

**Notes of River Users Consultative Forum (Lower) Meeting**  
**2<sup>nd</sup> May 2008**

Present:-

Captain Roy Stanbrook	RS	HM(L)
Captain Julian Parkes	JP	HM(SMS)
John Window	JW	PLA
Alan Hurrell	AH	Watermen & Lightermen
Richard Lukes	RL	T&GWU
David Gordon	DG	The Thames Wharfinger Co Ltd/W&LC
David Allen	DA	Alan C Bennett & Sons Ltd/RAFT
David Brown	DB	Svitzer
John Skellorn	JS	RYA (SE Region)
Ian Dunkley	ID	RNLI (Gravesend)
Bryan Hopkins	BH	MCA
Laura Dowsett	LD	Environment Agency
Robert Read	RR	Kent Police
Peter Smith	PS	ARA

**1. Apologies**

D Chard, London Shipowners & River Users Society. R Exley, HM Tilbury. P Welch, Met Police. M Shefras, Assoc of Thames Y/C. R Barker, Trinity House. K Harris, PLA. C McQueen, PLA.

**2. Notes of River Users Consultative Forum Meeting 2<sup>nd</sup> Nov '07**

Accepted as a true record.

**3. Matters Arising from 2**

No comments.

**4. PLA Sitrep**

**i. Safety Management System**

- JP gave an overview of the revised Permanent Notice to Mariners 2008, which should be published within next 2-3 weeks.
- All items identified the SMS Audit carried out last summer are substantially completed.
- The new draft Thames Byelaws 2008: we are just waiting on the lawyers, and will then have to go to informal public consultation. These Byelaws will replace the existing River Byelaws 1978,. Following that, the formal public consultation through the Department for Transport will

take place before the Secretary of State confirms the new Byelaws, hopefully by end of the year.

- PLA are producing a revised Guide to Berth Operators – which first came out 2/3 years ago. This lays out the responsibilities that go with being a berth operator and which will give people a better understanding of the maritime side.
- A new Lighterage Skills course is being developed in conjunction with Thames practitioners.. This is a local initiative, but MCA are aware and involved.
- The PLA recently held a Navigational Advisory Panel (NAP) regarding an incident at Coryton,. A second NAP will be held shortly regarding the re-development of La Farge jetty at Northfleet, which houses Northfleet Upper Light, the VTS radar and CCTV. The NAP will determine the continued need for these aids to navigation, and if required, will identify a potential alternative location.
- DA showed concern regarding an incident that occurred involving a clipper making excessive wash. JP explained our priority is safety. DA reported that consultants carried out a days survey and reported some vessels at 36mph which created a wash of great force.

DA stated that he is footing a £25k repair bill for damage by these vessels and wanted his concerns to be minuted.

JP and RS stated that the proposed new byelaws will state that the speed limit is 12 knots above and below Cherry Garden Pier. Vessels wishing to go above this limit will have to apply for exemption, after completing risk assessments and trials.

JP also stated that A Central London Vessel Traffic study has just been completed and the outcome will inform how we manage nav safety over the coming years in that part of the Thames..

- PS asked if we will be looking at the demand for clippers in terms of passengers. PS suggested that clippers shouldn't have high speed exemptions if not carrying passengers.
- JP expressed that this is still in consultation stage and all comments/e-mails will be taken onboard.

- JP was asked about the new byelaws and he said that it would be a smaller document, and would not include the bridge silhouettes and the Collision Regulations, although he pointed out that Collision Regs would still apply, but we are not publishing them in the same document now. There are 59 byelaws proposed, which would replace the existing River Byelaws.
- A discussion ensued re. arrival at jetties, RL asked is it the Harbour Master or berth operator who has the responsibility or saying whether a vessel can get to the jetty. JP stated that the Berth Operators has the responsibility to ensure a safe working environment. RS stated that any concerns should be notified to the Harbour Master.

## **ii. Port Security and ISPS Code**

- JP reported that there is no change to the ISPS security level (at level 1) code, or to the UK Ports & Maritime Threat level - low.
- JP reported that the Department for Transport had recently opened a public consultation on the new Port Security Directive, which started last week and runs to 11<sup>th</sup> July. It proposes the introduction of a Port Security Authority (PSA), which will oversee security within a port. Each port area will be provided for with a separate Designation Order. Although the future form of a Thames PSA had yet to be identified, JP advised that he thought there would be very few practical changes 'on the ground' following the introduction of this legislation.

## **iii Environmental Matters**

- RS reported (in Katherine Harris's absence) that the Marine Bill has been published and is open for consultation at the moment on the DEFRA website. Consultation will end 22<sup>nd</sup> June.
- 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.
- JP added that in the new byelaws, any PWC will be subject to col regs, as they are defined as being a vessel.

