. Tower Pier extension has TFL project approval – detailed design plan to follow shortly
 - ix. No significant changes to services have been made – there has been a marginal increase in frequency
 - x. LRS continue to be concerned about mooring practice despite passenger PBCOP being mandatory at all LRS structures
 - xi. A workshop was held on the 26th May demonstrating the need for best practice
 - xii. TfL has a marketing campaign to be launched shortly to raise awareness of waterborne transport options – including a video
 - xiii. The mayor will be making an announcement on a similar vein in late June
 - xiv. Woolwich ferry has cut 22 staff without any significant change to the operation of the vessel
 - xv. The ferry's performance has improved due to significant investment in the vessel
 - xvi. Different options are currently being considered for the East Thames Crossing
 - xvii. Any new ferry at this point would have conventional propulsion
- d. Fire
- i. Absent
- e. EA
- i. Water recreational strategy workshops were generally well regarded by attendees
 - ii. The need to protect river recreation from encroachment has come out clearly
 - iii. A draft plan for consultation will be coming out on the 6th of July
 - iv. Expected publication of the plan will be October
 - v. PLA was complimented for good practice on navigation safety through its NMT
- f. Port Health
- i. Absent

10. Events

- a. Details of the full barrier closure on the 5th of September can be found in Notice to Mariners 5 of 2010
- b. Olympics
 - i. London has signed up to the Olympics charter which includes not having any events clashing with the Olympics
 - ii. PLA has provided LOCOG with a list of all the usual events that run in central London
 - iii. Anyone else considering an event must contact HMU soonest
- c. Queens Diamond Jubilee
 - i. An enormous one-off river event currently in the very early planning stages
 - ii. Likely to run from Hampton to Greenwich and involve mass public participation
 - iii. Details limited at the moment but likely to be leisure focussed above Putney and commercial below
 - iv. Date will be in early June – as more details arise they will be dispersed

11. River Works

- a. Boreholes Project
 - i. This will end in August of this year
 - ii. One borehole will be drilled close to the southern arch of Tower – likely to be next month
- b. Southwark Bridge, centre arch closure planned for winter 2011
- c. Tower Bridge, centre arch closures or restrictions likely during the summer 2010, PLA will liaise with river users to minimise disruption to timetables and operations.
- d. Blackfriars, work continues, 2 of 3 navigable arches will normally remain open but there will be some night closures between 0030 – 0530 during this summer
- e. Waterloo Bridge, work should complete end Jun 2010
- f. Albert Bridge: No 2 Arch will be closed to navigation until end Oct 2010, with 3 and 4 arches then being closed from Nov 2010 until may 2011
- g. Barnes Bridge
 - i. All work effecting navigation has finished
- h. Consultative approach has caused some issues with contractors, but is generally working well.

12. GD 9

- a. HMU has reviewed all comments and what is used elsewhere in the nautical world
- b. Neon/orange is almost universally recognised as the best option, particularly under low-light conditions and at night.
- c. A NTM will be released shortly giving passenger boat operators one year to get sterns properly marked
- d. The size of the neon strip is defined in the byelaw, individual boat operators unable to comply with the General Direction should consult with the Harbour Master at an **early** stage to review options
- e. PLA & MCA are investigating various product options to see if a mass purchase is possible
- f. As many vessels will be docking in September the PLA needs to have formulated definitive guidelines by then for the MCA inspectors to follow
- g. On a related note some vessels have their names painted on in very small letters which the PLA will be looking out for

13. AOB

Dean McGlinchey – Thames Rib Experience record passenger numbers and would be willing to hand these over to PLA or LRS to help get more accurate passenger count.

Roger Flitter – Department for Transport from Jan 2011 will be mandating the use of Low sulphur bio-diesel in non-road diesel engines. This has many ramifications such as

bunkering, supply and, technical issues for older engines. The PBA is working with a number of other associations to formulate a response.

It was suggested that the IMO should be contacted as a similar issue is affecting short sea transits.

DNOM 11th November 2010