

PLA RIVER USERS CONSULTATIVE FORUM (UPPER)

NOTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT BAKERS' HALL ON THURSDAY 29TH MAY, 2008

PRESENT

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| David Foster (DF) | Harbour Master (Upper) |
| David Phillips (DP) | Deputy Harbour Master (Upper) |
| Julian Parkes (JP) | Harbour Master (SMS) |
| Dudley Curtis (DC) | PLA Deputy Harbour Master (Upper) |
| Martin Garside (MG) | PLA Press & Public Relations Manager |
| Katherine Harris (KH) | PLA Environmental Advisor |
| Sandra West (SW) | PLA Assistant to Harbour Master (Upper) |
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| Peter Finch (PF) | River Thames Society |
| Steve Davies (SD) | Royal Yachting Association |
| Andy Griffiths (AG) | London River Services |
| Derek Mann (DM) | Thames Clippers |
| Roger Flitter (RF) | The Passenger Boat Association |
| Rod Shaw (RS) | Maritime & Coastguard Agency |
| Chris Connolly (CC) | MPS Marine Support Unit |
| Kevin East (KE) | British Canoe Union |
| Chris Livett (CL) | Thames Luxury Charters |
| David White (DW) | London Coastguard |
| Bryan Shaw (BS) | London Port Health Authority |
| Colin Woodward (CW) | EA Sports & Recreation |
| Neil Caborn (NC) | Cory Environmental |
| Bill Mitchell | TRRC |

1. Apologies for Absence

Janet Kelly, RNLI
Jon Averbs, LPHA
Michael Shefras, ATYC
Stephen Webb, TRRC – represented by Bill Mitchell
Alex Hickman, T&GWU
Gary Davies, London Home & Water Safety Group
Chas Newens, Company of Watermen & Lightermen
Sean Collins, Thames Clippers – represented by Derek Mann

Bryan Hopkins, MCA
Darren Munro, LFB
Alex Brown PLA

DF welcomed everyone to the meeting, especially two new members – Roger Flitter and David White

2. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 21st November, 2007 were held to be a true record.

3. Matters arising from previous minutes

No matters arising

4. PLA

(i) Regulatory Update

- New publications. About to publish Permanent Notice to Mariners 2008. Re-issue of Guidance to Berth Operators after a review. Mark Towens is working on a syllabus of Standard for Ligherage Schools; working with North West Kent College to produce a course.
- British Waterways (BW) – risk assessment for Prescott Lock, rules for navigation from Thames to Prescott Lock. BW to delegate control of navigation etc. to PLA. Notice to Mariners to be issued and traffic will be co-ordinated by London VTS
- SMS – Several Navigational Advisory Panels (NAPs) held recently, mainly for the lower river. High Speed Craft NAP – draft of recommendations being taken forward with the MCA. Mandatory speed limit in Central London being looked at under review of the Byelaws. Informal consultation to take place (should be ready by end of next week) first then formal consultation with DfT. DF asked that everyone look at these very carefully and return with comments to Julian Parkes. The Byelaws will be a smaller version as COLREGS will not be included

(ii) Traffic Study

Traffic Study recommendations cover the following subjects

- Time Tabling
- Scheduling of freight during busy periods
- Pier capacity
- Keeping the authorized channel free for navigation
- Modifications to AIS
- Keeping the model up to date in order to run against 2008 time tables
- Use model for major river works licence applications

The findings will be made available on the website shortly

(iii) Passenger Boat Code of Practice

Passenger Boat Code of Practice – at the High Speed Craft NAP and talks with operators, Code of Practice required combining all the knowledge into one document. To be sent out under combined MCA/PLA/and hopefully Passenger Boat Association badge. Series of people will be consulted, then set up meeting to help PLA put it together. We will act as facilitator pulling everything together and then publish.

(iv) Trees

The PLA committed itself to preparing a long-term tree management plan for the revetment wall and towpath it assumes it owns on the Surrey side of the river between Beverley Brook and Kew. The PLA will be engaging appropriately qualified consultants to assist it in the preparation of this plan and work is expected to commence on the implementation of elements of the completed plan from Autumn this year

(v) Policy on River Works Licensing v Vessel Movements

Over the years PLA have received many complaints about wash and have accepted the vessel to be at fault. Now looking at both sides of the complaint. Sometimes river works are not suitable for conditions – this is a working river and if the works are not fit for purpose the licensee is informed; new works have clause in licence concerning conditions for build. Trying to redress the balance but be aware that if a vessel is found to be at fault this will be followed up.

(vi) Formation of PHRANG – PLA Harbour Master's Recreation, Navigational Group

Following the introduction of the rowing code it was decided that the group of people involved could continue to be a good liaison with the recreational world. PLA have added several senior people and together with the Chief Harbour Master meets to discuss recreational matters twice a year. The area of expertise has been extended eastward to include rowing clubs in the lower part of the upper district. Terms of Reference and Minutes of this meeting available on the website. CW asked if he could be a member of this group; DF said that would be fine and he should contact AB or SW for details

(vii) Corporate Affairs Update

MG advised that the PLA were looking at the way they licensed advertising, events, filming etc. in order to lessen the impact on river users. Obviously large events such as New Year's Eve fireworks were not the problem but PLA are asked for more and more river closures. Trying to work with those planning events on the river in order to reduce the number of closures whilst still allowing events etc. to take place.

