

Notes of River Users Consultative Forum (Estuary) Meeting
9th May 2008

Present:-

Captain Roy Stanbrook	RS	HM(L)
Captain Chris McQueen	CM	DHM(L)
Rod Owen	RO	PLA (pilot)
Katherine Harris	KH	PLA
Darryl Godbold	DG	SFA
Mike Sherfras	MS	RYA / ATYC
Micheal Waller	MW	MYA
Chris Edwards	CE	RYA Eastern
Tom Sims	TS	RYA South East
Andrew Rudge	AR	MCA
J Greenleaf	JG	RAFT
William Wright	WW	EK & ESF

Meeting opened at 1030.

1. Apologies

Guy Peto Medway ports, Roger Barker Trinity House, Julian Parkes PLA, J Window PLA, Samantha Jessop MCA.

1a. TE 2100 presentation cancelled.

2. Notes of River Users Consultative Forum Meeting 9th Nov '07

Accepted as a true record.

3. Matters Arising from 2

3a. Development of new leisure guide using the Harwich model is still on going (RS). MS commented Crouch Authority are to produce similar guide.

3b. Group was informed by MS that Essex Marine site remains stalled.

Environmental matters

Water framework directive consultation period now closed having been extended to 29th February 2008. Parts of Thames falls with area of three liaison panels with PLA being represented on all panels

MCA

AR reported that no progress had been made on the recategorisation of Walton Backwaters.

TH

Swale synchronised light trials are on-going and results to date are promising further trial demonstration scheduled to take place 13th May 2008, RS explained various sequence options are being explored. RO requested that need to take transit bearings should not be forgotten. There was general support for trial expressed by forum.

4. **PLA Sitrep**

a. **Safety Management System**

RS gave an update on

- New Permanent Notice to Mariners, should be completed within next 2-3 weeks.
- Audit of safety management system was carried out last summer, all outstanding findings have now been substantially addressed.
- Thames Byelaws, awaiting lawyers Byelaws then go to public consultation and then to Secretary of State for agreement. This should hopefully be completed by end of the year. Key changes are likely to involve new rules for PWCs allowing wider use on the river following pressure from both leisure and emergency services (police in particular).

The introduction of new 12 knot speed limit between Margaretness and Wandsworth, with provision for a relaxation on an individual craft basis following risk assessment.

- Guidance to berth operators now in PLA web site.
- Lighterage skills course is being organised with NW Kent College. This is a local initiative, MCA are aware and involved.
- Navigational advisory panel has taken place looking at the revision of operational procedures for passing arrangements whilst a large vessel swinging is swinging for Coryton. This follows a serious close quarters incident that recently took place. Recommendations are to go to NMT for ratification.

Safety management system continues to evolve and develop.

b. Port Security and ISPS Code

- RS reported that there is no change to the ISPS security level, or to the Ports & Maritime Threat level of low.
- Port Security Directive little change for London's arrangements security arrangements except a name change to Port Security Authority.

c. Environmental Matters

- KH reported that the Marine Bill has been published and is out for consultation at the moment on the DEFRA website, Consultation will close 26th June. KH outlined the main planks of the bill: Marine planning system covering spatial plans on regional basis for marine environment, Marine licensing setting up marine management organisation at national and regional level with the aim at simplifying consents process for marine projects. Access to coastal land with aim of improving public right of way to the coast and river. Establishment marine protected areas. How this will work on the Thames which already has a well established system is yet to become known. Various members of forum commented that much work needs to be done and questions answered such as agreeing boundaries for spatial areas, and other agency involvement such as Local authorities and inshore fishermen and conservation authorities now being established by the EA. The amended bill is expected to be ready to go to Parliament in the Autumn.
- The Personal Watercraft Code of Conduct and guidance leaflet is to be published in approx. 6 weeks time. PLA will carry out targeted stakeholder consultation before publishing the guidance. Those wishing to be involved in the consultation should contact either Katherine Harris or Roy Stanbrook asap.

d. General

Trade

- RS reported that we have made a 1.5% increase in tonnage to 52.7m tonnes, which are 800,000 tonnes up on previous years. Mainly due to cement, aggregates, coal and oil however forest products are down

5. Navigational Safety and Consultancy Matters

i. Estuary Incidents

23/01/08	Almar	Small veg oil tanker grounded for a few minutes to the east of West Blyth buoy. No pollution or injuries
23/02/08	British Robin / Philadelphia Express	Near miss incident between the British Robin swinging to berth at Coryton and Philadelphia Express passing. NAP – tightening rules
26/02/08	Sichem Melbourne	Sailing CTN3 ebb tide contacted with CTN3 and Western dolphin CTNL, dolphin and ship damaged, no pollution and injury investigation. Tug rules tightened. MAIB investigating incident.
20/03/08	Aquiline / Aurora / X-Press Elbrus	Aquiline whilst overtaking X-Press Elbrus passed close by the outward bound tanker Aurora causing interaction to occur. Master (PEC) issued with formal warning.
26/03/08	Cymbeline / Bro Genius	Cymbeline overtook the Bro Genius inward bound approaching Oaze Buoy and the cut across her bow to pass north of the Oaze Buoy. Formal warning issued to Master

