

PLA RIVER USERS CONSULTATIVE FORUM (UPPER)

NOTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT BAKERS' HALL
ON WEDNESDAY 21ST NOVEMBER, 2007

PRESENT:

David Foster (DF)	Harbour Master (Upper)
David Phillips (DP)	Deputy Harbour Master (Upper)
Julian Parkes (JP)	Harbour Master (SMS)
Martin Garside (MG)	PLA Press & Public Relations Manager
Dudley Curtis (DC)	PLA Deputy Harbour Master (Upper)
Sandra West (SW)	PLA Assistant to Harbour Master (Upper)
Peter Finch (PF)	River Thames Society
Steve Davies (SD)	Royal Yachting Association
Andy Griffiths (AG)	London River Services
Sean Collins (SC)	Thames Clippers
Derek Mann (DM)	Thames Clippers
Alan Rance (AR)	The Passenger Boat Association
Rod Shaw (RS)	Maritime & Coastguard Agency
Phil Welch (PW)	MPS Marine Support Unit
Alex Hickman (AH)	T&GWU
Janet Kelly (JK)	RNLI
Gary Davies (GDa)	London Home & Water Safety Council
Kevin East (KE)	British Canoe Union
Chris Livett (CL)	Thames Luxury Charters
Chas Newens (CN)	Chas. Newens Marine
Michael Shefras (MS)	Association of Thames Yacht Clubs
Adrian Bates (AB)	London Coastguard
Bryan Shaw (BS)	London Port Health Authority

1. Apologies for Absence were received from:

Neil Caborn, Cory Environmental
Colin Woodward, EA
Chris Connelly, MSU represented by Phil Welch
Katherine Harris, PLA
Paul Arnold, PLA
Alexander Brown, PLA

DF welcomed everyone to the meeting

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 12th June were held to be a true record.

3. Matters Arising from Previous Minutes

No matters arising

4. PLA

(i) Introduction of New Members of HMU Team

- David Foster – Harbour Master (Upper) and will continue to deal with major projects
- David Phillips - new Deputy Harbour Master (Upper), will initially look after enforcement, incident investigation, etc but in time will take over for the day to day to running of the district.
- Dudley Curtis - Deputy Harbour Master (Upper) and PLA Pilot is responsible for cruise ship visits and events in the middle district.
- Alex Brown - River Manager (Putney to Teddington) and first point of contact for everything within that area. Based at Richmond Monday, Wednesday and Friday, telephone number 020 8843 7210 and Bakers Hall on Tuesdays and Fridays, telephone number 020 7743 7921. Email address is Alex.Brown@pola.co.uk.
- Paul Arnold has taken up the new position of River Inspector (Middle). He will conduct initial investigations after a serious incident, monitor river works licences, ensuring works are carried out as per terms of the licence, check navigation lights etc plus take charge of major events and evolutions on the river. There are three River Inspectors who will work on a six-monthly rota.
- Sandra West - continues to assist the Harbour Master, co-ordinate the running of the HMU office and is Office Manager for the Bakers Hall office.
- There have been changes in the structure and manning of the harbour service launches in the middle district but there should be no difference for the river user. The Driftwood boats will now be working a five day week instead of four.

(ii) Regulatory Update (including BML)

SMS

- The review of the byelaws continues, hopefully they will go out to consultation in the New Year.
- New Code of Practice for Craft Towing Operations on the Thames has been published
- Navigational Advisory Panel planned for 10th December for High Speed Craft Operations.
- Amendment to Pilotage Directions 2006
- Central London Traffic Study continues, scheduled to finish at end of year. Study focusing on river traffic and capacity between Thames Barrier and Putney Bridge.
- Guide for Users of Recreational Craft to be reviewed starting in New Year. Should be ready by spring in a new fold-out style.
- Navigational Risk Assessment for Bow Creek/Prescott Channel has taken place.
- PLA working with Olympics Delivery Authority on issues affecting river security for the Olympics.
- ISPS level for port at level one.
- Sum of £50,000 has been put aside to help train BMLs. Grant of £500 for individuals starting on course, and will pay for Local Knowledge endorsement for London based trainees.
- Ligherage Skills & Seamanship Course being funded.

