

River Users Consultative Forum (Estuary) 20th April 2007

At London River House, Gravesend. The meeting opened 1030.

Present:-

Capt R Stanbrook	RS	HM(L)
Capt C McQueen	CM	DHM(L)
Capt J Parkes	JP	MASM
Katherine Harris	KH	PLA (MCT)
Rod Owen	RO	PLA (Pilot)
Steve Elliot	SE	Kent Police & representing Essex Police
Chris Edwards	CE	RYA Eastern Region
Mike Sherffras	MS	RYA/ATYC
Andrew Rudge	AR	MCA
William Wright	WW	K & E SF
Darryl Godbold	DG	SLFN
Beth Axtell	BA	EA
Mick Ross	MR	Southend Borough Council
Tim Simms	TS	RYA south east
Ken Waller	KW	MYA
R Barker	RB	Trinity House

1, Apologies

Received from Captain S Gobbi, Medway Ports; Sgt Jason Lane, Essex Police Marine Unit

Meeting opened with RS extending thanks to Gordon Dickins for his long & valued contribution to the port & to RUCF's in particular who has stood down as HM(L) and is shortly to retire.

2, Minutes of last meeting

20th October 2006 agreed.

3, Matters arising

- i, Essex estuaries marine site on going further enquires are to be made. **Action: KH**
- ii, Water Framework Directive boundaries. Boundary map distributed to members of forum, panels are to meet regularly, significant issues will be posted in PLA website environment section. **Action KH**
- iii, Benthic & fish surveys. DG commented that new species are appearing in the estuary underlining the importance of undertaking surveys & liaison with PLA /EA
- iv, Harwich style Leisure users guide, RS commented that he had received feed back from corporate affairs that they favoured retaining existing format because of the difficulty in creating a Harwich style guide covering upper, lower & estuary areas. RS sought views from members on how best to proceed, group felt Harwich style format was worth pursuing feedback received suggested having two guides an upper & lower version and possibility of having combined one with Medway. **Action: PLA to discuss further internally.**

v, Kentish Flats Offshore Wind Farm aero navigation lights

RS commented that Civil Aviation Authority had agreed that intensity of red area navigation lights could be dimmed to 10% of normal intensity but in poor weather conditions intensity would need to be increased. The method of achieving this was still being investigated.

Yellow flashing light synchronisation still to be fixed.

4 PLA SITREP

1, Safety Management system

JP updated forum

1, Two public consultations are currently underway: Pilot boarding & landing code now closed, Vessel reporting points shortly to close.

2, SMS review of hazards now complete, duplicated hazards have now been identified & merged.

- River byelaw review ongoing
- New Commercial craft towage code to be shortly published
- ISPS no issues security level remains at 1.
- new EU directive on Port security comes into effect 15th June, UK draft regulation not expected until end of year. New regulation will widen scope of ISPS to cover Port estate beyond berth.

c, Environment matters

KH updated the group

1. Intention of PLA to draw up code of conduct for use of personal water craft for Essex side of the Thames similar to that already produced by Kent County Council, initiative being undertaken in response to complaints received last year concerning irresponsible users. A local workshop on 18th May has been organised to include all stakeholders users & local clubs, regulators. RO emphasised the importance of education & safety as well navigation enforcement aspects need to be addressed in guide. SE outlined how Kent guidance code was produced. SE asked if PLA would consider inclusion for provision of fixed penalty notice for certain byelaw offences. SE commented that Kent Police is making representation to HM Medway for similar provision. JP replied saying they would investigate how such provision could be achieved. JP commented inclusion of Col regs within PLA byelaws will be retained as it gave PLA a route to enforce regulation of leisure vessels following decision of House of Lords ruling not to accept PWC as a power driven vessel. SE also commented Kent police are using ASBOs to ban use of PWCs & they are looking at other initiatives to seize cars trailers of PWCs. KH commented that the code should be ready by April 2008.

2. Marine environmental GIS. Purpose of GIS to collate all data from all science disciplines to monitor changes to the environment on the river. Expected to be complete by end of the year.

General Trade

- Mixed performance
- Crude oil overall levels down due to unplanned closure of refinery
- Trade up 5% but fuel traffic down 20%. Unitised traffic, metals and scrap down.
- Trade running below budget for year.

- OIKOS re-opened pipeline to supply 4 million cubic metres per annum of jet fuel airport.

- Bio fuels trials for power generation have ended because of difficulties encountered during transshipment.

5, Navigation safety & consultative matters

1. Estuary Incidents Nil

2. MCA District Marine Safety Committee JP & MR informed forum. that, PLA has been approached by MCA to consider an MCA initiative to merge Thames element of DMSC with PLA RUCF forums, PLA is generally supportive of idea but matter has still to be fully considered by NMT. This forum generally supportive provided DMSC matters can be handled without extending duration & numbers attending of meeting adversely.

