

**Notes of River Users Consultative Forum (Lower) Meeting**  
**7<sup>th</sup> November 2008**

Present:-

|                       |    |  |
|-----------------------|----|--|
| Captain Roy Stanbrook | RS | HM(L)                                    |
| Captain Julian Parkes | JP | HM(SMS)                                  |
| Captain Chris McQueen | CM | DHM(L)                                   |
| Nick Evans            | NE | PLA                                      |
| Alan Hurrell          | AH | Watermen & Lightermen                    |
| Richard Lukes         | RL | T&GWU                                    |
| David Allen           | DA | Alan C Bennett & Sons Ltd/RAFT           |
| David Brown           | DB | Svitzer                                  |
| Kevin Boyd            | KB | Svitzer                                  |
| Alan Turner           | AT | Port of Tilbury                          |
| John Skellorn         | JS | RYA (SE Region)                          |
| Ian Dunkley           | ID | RNLI (Gravesend)                         |
| Bryan Hopkins         | BH | MCA                                      |
| Gary Jones            | GJ | Kent & Essex Joint Marine Unit Police    |
| Peter Smith           | PS | ARA                                      |
| D Chard               | DC | London Ship Owners & River Users Society |
| J Warren              | JW | SFA                                      |

Meeting opened at 1035

**1. Apologies**

R Exley, HM Tilbury. M Shefras, Assoc of Thames Y/C. R Barker, Trinity House. K Harris, PLA. J Window, PLA, David Gordon, RAFT. Peter Finch, River Thames Society. D Godbold, SFA. Laura Dowsett EA.

Chairman welcomed Gary Jones Essex & Kent joint police marine unit and Nick Evans PLA trainee.

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

Accepted as a true record.

**3. Matters Arising from 2**

iv. Access points. RL asked about progress in updating access points. JP commented that a review of emergency access points is underway by the PLA, once completed the emergency services will be asked to comment on them as to their suitability from their perspective. Once this process is complete and list agreed they will be incorporated into the Ports emergency plans.

RL. Raised the issue of suitability of some of the existing sites and in particular the fact that tugs can not get to them because of lack of water. RL added that their list of access points is at odds with that held by the fire brigade and was making the point for a common list to be held by all parties.

JP agreed that this was an issue but there were also many others that also need to be taken into account and it is accepted that some sites may not be suitable on all occasions.

JP commented that the existing access points are listed in the emergency plans to which all the emergency services hold and other partners on the river.

JP agreed that emergency plans together with emergency access points will be placed on the internet and promulgate through the Watermans group.

**Action: HM(SMS)**

ii Inland waterways – national standards

ID informed meeting that RNLI had approached PLA for PLA grant for BML but had been turned down by A Gale because they did not meet the criteria, but did not know what the criteria was. JP said that the general criteria was grants would be available to support people working in the commercial port. JP suggested that ID arranges to have a face to face meeting with A Gale to further discuss issue.

JP commented on ship towing in fog that the Flying Phantom MAIB report had been received and reviewed to see where it may impact on PLA operations and procedures additionally a review of the voluntary tug code is just starting lead by HM(L) which will include towing in fog arrangements.

RL informed the group that he understood that the inland waterways standard had not been ratified in Europe yet. BH commented that he was not aware of this fact. It was decided that this would remain an agenda item.

**Action: DHML**

Marine Navigation Bill update, JP informed group that it had not included in the Queens speech.

RS asked JS if there had been any more incidents of barges going through mooring. JS replied no.