(iii) AIS

- Most boats now fitted and working, system is proving beneficial. Those not still fitted are in the process of being so. Mobile AIS units are will shortly be available.

(iv) Upriver Update

- Automation of Richmond Lock has been cancelled
- Harbour Service Launches will continue as usual with the occasional extended watches when required
- All 18 rowing buoys in place, Notice to Mariners published.
- Rowing incidents have decreased
- The majority of the new rowing signs are now in place. Those signs still not in position are delayed due to delays in the consent process.
- Key rowing events, (those with paying entrants) will now require a Notice to Mariners. HMU encouraged the TRRC to lump as many events together onto a single Notice to Mariners in order to minimise the cost to individual organisers.
- Overhanging trees – test sample for tree management on Surrey bank in January from roughly 200m downstream end of Chiswick Ait. PF asked whether stairs could also be cleared – DF replied that the PLA only maintain those they own and they are very few.
- Rowing Code has been in place for a year. KE asked that it extend beyond Putney/Richmond. Joint disciplinary system with TRRC working well. PLA sponsored awards for clubs who have best implemented the rules are:
 - Tideway Scullers' School – overall winner
 - Auriol Kensington – runner up
 - Imperial College – most improvedThese awards will be presented on 29th November at Tideway Scullers School.
- BS said complaints had been received about noisy coaching boats. Complainants are being asked to provide boat identification in order to follow up a complaint. DF asked all parties to keep a sense of proportion when dealing with type of complaint.
- KE asked about the Recreational Liaison Group which will replace the Rowing Implementation Group – DF said this will take place twice a year, terms of reference are being drafted and will be sent out for consultation shortly.

(v) Corporate Affairs Update

- 'Tidal Thames', a new quarterly journal available, is now being produced in-house. It hopes to reflect the diversity on the river. Next edition due in 2-3 weeks.
- New Environment Report recently published
- Brief Guide to PLA also recently published.
- Will be promoting the river more strongly, i.e. stall at Thames Festival and working alongside the Safety trailer
- Filming of Harry Potter and National Treasures II has taken place. MG thanked all the operators and other river users for their patience. Although filming can cause disruptions it is recognised that it brings a lot of work to the river so every application is judged individually

- There are no plans to show the Marchioness drama that was filmed last year by Yorkshire TV

(vi) Environmental Issues

Dredging

Dredging at Gallions and Blackwall Point shoals has recently been completed. Predetermined trigger points have been introduced to assist in planning maintenance dredging programme in the Upper District.

Water Framework Directive

Work continues on the Thames River Basin Management Plan. The Thames liaison panel has identified draft significant water management issues such as:

- Alien species;
- Diffuse pollution (rural, urban & transport);
- Flow problems;
- Point source pollution;
- Physical modification;
- Urban development.

Views are being actively sought on these issues and consultation period is open until 28th January 2008 – see EA's website for more information.

Marine Works (EIA) Regulations 2007

Came into force June this year, applies the EIA regulations to all PLA RWL & dredging applications & DEFRA consents.

Thames Estuary Partnership Conference

Mainly discussed flooding, flood defence etc. Sense of urgency now apparent; however recent surveys have shown that flood defence walls are higher and more robust than previously thought. MS referred the meeting to the EEC Marine Bill .

5. MCA DISTRICT SAFETY

- Industrial action by MCA not affecting safety – Orpington not participating
- Reviewing Class V requirements – draft produced of regulations specifically for Class Vs but returned for re-drafting. CL observed that regulation of craft carrying up to 12 passengers was more stringent than for larger vessels.
- BML came into affect January 2007, problems elsewhere but London area working well. Some concerns over competency but these are being addressed.
- MARPOL Air Pollution now in force but not ratified yet in UK.
- Ship detentions in the South East/Thames area are twice the national average
- RS confirmed that the best forum for the boat operators to attend was the Class V Operators Forum held at Orpington.

DF agreed that that it was well worth the effort of attending the Operators Forum as matters concerning Class Vs could be discussed in greater detail; the more attendees the better for the industry.

