

POLICY FOR MANAGING THE SAFETY OF NAVIGATION

The Port of London Authority (PLA) has a primary responsibility to maintain safe access and to manage and support the safety of navigation for all vessels using the tidal River Thames.

The Port of London Act 1968 (as amended) makes it the duty of the PLA to take action as ‘... necessary or desirable for the improvement and conservancy of the Thames. ...’ and gives the PLA ‘... power to provide, maintain, operate and improve such port services and facilities ...’.

Furthermore, Section 6 of the Port of London Act 1968 (as amended), taking its lead from the Harbours, Docks and Piers Clauses Act 1847 and subject to compliance with PLA enactments, byelaws and regulations and payment of PLA charges requires that ‘... *the port premises shall be open to all persons for the shipping and unshipping of goods, and the embarking and landing of passengers. ...*’. To this end, it is Board policy that the PLA shall manage the safety of navigation according to the following Governing Principles and Key Objectives:

Governing Principles

- Comply fully with the standards laid down in the Port Marine Safety Code (PMSC). The Board of the PLA as the Duty Holder are collectively and individually accountable for the management of marine safety under the Code.
- The Authorised Channel, marked by pecked lines on PLA and Admiralty charts is the main channel for navigation and should not under any circumstances be obstructed by any permanent works. Temporary obstruction or closure of the Authorised Channel for sporting or cultural events may be permitted only in exceptional circumstances or for significant public events.
- Bridge arches should be kept clear of obstructions. Temporary obstruction or closure of bridge arches will only be permitted when strictly necessary, such as to facilitate bridge maintenance or to deal with an emergency situation in the bridge arch. When it is necessary to effect the temporary closure of a bridge arch, care will be taken to ensure whenever possible that two-way traffic may be maintained.
- The PLA will endeavour, whenever possible to maintain a 15 metre channel either side of the Authorised Channel to enable vessels manoeuvring onto or off berths and recreational vessels to remain clear of traffic navigating in the Authorised Channel.
- In parts of the river where significant recreational activity takes place such as above Putney Bridge, or in the vicinity of boat or sailing clubs the safety of navigation will be managed appropriately to account for this factor.

Key Objectives

- Maintain an appropriate and effective marine Safety Management System (SMS) based on continuous, formal assessment and mitigation of risk, in consultation with river users.
- Monitor, review and audit the SMS regularly. Appoint a Designated Person to provide independent assurance to the PLA Board (or Duty Holder) that the PLA is compliant with the PMSC and maintains an appropriate and effective marine SMS.
- Review regularly the effectiveness of, and if necessary seek amendments to, its legal powers and regulatory framework, including Byelaws and Directions in respect of navigational safety.
- Employ competent people qualified and trained to the appropriate standards.
- Publish a Marine Safety Plan every three years and report annually performance against the plan.
- Ensure that all policies, byelaws, directions and procedures are properly and effectively applied and enforced.
- Investigate all navigational incidents and near misses to determine the cause in order to reduce the incidence and severity and inform the risk assessment processes; and to decide whether or not an offence has been committed.
- Conserve the harbour so that it remains fit and safe for use by all its users.
- Provide effective management and co-ordination in respect of the PLA's response to emergency maritime incidents within its area of jurisdiction.
- Consult widely with port and river users and other relevant stakeholders in respect of navigational safety issues and proposed changes to navigational regulations and arrangements.
- Verify the fitness for purpose of licensed inland waterways commercial vessels by inspection, ensure effective supporting operational safety management systems and where appropriate, define and enforce minimum crew competencies.
- Ensure, through an appropriate level of risk assessment that the licensing of river works takes due regard of the safety of navigation, including consultation when appropriate with relevant stakeholders.
- Monitor the safety, access/egress arrangements and general condition of berths, jetties and wharves; and provide guidance and advice to berth owners in support of them ensuring their facilities are safe and fit for purpose.
- Monitor and manage the safety and efficiency of vessel traffic within the VTS Area through the provision of an Information Service, a Traffic Organisation and a Navigational Assistance Service, as appropriate.
- Provide appropriate pilotage services in accordance with the Pilotage Act 1987.

BOARD APPROVED
09.12.14