(viii) Environmental Issues

- Dredging – minor dredge of Battersea shoal carried out. Third party dredging included South West India Dock and King George V Dock entrance in March together with Wapping Police Pier. Dredging application for Prescott Lock into Olympics site for stage above A13 bridge
- Legislation – draft Marine Bill – DEFRA asking for comments, replies by 26th June. Will apply to all tidal waters, framework for the main ... of the Bill. Bill working its way through Parliament, law towards the end of 2009. PF asked for a copy of the PLA's comments before they are sent off. KH said yes, they will be fairly brief – outline stuff. RF asked about the Executive Summary, KH said it was at beginning of document, very useful document, available on the website

CW passed out an information sheet about the Water Framework Directive. He would like to send out updates and asked for email addresses for those interested.

DF advised that next week the PLA would start marking some of the mooring buoys below London Bridge for the first time with blue lights, starting with those off Woolwich Pier. If the trial is successful another ten downstream of London Bridge will be lit. DF also said Paul Arnold, River Inspector (Upper) would be completing his six months term with HMU's office at end of May and will be replaced by Ian Yarnton

5. MCA District Safety

- RS said MCA in process of re-organisation and there will be some changes in the London area. There will be a new Area Operations Manager and he would supply contact details once other changes had taken place.
- BMLs – now up and running but MCA have gone back out to the trade for consultation as there is a necessity to amend the legislation. None of the attendees had received any information on this yet.
- MCA audits starting shortly.
- Trials being carried out with Thames Clippers to try streaming on a spring – trying to progress this so in future approval can be given.
- New Thames Estuary Charts available, required by 01/07/2008.

6. Navigational Safety

DP advised there had been a peak in the number of incidents November/December 2007, mainly wash complaints and machinery failures. With new policy these numbers have decreased. Following incidents Masters reports are vital, please ensure these are sent in as soon as possible after the incident and include lots of detail.

7. Other Updates

(i) Police –

- CC stated many changes over the last six months. The new C.I. Derek Caterer has taken over from David White (now the representative for the Coastguard) and he thanked DW for all his hard work whilst at Wapping and looks forward to working with him in his new capacity. There is also a new Superintendent.
- Change of name, now Marine Policing Unit, have own definite policing role not just support.
- Ease down at Wapping Pier now lifted, pontoon in place and thanked PLA for their assistance.
- Ref. Victoria Deep Wharf where GPS barges let go – are working with local police.

(ii) Coastguard –

- Two new watch managers recruited.
- LESLP being restarted. Major incident exercise in the Autumn.
- Alternative being sort for TIRRs.
- Industrial action continues, contingency plans to be circulated. DF said PLA no longer receiving daily reports from London Coastguard, deemed to be result of industrial action

(iii) LRS

- Temple Pier planning appeal successful.
- Initiate Concordat – non binding agreement for number of stakeholders.
- Pier planning GLA, LDA and LRS. Scott Wilson to undertake pier plan, presentation on the draft plan at the next concordat meeting. Pier plan – look at where existing plans are, to approach through Borough plans for pier; GLA could use this to see where piers are needed. DF said Scott Wilson should talk to PLA planning department where there are outstanding applications, which may be of help. RF said concordat meetings are delayed for the moment due to new Mayor,
- AG advised Woolwich Ferry is operated by London Borough of Greenwich for LRS but now want to terminate the contract with effect from 30/09/2008; unless LRS can find another operator they will have to run it themselves. Could be tendered out at some time in the future.
- Masthouse Terrace Pier has been replaced by British Waterways.

(iv) Port Health

- Successful exercise in conjunction with one of the dredging companies on the river.
- Number of noise complains successfully resolved; commencing weekend patrols.
- Cruise ship season has started, all seems to be running well.
- Smoke free vessels effective from 05/07/07 does not apply to Class Vs but the operators have taken it up

(v) EA

- Teddington Festival cancelled to work at the lock.
- EA Sport & Recreation department are also under reorganisation so CW may not be attending next meeting

(VI) RNLI

- Now have fixed camera on one of their vessels, DVDs can be obtained

8. Future Events

- List of events was available.
- In negotiations with Red Bull Air Race as to river closure times. Trying to keep at minimum; one hour practices Thursday and Friday, two hour Saturday and three on Sunday

9. River Works

- Tower Gateway Bridge – planning hang up, there will be another public enquiry. Plan to open in 2016, some doubt after the change of Mayor
- Blackfriars Rail Bridge – contract now given to Balfour Beatty. Starting this October/November. Jack up barge going to work through until late Autumn, NTM to be published. Work ongoing until 2012, two of three central arches must be open
- Prescott Lock – lock now in place and work nearly completed. Hope to trial lock out on 24th June, open for main barge traffic in late October but trials from August. A London lighterage company has been granted contract, mainly aggregates.
- Tower and Southwark Bridges – Scaffolding already on Southwark Bridge, Tower Bridge starts later this summer, both renovations planned completion by 2012. One arch only will be closed, alternatively. One winter locked down, October 2010/March 2011. Bookings not being taken for cruise ships etc. for that time, Notice to Mariners to follow
- Cannon Street – Jack up barge on site at present, should be out in about two weeks

10. Time/Date of Next Meeting

1030 on Tuesday 25th November, 2008