3. Sunk traffic separation scheme comes into effect 0000 1st July, with buoys being repositioned on the previous day. RO expressed concern of the removal of Sunk light vessel & replacement with high focal plane buoy & highlighted the importance of existing Sunk Light Vessel to the pilot boarding in Sunk area of establishing vessels position quickly. RB replied that effectiveness of the new arrangements would be reviewed in six to eight months time. Deployment of new buoy pattern would be a difficult operation. Information about move would be made available shortly & arrangements made on to warn shipping.

4. Leisure craft crossing points in lower points promulgation in third party charting. RS commented much information is already contained within electronic charts but is hidden & easier access of information is desirable. The issue had been raised with manufacturers & hydrographic department.

5. Inland Waterways National Standards. New BML in force 1st January. PLA Watermens & Lighttermens byelaws have been revoked. JP stated that he thought that majority of new BMLs have been issued. New Technical standards for new builds are fully developed but legal implementation of standards delayed 2008/9, PLA however has adopted these new standards for PLA vessel licensing regime.

6. Craft anchoring in fairways continues to be a problem still in force is NTM28 of 2006. Discussion followed on difficulty of issue & how it could be addressed ranged from gentle prompting, education & liaison with police.
7. Update on Marine Bill deferred until next meeting.
8. Blacktail Spit East & West beacons. Consultation has now been completed & decision made for the lights on the beacons to be discontinued as navigation aids, but structures will not be removed. RB commented that the date for discontinuing lights on beacons will be after Sunk buoy moves final date to be agreed. TH & PLA will issue NTM.
9. Maplin Buoy to be moved & paired with West Swin buoy and changed to starboard lateral mark. PLA agree with proposed change.

6, Other updates

MCA.

AR reported

1. Person interested in BML directed to MCA web site
2. Categorise Walton backwaters between Stone point & Earlams beach demarcation between C & D waters.

Medway

1. All tide landing at Queenborough. Because of the dangerous state of pontoons it is now condemned and out of use . It is unknown when owners will reinstate this landing.

Riparian Boroughs

Southend

MR reported

1. Afloat boat section to be discontinued, one launch retained but not permanently manned. Pier & foreshore will modify their operation. It was thought Southend would discharge Statutory duty for moorings would be exercised from ashore.
2. Fog signal on pier head operation from 23rd April.
3. PWC slipway operator still being sought.
4. Visiting vessels to pier over summer Grand Turk, Sedov, Balmoral & Waverely
5. 27/28th May Southend airshow
6. Barge match end of August

Environment Agency BA

Projects

1. Working with water companies at tightening up measures on sewage water discharge into the Thames. The calculation of discharge volumes is to be treated in combination with other discharges and not on an individual treatment plant basis in order to improve water quality.
2. Giant east / west Thames sewer tunnel project has got go ahead 2015 to 2020 time scale for completion.
3. Bathing water season commences & water quality checks will be carried out.

Trinity House

1. RB commented that TH has been working closely with the MCA on Sunk traffic scheme project and emphasised all views are important and carefully considered before implementing change. RB additionally commented that whilst new technology such as virtual buoys have their place as do traditional methods marking when appropriate.
2. 20 class 2 buoys in the outer estuary in the Wallet & other locations are to be replaced with plastic buoys.

7, Estuary Events

4 th May	Flotilla of 40 fishing boats to sail up river to Parliament to protest over fishing quota cuts.
5 th May	Benfleet yacht club race from Benfleet to Chatham
27 th to 28 th May	Southend airshow
18 th to 22 nd July	Medway yacht Regatta

8, River Works

1, London Gateway decision still awaited not now expected until after the local elections in May.

2, Wind farms

- Kentish Flats Offshore Wind Farm, suffering serious technical difficulties with large number of turbine gearboxes failing.
- Gunfleet 1 & 2 scoping report has now been received. New owner DONG plans to combine two projects into one project expected to be on stream 2008/9.
- Consents have now been given for the London Array has now been given. Planning consent for the landing site for power cables on north Kent coast still need to be resolved as permission for sub station has been refused. Construction is due to start by the end of 2008..

3, Brit Ned cable

no news

4, Princes Channel

PLA board has given approval for expenditure for 8.0m dredge subject to no beneficial user being found by spring next year. The dredge expected to be complete by end of year. The project has been split into two parts: One concerning the dredge including the beneficial use of material and a second navigation project looking at safety of navigation issues within Princes channel considering the hazards and risk mitigation factors but ensuring safe & cost effective solution is found. RO questioned why project was being split and why is there the need to dredge when the port has the Fishermans Gat . RS replied that there was a risk that FG would close over time as North Edinburgh channels did in short order together with the issues of increased traffic expected from London Gateway Port..

5. Canvey LNG

Planning permission has been refused although this will be appealed by operators and is expected to go to public inquiry.

9. AOB

DG raised issue of recent recovery of tanker bunker type pipe full of mud & some oil & problems caused to fishing vessels. DG made a plea for consideration before dumping materials in the river.

10. Date of next meeting 19th October 2007 @1030

Meeting closed 1240