#### 4. PLA Sitrep

##### i. **Safety Management System**

JP informed updated meeting on SMS issues

- MAIB Reports are reviewed as part of the safety management system to see if there are lessons to be learned including Sea Mithril, Sichern Melborne and Flying Phantom reports.
- London gateway port is a Statutory Harbour Authority in its own right and has its own safety management systems its area of responsibilities which extends 60 metres off the jetties. DP world has agreed that their sms will dove tail with PLA existing SMS. Hazards identified in the sms have been reviewed in advance of the new berths becoming operational.
- The new draft Thames Byelaws 2008: The PLA has received feedback following public consultation and will publishing these shortly together with PLA response to them. Most of the feedback has been about the proposed new speed limit in London both for and against. The draft byelaws will be revised following consultation and presented to the PLA board before going to wider consultation by Dft. Once this is complete the draft byelaws will be confirmed by Dft and the existing byelaws revoked. The new byelaws are not expected to be in place now until end of 2009.
- New pleasure users guide new format is being worked on which will be more user friendly on waterproof paper similar to that used at other ports
- General directions and Pilotage directions are due for review 2009 and consultation process starting January 2009.
- PWC code nearly complete and it is to published in the early in the new year work.

ID asked if there are to be changes were they are allowed to be used. JP replied yes they are incorporated in the new Thames Byelaws. They will be allowed to used up to Margaretness subject PWCs being registered with HM.

- PLAs main over arching policies have been reviewed and there are no major changes.

- Guide to Berth operators has been updated and published in June. Including a section on floating drydocks and including a code of conduct.

## 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 - moderate.
- JP reported that the new Security Directive which cover the wider port area rather than the just the jetty area. Directive will be on the statute book by the end of the year. Consultation on the draft designation area ready in the new year outlining the new Port Security Authority which will cover ISPS berths and river on the Thames. The new authority it is hoped could be place by the middle of 2009, Medway is expected to be separate area.

GJ added that the police are mapping affected berths / facilities and areas of the river and are preparing patrol areas developing contacts with berth facilities officers. Patrols to start in the new year.

## iii **Environmental Matters**

- The Personal Watercraft Code of Conduct already commented on.
- Sea horses reported on the Thames have been given protected status in the area.

## iv. **General**

### Trade

RS reported that the downturn in trade reported has not yet to start to be reflected in the ports statistics, but reductions in certain levels of trade are starting to occur with quiet days being noted it is thought at the next meeting the port will be in a better position to gauge effects on the port.

RS reported that the optimising Pilotage project is drawing towards a close the aim is to make the port more efficient. The new Pilotage management structure has been expanded and should be better able to deliver a better service.

R Carr, Pilotage Manager is to retire at the end of the year and he is to be replaced by Peter Steen on the 1<sup>st</sup> December, Peter is currently our Marine Services Manager.

DA asked to put on the record disappointment at a letter recently received from the PLA about the substantial increases in port charges being proposed and to be put to the board in November. DA added the 15% increase in craft registration and 5 % less 1% for other charges is completely inappropriate they will be taking place against a background of fall off in business due to the downturn and increasing costs of operating craft on the river. JP informed meeting that charge increase regarding craft registration surveying activities was necessary to better cover costs of survey inspections.

DA spoke of licensing difficulties of craft with British Waterways for the Olympic site and the heavy costs being incurred with craft needing dual registration. JP commented that there was an agreement in place BW and PLA .

**Action:** JP undertook action to investigate this further with BW.

DC stated that they continue to monitor changes to Pilotage departments, he had not sighted the proposed new conservancy and Pilotage charges but whilst not surprised expressed his concern over increases in charges and made a plea for them to be kept as low as possible, cost effective and if possible reduced.

RL asked a question on who licenses tugs for Pilotage duty as only one Svitzer tug is currently licensed. BH added work is undertaken by MCA. KB commented it was for Svitzer management to address.

## 5. Navigation Safety and Consultancy Matters

### i. River Incidents

|          |            |  |
|----------|------------|--|
| 19/06/08 | Clementine | Vessel passed Vopak 2 at speed causing ship alongside causing a draw off effect terminals automatic shutdown system to be activated. |
| 20/06/08 | Ballyhealy | Erratic navigation complaint in the Oaze precautionary area  |
| 18/06/08 | Manitoba   | Barge sunk whilst coming away from sand loaders at Ameys. Rip in barges side caused by section of angle iron extending outwards      |