- RS reported that PLA are looking at allowing operation of PWCs further upriver in line with Guidance Notes and to allow Essex, Met Police and RNLI to use PWCs in their own operations.

BH reported that MCA are trying to change their regs to bring them under regulation.

#### iv. General

##### Trade

- RS reported that there has been 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.
- RL asked if there is an updated list of access points as the list he has is now very out of date (15 years old). JP reported that the list is currently being updated for emergency access points.
- AH asked if there are any updates on New Bridge, Greenhithe and Erith Causeways for access purposes. RS reported that we are investing heavily in these causeways and have no plans to dismantle. Ongoing work is being undertaken. The new Holehaven causeway was officially opened last week.

### 5. Navigation Safety and Consultancy Matters

#### i. River Incidents

27/11/07	Cornmoat	Broke adrift Mucking Wharf grounded off Shellhaven recovered without further incident.
09/11/07	Cymbeline	Aliance Maura berthing NHCTU. Overlinking interaction incident – master issued with written reprimand.
13/12/07	Adsteam Mercia/Capt Saray	Near miss/girding incident rounding Tilburyness. Tugs in push/pull.
10/01/08	Pembroke Fisher	Sailing GATX1 strong ebb tide and high winds contacted with Black Shelf buoy. Vessels

		rudder and propeller damaged.
23/01/08	Almar	Small veg oil tanker minor grounding just east of West Blyth buoy. No damage/pollution in attending.
31/01/08	Grande Brasile	Engine failure. Gravesend Reach bow thrusters motor burnt out causing overload. Tugs to the rescue.
12/02/08	Helen	Minor incident contacted with marker site of old TRJ, vessel trying to keep clear of outward vessels, dense fog.
13/02/08	Calibur	RoRo blackout, emergency anchored just short of Northfleet terminal, no damage. Once power was restored, continued on passage to Til Dock.
23/02/08	British Robin/Philadelphia Express	Near miss. BR swinging CTN4. 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. Subject to MAIB investigation. Tug rules tightened.
21/03/08	Grande Amburgo	Vessel dragged anchor. Extreme wx flood tide.
03/04/08	Expansa	Lower Hope – position went through side of engine. Anchored, tug assist no injuries/pollution.

- RS commented that this is just a blip on our SMS and they were just catching up with a quiet period beforehand, whether it has levelled off the statistics yet, we are not sure. But one thing that has come to the fore is the amount of breakdowns and mechanical failures occurring.

BH commented that due to the state of the market shipowners are reticent to take ships out of service for repairs and maintenance.

- AH asked if it was possible to put a marker on the Tilbury Repair Jetty marker pile to show it's there. RS said the buoys mark the lower end, but not on the upper end.
- JP noted that NMT periodically identifies any trends and makes judgements through consultation with MCA and other organisations.
- RL said that there was a real problem with the dense fog and that pressure is put on pilots to do the job, the shipmasters get quite frightened. He knew of a near miss incident in Feb/Mar where a vessel went full astern and was very lucky not to damage the tugs or jetty. RS and JP both said that is the first they had heard of this incident and that it should have been reported as a near miss at the time.

**Action: RS**

## ii **Inland Waterways – national standards**

- JP said there was nothing specific to report on standards and there would be 2/3 years before any technical standards were issued. Following discussion it was decided to leave this item on the agenda for updating purposes at next meeting.
- Following on from a previous point, JP said that there was now a PLA grant to support Boat Master Licence training for local (London) trainees.

## iii **Olympic Arrangements Update**

- DA passed around pictures of Prescott Lock. He also said there were tenders out for companies to supply the concrete for the Olympic site and that five companies were bidding for the waste collection and disposal contract. Prescott Lock is scheduled to be opened by September.
- JP said our navigation was below the A13 bridge and British Waterways above the A13 bridge – they have all come to an agreement and the legal process is being dealt with at the moment. British Waterways will delegate and we will be using TBNC to manage navigation to

Prescott Locks and we will regulate traffic using our rules and regulations.

- JP took this opportunity to update everyone on the Marine Navigation Bill to implement management of safety in ports. He said he had just been informed by Dept of Transport that this will be out for public consultation at the end of this month. It will address three areas – Port Safety, General Lighthouse Authority issues and wreck removal. The port safety part of bill will reserve powers for Secretary of State to give directions to statutory harbour authorities if it feels the harbour authority are not undertaking their statutory duties properly and effectively in terms of management and navigation of its port.