RO commented on the Sichem Melbourne that whilst the ship was a new build that class of ship handled poorly with poor manoeuvring characteristics. Both the British Robin and the Sichem Melbourne incidents has highlighted issues regarding the Pilot master relationship some of which are communication issues and other factors such as cultural reasons may come into play. TS asked about the sanctions open to the Harbourmaster and MCA. RS outlined the Ports general approach was lessons learned first, but on occasion written formal warnings will and are issued. AR commented MCA issue cautions were necessary and incidents will be forwarded to flag states for them to take action. CE asked whether there was any recreational craft incidents RS reported none.

Sunk VTS

AR informed forum that there was no progress to report concerning restoration of Sunk VTS. The current MCA staff dispute and restructuring of MCA is taking much of the MCA management time. The new VTS manager was reviewing AIS and radar data on a regular basis. AR commented that the number of incidents or near misses was very low RO replied that a possible reason could be near misses are being managed as they occur and are not being reported and who do you report them to in the first instance. RO stressed the main benefit of Sunk VTS was the one VHF channel all traffic would be working which is no longer the case now. RO also raised the issue of flag of convenience trawlers operating in the area and the difficulty in communicating with them.

Inner Sunk buoy

An agreement has been reached with Trinity House for the improvement to the buoy to improve its visibility as a short term measure. As part of LGW project other solutions are being investigated and further meeting TH will take place.

Inland waterways

Forum agreed to remove this as an agenda item.

Marine Navigation Bill

RS informed Forum that draft consultation document for the Marine Navigation Bill had just been published. The bill outlines proposals to give all Harbour Authorities the powers to raise General directions, Secretary of State powers to define NOS for pilots and Harbourmasters. Bring into force IMO wreck convention. TW commented that that RYA had serious doubts concerning General direction powers for HA's, RS replied such powers would only cover navigational safety issues.

6. Other Updates

i. **MCA**

AR informed forum consultation will be taking place with industry regarding class v passenger ships BML difficulties over gaining sea time and underpinning knowledge, the MCA are investigating possibility of creating restricted tidal BML MCA has powers under section 48 of MSA to issue dispensations on a case by case basis.

New requirements for passenger ships come into force 2010, requirements will include annual hull inspections instead of the current two inspections in a five year period. Ban on smoking for UK registered passenger ships is being considered.

ii. **Medway YA**

TW showed outlined drawing for the proposed Medway north channel, including loss of Medway large vessel anchorages which is being considered. New Southern channel is going ahead. The 2nd LNG terminal will become operational later in the year. New Kent Police boat is now operational. Sun Pier is damaged and expected to be closed until further notice. New yacht recommended route established on the Medway. Faversham Creek to be refurbished.

WW added that a land reclamation project north of Garrison Point will be taken forward as part of new channel project.

iii. **RYA Kent**

Kent & South East regions nothing to report.

iv. **Fishing**

DG, raised fishermen's concerns over increasing numbers of Spanish operators owning Belgium flags fishing vessels operating a form of flag of convenience claiming historic rights and fishing within twelve mile limits. AR commented RN monitor fishing vessels over a certain size.

7. River Events

17 th May	Benfleet Y/C Queenborough Run
25 th /26 th May	Southend Air Show
14 th June	Benfleet Y/C Wilson Trophy
12 th July	Thames Barge Match
23 rd August	Benfleet Y/C Race to London

8. River Works

- i. London Gateway HEO has now been granted, works expected to commence towards the end of the year with aim that the first operational berth being ready for 29th December 2010.
- ii. London Array, Shell has withdrawn from the project, remaining partners are confident in finding another partner and are pressing ahead to obtain necessary planning consents.
- iii. Gunfleet Sands work has commenced with turbines planned to be erected over the winter.
- iv. CE commented Peel Holding have a proposal for four wind turbines on Jacobs bank.
- v. Princes Channel dredge is now complete 8.0 m depth has been achieved. It is likely that 7.9 m depth will be declared in due course. Decision on 8.0m surcharge is in abeyance.
- vi. Princes Channel navigation project, deregulation of channel will not now take place following detailed review of project including costs. A NAP has taken place considering the marking of new deep water channel and changes to buoy layout at western and eastern end, findings are going out for consultation.
- vii. Canvey LNG. Nothing new heard.
- viii. Lower Thames Crossing. Metro tidal tunnel from Holehaven across to St Mary Hoo has been proposed plan calls for cut and cover tunnel, tidal lagoon on Yantlet flats and barrage.
- ix. Brit Ned cable. Route survey scheduled for June / July

9. Any Other Business

WW Cockle season starts 16th June .

10. Time/Date of Next Meeting

14th November @ 1030 LRH.

Meeting closed at 1245 approx.