|          |                |  |
|----------|----------------|--|
|          |                | from the berth.  |
| 22/06/08 | Clementine     | Vessel suffered power failure of CPP in Gravesend Reach and required tug assistance whilst problem was being resolved.   |
| 09/08/08 | Bro Gratitude  | Whilst backing away from Coryton 1 at slack water. The vessels port anchor got caught on a shore fender causing damage to fender.  |
| 31/08/08 | Euro Discovery | In dense fog and on an ebb tide the vessel head up on NHCTL sailed swung to port off the berth and when rounding Tilburyness set strongly to the south contacting Northfleet Thames terminal causing minor damage to ship and shore fender.  |
| 03/09/08 | Fehn Castor    | Vessel suffered fracture to a sea water main engine cooling system vessel was anchored mid channel off Holehaven. Once the damage and repair time had been identified the vessel was directed to take tug and was towed to a designated anchorage to carry out repairs.  |
| 18/09/08 | Yeya 1         | The vessel overshot the Warps pilot station, failed to respond to VTS instructions to stop and wait at pilot station. A near miss incident occurred with the inward bound bulk carrier Mount Travers forcing the MT to pass south of SR1. Incident was reported to MCA. The Masters lack of understanding of English was major contributory factor to the cause of the incident. |
| 30/09/08 | Napia          | Napia towing alongside a barge in the swatchway wires parted due to wash from outward vessel in Sea Reach.   |

**Note:** BH reported MCA did detain the Yeya 1 for number of deficiencies and raised Yeya 1 incident with the flag state. Following the incident the vessel is required to take a pilot from outer port limits and any movements within the port. The vessels master and crew are in dispute with the ships owners over non payment of wages and ITF have been made aware of their predicament .

CM reported that the River Inspectors have started inspecting riverside berths on regular basis, principally to look for signs of damage ie, to fenders, general conditions of the jetties, exposed steel work etc, additionally looking at access ladders, access to mooring bollards from both River Works licence and Health and Safety perspective. A report is then compiled and given to the berth operators managers, feedback received from the berth managers has been positive. River users are requested to report issues with berths using the berth deficiency report form now available on the PLA website.

ii **Inland Waterways – national standards**

Nothing to report

RL asked who was the practitioner on the BML local knowledge exams as he had heard it was a retired manager, he felt the practitioner should be person working on the river regularly. BH replied persons used to date have been people working on the river and their knowledge was up to date. CM gave Derek Mann from Thames Clippers as an example of practitioner who sits on the BML exam board.

BH commented that they had noticed an improvement in the pass rates during recent examinations as the NW Kent College develop their courses.

iii **Olympic Arrangements Update**

DA informed meeting Prescott lock is now complete including trials and had been looking forward to moving up to 4000 tons of material through the lock. However a problem has arisen in that when clearing lock inwards vessels ground as there is insufficient water. 2.5 million pound dredging works needs to be carried out between the lock and wharf to make it useable for barge traffic. DA understands this investment is unlikely to occur in the present financial climate and not considered essential for development of the Olympic site by the developers. Additionally because of the credit crunch there has been a collapse in charge rates for moving material by road and the need to contain costs for development of the Olympic site are making barge traffic unviable.

DA added extensive work on the Blackwall tunnel replacement ventilation systems will mean one bore at a time will be closed in the new year. Works are expected to take one year.

6. **Other Updates**

- i. GJ took the opportunity on behalf of Kent Police to thank the PLA for their robust response to the Rainbow warrior

and other incidents. In particular the giving and enforcement of special directions.

BH on behalf MCA thanked pilots for reporting of deficiencies. In particular the recent incident with a Ukrainian Master being taken to court over an alcohol offence, Essex police and PLA were thanked for prompt action in assisting MCA. BH reported that at the moment they are two surveyors short and are not in a position to respond to every notification at the moment and notifications are being graded as to their seriousness, however he hopes to have a replacement surveyor shortly but it will take time before he is up to speed and able to undertake every task.

BH reported the District Marine Safety committee sub group has been looking into Class v passenger vessels incidents and following a particularly serious incident at Westminster pier which had highlighted poor procedure / practice of steaming ahead on a spring alongside a pier whilst loading or unloading passengers. A draft passenger vessel code is being developed by MCA, London River services and passenger boat association it is hoped this will be ready and in place in the spring.