## 6. Other Updates

- i. **MCA (BH)** – new CE has been in post for a year – lots of change since then. They have been losing experience in their HQ and locally they are also a surveyor down, but will be recruiting shortly.

Still doing BML's. Tripartite approach is proving successful. BML will seek to improve safety.

MCA are starting a District Safety Sub Committee, which will be known as Eastern Region District Marine Safety Sub Committee and shall cover the inland waters, rivers, estuarial waters, tidal waters, harbours and coastal waters in the geographic area. It shall report to the Maritime Safety Co-ordinating Committee through Eastern District Marine Safety Committee. The purpose of the Committee shall be to raise awareness and provide a forum for discussion of proposals for safety measures affecting ships, crews, other water users, riparian occupiers or waters in the area, member organisations or others. This Committee will meet annually, though the Chairman may call additional meetings if circumstances require.

- ii. **Environment Agency (LD)** – Expecting to have an EA Agreement up and running over the next few weeks regarding Sewage Treatments, essentially this Agreement will enhance standards.

Last year was very quiet, no major incidents.

EA will be putting in three water quality monitoring pontoons in the upper reaches.

Their Fisheries Team are doing surveys next month because a Seahorse was found, along with a couple of salmon.

Code of Conduct being put in place for Personal Water Craft.

iii. **RNLI (ID)**

RNLI attended 99 callouts in the Lower end over the past year.

There has been a reduction in hoax calls. Kent Police are in process of prosecuting a hoax caller who used a CB radio.

As far as their operation is concerned, the current class of boat is coming to the end of its life and a decision has been made for the provision of a different type of boat. The "Atlantic 85" with twin outboards has been identified as suitable.

Fuel Barge - which will be shared use with PLA, Essex Police and others should prove to be successful.

Likely to be on-going industrial action with Coastguard colleagues, which is proving to be a communications headache for them.

Pointed out that Incidents tend to be leisure users, particularly on the North side.

**7. River Events**

3 <sup>rd</sup> May	Benfleet Y/C Race to Chatham
17 <sup>th</sup> May	Benfleet Y/C Queenborough Run
25 <sup>th</sup> /26 <sup>th</sup> May	Southend Air Show
7 <sup>th</sup> /8 <sup>th</sup> June	Gravesend Summer Regatta
14 <sup>th</sup> June	Benfleet Y/C Wilson Trophy
5 <sup>th</sup> /6 <sup>th</sup> July	Gravesend Grand Prix/Big Day Out
12 <sup>th</sup> July	Thames Sailing Barge Match
16 <sup>th</sup> /17 <sup>th</sup> August	Gravesend Shrimpers Regatta
23 <sup>rd</sup> August	Benfleet Y/C Race to London
7 <sup>th</sup> November	Gravesend Fireworks Display

**8. River Works**

- i. RYA (JS) wished to comment on the Canal Basin. GSC are not happy with the management, people are reluctant to open the gates. At Gravesend Sailing Club boats are leaving and the borough do not want anything to do with it, even developers want to pass it on. There should be a second gate put in.

- ii. Lower Thames Crossings – RS explained the proposals received from Metrotidad for a tunnel under the Thames with associated tidal lagoon.

TE2100 have proposals in for other crossings.

## 9. **Any Other Business**

AH (Waterman) attended a meeting here 2/3 years ago re Mooring Buoys and asked three questions. Firstly, Hook Buoys are used on the continent, did the idea spread here? Secondly, Moorings on River regarding ships – a liaison is needed with pilots, so that everyone is on the same song sheet. When a ship approaches the berth, everyone should know what is expected. Thirdly, Ropes buried in automatic ropes – particularly in RoRo berth – could they prepare ropes so they run free?

JP replied – the well established local Code of Practice for safe mooring generally covered all these points.

RS said Hook Buoys (Stayright Buoys) are used at Kingnorth on the Medway, but provision is ultimately up to the Berth Owner.

RR (Kent Police) noted that Gravesend Police station had moved premises to Thamesway, Northfleet.

JS (RYA) commented – with regard to wash/speed – what control is there over barges going through moorings and could they be asked/recommended to go outside.

RS will have a word with Barge owners

**Action: RS**

RS said there was a proposal for a pontoon at the end of Tower Pier, which, providing all issues are addressed, should go ahead. The pontoon will be 30m long by 10m wide and access will include provision to satisfy disability regulations.

RS said our opinion was asked for a small marina there too, the primary reason is for a pontoon for the Tilbury Ferry, which will also enable open competition.

## 10. **Time/Date of Next Meeting**

7<sup>th</sup> November @ 1030 LRH.

Meeting closed at 1255 approx.