

Notes of the River Users Consultative Forum (Estuary) Minutes 9th November 2007.

Present:-

Capt Roy Stanbrook	RS	HM(L)
Capt Chris McQueen	CM	DHM(L)
Capt Julian Parkes	JP	HM(SMS)
Rod Owen	RO	PLA (Pilot)
John Window	JW	PLA
Roger Barker	RB	Trinity House
Mike Shefras	MS	RYA/ATYC
William Wright	WW	E K & E S F
Andrew Rudge	AR	MCA
Chris Edwards	CE	RYA Eastern
Tom Simms	TS	RYA South East
Ken Waller	KW	MYA
Steve Gobbi	SG	HM Medway
Cathryn Spain	CS	AHM Medway
Darryl Godbold	DG	SFA

1. Apologies

Katherine Harris PLA, Steve Rogers Castle Point B.C. Sgt Salter Essex Marine Police, Lee Sturgen, S Jessop MCA

2. Notes of last minutes meeting 20th April 2007 agreed

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3. Matters arising from 2

- a) Leisure guide production of guide is now actively being taken forward.
Action: RS
- b) Essex estuaries marine site stalled
- c) PWC Castle point work shop took place, new launch sites, signage all being taken forward. Work is ongoing. Met MSU has raised the issue of using PWCs in their work as part of the Olympic project.
- d) Electronic hidden information on electronic charts issue has been raised with the manufacturers.

4. PLA sitrep

- JP update on Calor gas LNG project will be given by RS.

Several Navigational Advisory panels have been convened during the period, including those addressing:

- Removal of Gravesend Ship tier.
- Large containership assessed limits for such a vessel on NHCT following an approach to take larger vessels than normally taken at TCS.
- Break out of container vessel from NHCTU.

In the wider SMS, the following points were noted:

- Pilotage Directions 2006 - Small amendment. The compulsory Pilotage 50GT limit above Margaretness has been removed (now only 40m criteria)..
- Revision of river byelaws is on going to be re-named Thames byelaws 2008. Hope to go to informal public consultation early in 2008.
- External audit of SMS by an external marine consultants was undertaken in July. A number of recommendations were made but in general system was found to be fit for purpose. One recommendation is to widen the scope of SMS to include Health & Safety incidents that can impact on safety of navigation. A summary of the report findings is available on the PLA website. ([portoflondon.co.uk/navigational_safety/marine_safety/PMSC Healthcheck Report July 2007](http://portoflondon.co.uk/navigational_safety/marine_safety/PMSC_Healthcheck_Report_July_2007))
- The Forum was reminded that all published MAIB reports are reviewed by NMT and any findings, lessons learnt applicable to Port are taken on board and promulgated as necessary.

Port Security

- ISPS Security level remains at Level 1. National threat level remains at SEVERE.
- New EU directive on Port Security - Draft enabling regulations not expected for industry consultation until end of year at the earliest. New regulation will widen the scope of ISPS to include Port estate beyond the berth. JP commented that almost 30 new Port Security Authorities would be established across the UK to overseeing port security and would operate with advice from the police, security services and other relevant government agencies.

Environment Matters

RS updated the group

Water Framework Directive

Work continues on the Thames River Basin Management Plan. The 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.

CE raised issues of errors in the Anglian area region document on this subject.

Marine Works (EIA) Regulations 2007

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

Archaeological diving operations to commence 5th November in the estuary to inspect and survey wreck. NTM issued & available on website.

General -

Trade

Overall 2% above last year

This was largely achieved by a 12% rise in crude oil due in the main to the refinery coming back on line after an extended period of maintenance. However the recent fire at Coryton has meant that the refinery is closed at the moment but it is thought impact is likely to be short term and the refinery will be back operationally fairly quickly.

- Oil product up 2%
- Aggregates up 11%
- Unitised loads up 2%
- Coal up 9%
- Forest products down 17%
- Iron steel & other metals down 30%
- Veg oil & oil seeds down 27%
- Cement up 41%
- Other business down 13%

Development of Local Lighterage course,

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A meeting has taken place with local lighterage employers/practitioners to confirm the need for such a course. If that is the case, the PLA as part of a general policy to support maritime training is prepared to support the development of local lighterage course, working with the industry & NW Kent College as it recognises lighterage skills. I have an important and continuing role in port safety.

ii) Waterways national standards.

JP informed the group that whilst the transport select committee had some reservations about the introduction of the BML this was not the view of government and new regulations are in place for the BML and no change is envisaged. JP added that a BML training course was being offered by NW Kent College & PLA was prepared to help with funding, £500 per candidate. PW (MSU) asked whether they could access funding for training their officers, JP replied that this would be looked at sympathetically.

Discussion followed.

DG asked whether grants would be available for the local fishermen, forum felt this would be beneficial even though there is not an actual requirement to hold a BML. PLA sympathetic to the idea and would consider it.

TS. RYA has introduced a new two day course for beginners covering basic safety & navigation.

JP raised the issue of training for mates & crew as nothing exists at this time. AR replied that MCA does ask boat companies to have training schemes for their crews.

JP was unable to give a progress report on when the new Inland Waterways technical standards developed by MCA and industry would be enacted.