BH reported that large falls in freight rates are occurring in certain trades bulk, container in particular with ships being laid up around the world, shipping companies are dropping ports and banks have stopped issuing letters of credit for goods.

BH reported that the MCA had still not recruited Director of operations. BH opened for discussion the need to have common understanding for the definition of an incident as there appears to be great differences to the numbers of incidents happening or being reported on the river between agencies. It was recognised incidents are reported for wide range of reasons and to different organisations but it does not necessarily follow every incident will be reported to every organisation.

BH advised David White had taken up post a station manager at London Coastguard. LCG is now fully staffed.

ii. **RNLI (ID)**

Petrol fuel facility at Gravesend is just about ready to become operational which is being shared with PLA. The facility has been offered to Police but to date they have not taken the offer up. ID stated RNLI will consider any organisations which might want to use facility on a regular basis, but it is not intended to be available for the leisure users but in emergency RNLI may be able to assist.

ID commented on the number of incidents this year that are occurring associated with Thurrock Yacht club. It was agreed that PLA / RNLI do a joint presentation at the club. Club to be approached.

**Action: HML/ID**

## **7. River Events**

|                          |                             |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 7 <sup>th</sup> November | Gravesend Fireworks Display |
| 8 <sup>th</sup> November | Southend Fireworks Display  |

BH asked about PLA centenary events from next March. RS confirmed that there are various activities including concerts but as he understood they are not are not centred on the river.

## **8. River Works**

- i. LGP geotechnical investigations are starting a jack up rig will be undertaking borehole operations at various positions off LGP and yantlet channel, CPT and vibrocore surveys will also carried out Notice to Mariners has been published and river users are advised to listen for updates by VTS. A harbour empowerment order is in place to allow for the development of LGP and tidal works approval which similar to river works licence is required to be signed off by Secretary of State following scrutiny and recommendation by the PLA. Subject to TWA approval dredging works and building of the bunds is scheduled to start 5<sup>th</sup> January 2009. Main contractor is Laing O'Rourke and Dredging International joint venture have been appointed by DP World.
- ii. Belverdere waste construction of new jetty has started on the Borax wharf site. Costains are undertaking the construction.
- iii. Cross Rail nothing new to report.
- iv. Marina developments—Greenhithe marina original application was refused by the Dartford council, developers are to submit a fresh application. Rainham council with Veolia are interested in establishing a yacht club with mooring near to Coldharbour jetty opposite Erith yacht club.
- v. Wind Farms... Gunfleet sands construction has started, Tilbury turbines AT reported procurement contract has now been signed there is a lead in time for delivery of one year. Site investigations have started.
- vi. Canvey LNG... Developer Calor are expected to submit an new application at some stage. Dredging work at the site is underway to deepen the box for current LPG vessels that use the berth.
- vii. Northfleet jetty no new developments to report.

- viii. Lower Thames Crossings – Metrotidal are still developing their proposal for a tunnel under the Thames with associated tidal lagoon.
- ix. Thames Gateway Bridge has been cancelled by Mayor of London.

**9. Any Other Business**

DB reported Svitzer are maintaining six tugs on the Thames. They are starting to notice a decline in their business and are seeking external work elsewhere around the country. Anglia and Redbridge are to return to the river in a week. KB added maintaining the voiths whilst popular with crews and pilots are becoming more difficult to maintain as they age. AZDs are likely to replace the voiths and training of crews and pilots will be required and beneficial.

JW reported that survey vessels Confidante and another one unnamed which are currently working the sea reach that their sounders are causing problems with the fish population being constantly moved on because of the noise they generate. Catches are well down as a result.

JW also reported that they still had not received compensation from DP World. Concern was also expressed about the positions of redline data monitoring buoys in the fishing grounds. RS commented that when TWA is granted this would trigger compensation payments. JW stated the current survey work is already seriously interfering their way of life.

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

8<sup>th</sup> May 2009 @ 1030 LRH.