- Concern was expressed about the lack of surveyors and delays in inspections that are having a knock on effect on business; RS said MCA were working hard to provide a service.

6. NAVIGATIONAL SAFETY

- The Fast Ferries Navigational Advisory Panel will take place 10 Dec 07. DF thanked all those who spare the time to attend PLA panels etc, often the same people, it was very much appreciated and their expertise is vital.
- JP said Port Marine Safety Code was also a measure of how operators have a role in navigational safety.
- SC said that a lot of incidents don't get reported and more people need to be honest. DF said PLA are very aware of the under-reporting issue and stressed that full reporting benefits all river users in the end. JP reminded the meeting that requirement to report is in the Byelaws. The scope has been extended in the new Thames Byelaws being drafted.

7. OTHER UPDATES

(i) Police

- Easedown still required for pontoon at Wapping.
- New Targa 21s arrived
- Entering a bid to the Home Office for resources for Olympics
- MPU looking at initiative to meet and talk with the rowing community
- Drink Drive Campaign – raise awareness of the Act, reminding crews on boats of their responsibilities
- Pier Security – meeting with LRS to raise awareness, also engineering and design safety initiatives

(ii) RNLI

- Sixth year of operations on the Thames, 230 callouts, well down on previous years - possibly weather related
- Requested river users slow down when passing Waterloo Pier as there are still problems with wash

(iii) LRS

- Awaiting the result of the planning appeal concerning lay-by mooring Class V vessels on a pier.
- River Passenger Service Workshop hosted by GLA/TfL – proposed concordat a draft will be circulated to proposed signatories.
- AG said passenger vessels could emit 40% more sulphur than buses and TfL want to investigate how this could be improved. CL said operators were concerned about the cost of low sulphur fuel and the use being made compulsory.

- Reference sewage RS said there is nothing in the draft MCA legislation which required sewerage retention units to be carried although new builds should incorporate it.
- MS said there was a lobby of people complaining about sewerage from houseboats above Putney. DF said all new river works licences required vessels to be connected to mains sewerage.
- It was noted that the Mayor of London's requirements re sewerage were higher than those for national legislation.
- BS said LPHA have plans for vessels to be converted, they are carrying out a study on river water quality.

8. FUTURE EVENTS

- List of events presented
- DC asked if anyone had heard from Red Bull – no one had
- 2008 cruise ships at 15 so far, unlikely to be increase
- Lords v Commons event 17/07/2008

9. RIVER WORKS

- Tide boards being established at Wapping, Temple Steps, Nine Elms, Plantation Wharf. A Notice to Mariners will be issued.
- Thames Gateway Bridge – Public enquiry will probably now be January 2009, go to tender 2012 and build during 2013-2016
- Thames Link/Blackfriars Railway Bridge. The construction of a new station on the existing bridge and redundant piers immediately upstream.. Surveys due to start in Spring 2008 and work finish in 2012. HMU to visit the HR Wallingford model to assess how river flows around the proposed temporary river works will affect river traffic.
- Thames Water – construction of two tunnels to carry excess sewage between Abbey Mills and Beckton and a second between Hammersmith and Beckton, first part operational by 2014. PLA encouraging water transport of the spoil.
- Prescott Channel – construction going well. Lock should be fully operation next summer. DF advised the meeting that not enough operators were getting involved with contractors. 350t barges will be used – there are contracts waiting to be awarded.
- Olympics – PLA working with Olympics Delivery Authority, Olympics Passenger Transport Plan has been received.
- Westminster Bridge – work completed, moorings to be re-instated. DF thanked everyone for their compliance with the Notices to Mariners and TBNC directions.
- Tower Bridge & Southwark Bridge – both to be refurbished by the time of Olympics. There will be arch closures during the work but have agreed Tower Bridge will be worked on over the winter 2010/11 and Southwark the centre arch will not be closed during the summer months.
- Scour Protection London & Southwark bridges – work completed. Obstruction found and removed.
- Greenwich Promenade – work has started

10. The date of the next meeting will be Thursday, 29th May, 2008 at 1030.