5. Navigational Safety and Consultancy Matters

1, River incidents

CM reported on incidents since the last meeting

05/07/07	Bacoliner 1	The vessel was anchored in Chapman 3 anchorage using her stern anchor to allow for barge transfer through the bow. Weighed anchor & re-anchored again dragged using stern anchor, vessel dropped her starboard anchor in an attempt to stop the vessel dragging the anchor & length of chain were lost, vessel dragged down onto the Bro Genus & anchor cables became entangled. Pilot and tug assistance was summoned. With pilot on board vessel freed herself and vessel was re-anchored in Z6. Tug assistance was in the end not required. West'y wind 3 or 4 & tide ebbing.
01/11/2007	Valentine v Madison	Interaction incident occurred when the Valentine was overtaking the loaded tanker Madison outward bound vessel between SR7 & 6,

Sunk VTS / Traffic separation scheme

On the 1st July 2007 Sunk traffic separation scheme came into existence at the same time the MCA Sunk VTS scheme ceased. There are proposals and discussion being for replacing Sunk VTS. AR commented that Dover CG are monitoring the separation scheme using a mix of radar & AIS. The MCA are following up reported rogue vessels with the owners up to thirty vessels have been followed up.

RO commented that vessels are all on different VHF channels transiting the ex Sunk VTS area which is causing confusion amongst vessels as it is now very difficult to contact other vessels, he made a plea for a common VHF channel to be used. SG suggested idea is given to PLA pilot representative to put forward at regular MCA forum on Sunk area which is shortly to take place in Southampton. RB commented UK is in breach of an IMO submission supported by the UK navigation & safety committee for Sunk VTS as a key part of the Sunk traffic separation scheme.

RO stated the length of time it takes for correction to navigation charts to users was an issue when the separation scheme came into existence as corrections were take six weeks or more to get to ships. However vessels now transiting the area with not up to date navigation charts of the Sunk separation scheme whilst still a problem is now less so.

Marine Bill

- To be carried forward to next meeting.

6, Other Updates

i) MCA

- Categorisation of Walton backwaters on going.
- CE of MCA has announced a consultation process is about to take place on restructuring of MCA with the aim of reducing manning levels, which likely to be aimed at administration functions.
- IR issues still exist at Coastguard stations with staff, but key SAR capability is being maintained.

ii) Medway

- Medway and Swale Maritime Forum, PLA & other interested parties are invited to future meeting.
- Medway ISPS meeting PLA, invited to future meetings.
- Navigation Advisory Panel discussing general navigation issues, invitation to PLA HM & pilot to future meeting.

- RO requested invite should go to LPC so representative can be selected from the wider pilot body.
- LNG demolition of old jetty IOG No8 is underway. Phase 2 four new storage tanks for completion 2008. Phase 3 LNG second jetty due for completion 3rd quarter 2009. LNG market has changed and LNG ships visits to IOG are set to improve.
- Medway are expecting one LNG ship a week over the winter period

LNG Slots sold

1. Phase 1 53 slots
2. Phase 2 160 slots

- Contracts exist with BP/Sonatrach, Centrica & Gaz de France.
- The LNG project poses traffic management issues for Medway. LNG traffic rules are still developing and will remain in NTM form eventual aim for permanent set of rules eventually.
- HR Wallingford has undertaken studies on option on how to keep other traffic moving whilst allowing LNG vessels to move. Royal Haskoning has been asked to do further in depth assessment of options, they are to hold a meeting with regulators on the 26th November 2007 to discuss second Medway channel to north of original through the Great Nore anchorage & around the wreck. This is along term project other interested parties will be consulted at later stage as the project develops. Minutes of meetings will be available.
- Consultation on a secondary channel to south of main channel has been completed and issues raised has been addressed, purchase of buoys is underway for the channel.

iii) Riparian Boroughs / London Port Health / Environment Agency

- Nothing to report.

iv) Trinity House

- RB briefed the group on a extending the on going trial of synchronised lighting of navigation buoys in the Swale estuary. Further trial will take place 29th January 2008. Comment from users is sought.

v) New navigation aids in the Sunk traffic separation area is being monitored to see how they bed end in it is expected to be year before any charges are likely to be considered, comments on usefulness or otherwise on aid are sought. RO raised pilot concerns on the Sunk Inner buoy and informed group that the LPC had written to TH on the issue. Principal

concerns are that visually the present high focal plane buoy can be difficult to spot by day under certain light conditions and stressed the importance for the buoy to be highly visible as it is an important marker for pilots lining up for the Black deep & Barrows channels.

7. River Events

	Nothing to report
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8. River Works

London Gateway

- HEO is being worked on and is expected to be completed by the end of the first quarter 2008. work cannot commence until this hurdle is passed. Meanwhile wreck investigation & removal is being progressed.

Wind generation

Kentish Flats

- There are serious technical problems with the current windmills and the manufacturer Vesta has withdrawn from the offshore market.

Gunfleet Sands 1 & 2

- Both projects have been combined into one project & new developer DONG has taken over the project.

London Array

- Consent has now been given for the sub station ashore and River works licence is being processed for the power cables.

Thanet

- Work is expected to commence next year.

Princes Channel

- Contract for dredge to 8 metres has been signed with dredging commencing the first week of December and expected to last six weeks. NTM has been issued.

Canvey LNG

- Application has been withdrawn following Centrica's withdrawal from the project. It is expected that the Calor will resubmit application in the New Year. PLA has reservations about the project mainly concerning likely disruption to other river traffic.

9, AOB

E K & E S F New byelaws being put in place for collecting of mussels details can be found on the web site.

Medway DHM Andy Wilmore will be retiring March 2008 and Cathryn Spain will take over the post.

JW New PLA craft Easthaven has taken the waters to patrol Holehaven and Canvey area.

10, Date of next Meeting

9th May 2008 @1030 LRH.

Meeting closed 1225 approx

