



Notes of River Users Consultative Forum (Lower & Estuary) Meeting

19TH May 2016 @ 10.30 hrs at London River House

Chair

Cathryn Spain CS Harbour Master Lower – PLA

Attendees

Simon Phillips	SP	Deputy Harbour Master Lower - PLA
John Window	JW	Haven Master Canvey Island – PLA
Steve Rushbrook	SR	Deputy Harbour Master Lower – PLA
Sandra Baker	SLB	Executive Assistant PLA
Sarah Broad	SB	Nav. Safety Systems Co-ordinator
Denise Rowley	DR	Environment Officer, PLA
Linda Potter	LP	London River Users
Neil Withers	NW	Thames Operations Manager, RNLI
Stuart Smith	ST	London Port Health Authority
Andrew Rudge	AR	Maritime & Coastguard Agency
Stuart Strutton	SS	UK Manager, Kotugsmit Towage
Richard Hart	RH	Assn. Thames Yacht Clubs
Chris Edwards	CE	RYA East
John Green	JG	RYA South East
Captain N. Dodson	ND	Trinity House
Geoff Holland	GH	Harbour Master, Port of Tilbury
Ian Clark	IC	Medway Peel Ports
Kevin Beacon	KB	Medway Peel Ports

1. **Welcome & Apologies**

Archie Turnbull MCA (now retired), Melanie Norris – Gravesham Council, D Harding, D. Whitby - Cemex, D. Read – London Port Health Authority, Insp. K. Thomas – Kent Police, J. Parkes PLA, P. Wilkinson - PLA, Capt. R. Barker, J. Potter – Passenger Boat Co, K. Boyd - Svitzer

2. **Minutes of last RUCF (Lower & Estuary) 12th November 2016**

Minutes from the previous meeting were agreed

Matters Arising – *bridge proposals at Dartford Creek - to be discussed under Agenda Item 5h, river works.*

3. **Review of Membership**

An email will be issued to all members in order to update attendance at future RUCF meetings, also requesting feedback on items for the agenda. It was suggested to have one representative from each organisation, as the point of contact and main representative, who may be deputised.

Action: CS to email all members regarding membership and agenda

4. **PLA Update**

Julian Parkes will continue his secondment as Interim CEO for the Thames Skills Academy and in the intervening period Cathryn Spain will continue as Lower District Harbour Master, as well as providing oversight to the Safety Management and Vessel Licensing teams.

John Window announced his retirement at the end of June, after 51 years of working at the PLA.

5a **Marine Operations** – covered under Agenda item 5h

5b **Navigational Incidents**

Lower District Navigational Safety Incidents November 2015 – April 2016

(See Appendix 1 attached)

- There was an overall decrease in incidents compared to last six months (68 reduced from 90) – mainly to due a reduction in machinery deficiencies.
- There were 2 ‘serious’ incidents in the period compared to 3 in previous 6 months and no ‘very serious’. (One was a near miss due to fog which had been addressed with the vessel concerned)
- There was an increase in pilot ladder deficiencies from 2 to 9
- Other incidents included a crew injury on board, mooring breakout, dropped bale from cargo ship, tug fouling its line, a line caught in vessel’s propeller and a vessel not having the correct charts.

Recreational Incidents:

- A ‘Dutch’ type barge cut across a cargo vessel in Sea Reach
- A cabin cruiser lost engine power and grounded in Gravesend Reach
- A ‘Dutch’ type barge was leaking diesel during her passage out
- Small commercial fishing boat at Folkestone – inappropriate navigation

There were no reported incidents of ‘inappropriate navigation’ (in comparison to reporting at Dover) The necessity of reporting any incident/issues in order that they can be addressed and the awareness promulgated – especially in the case of ‘lack of knowledge’ – was reinforced.

No near miss reports nor feedback is currently being received from recreational craft and going forwards this was to be encouraged. The emphasis of reporting (without blame) was highlighted and work is in hand to look towards a ‘user-friendly’ on-line reporting tool.

5c **Navigational Matters**

i Leigh Buoy

The Leigh Buoy, which the PLA maintains, is at the entrance to the Leigh Channel. It is a starboard hand mark, but most users entering the channel are leaving the buoy to port. ND suggested that a new survey is required prior to considering whether to change the characteristics of the buoy or move it. JW advised the area was busy with cockle boats, fishing boats and Benfleet Yacht Club. CE will seek views of Benfleet Club.

Action: CS to liaise with John Pinder re an accurate, up-to-date survey.
CE to seek views of Benfleet Club.

ii NE Maplin/ Maplin Middle

The buoy has been shifted outside the firing range and re-named. Feedback has previously been sought as to whether the buoy, which is a Class 3 buoy, has adequate visibility. There has been very little feedback since the buoy was shifted so

it was agreed that if no-one has any further comments the item can now be closed out.

5d Risk Assessments

There has been a slow response from yacht clubs to the PLA's request to submit their annual risk assessments (5 received to date). A reminder email will be issued.

Action: SP to issue a reminder to clubs on Risk Assessments

5e Regulatory Update

i Thames Byelaws

The PLA has completed a Second Informal Public Consultation on amendments to 4 Thames Byelaws:

- No. 15 Restrictions on Moorings
- No. 49 Discharge of Sewage into the Thames
- No. 58 Navigation under the influence of Drink or Drugs (including revocation of old River Byelaw No. 9 Drink & Drugs)
- No. 59 Repair of Licensed Works and Structures

They have undergone a second informal consultation, with further amendments, following feedback, especially on No.15. They will go to the Board, for approval, in July and should be issued towards the end of 2016.

ii General Directions

The updated Directions have been approved by the Board and should come into force in July 2016.

iii Code of Practice for Passenger Vessel Operations on the Thames

The Code has recently undergone a scheduled 3-year review and been updated to be more user-friendly – due to be issued June/July 2016.

iv Code of Practice for Paddling on the Tideway

A new Code of Practice is in the process of being developed, in a user-friendly style.

v Recreational Users' Guide – Copies tabled

Reviewed every 2 years - comments and feedback requested by end Sept. to enable an updated version being issued at the beginning of 2017.

Action: All comments/Feedback to Lower District Harbour Master before Sept.

5f Port Security

The Thames Port Security Authority met in April.

Reference was made to a Port Security Cyber exercise which had generated wider interest, and there is a strong focus on cyber attacks.

There has been a shift in the patterns of illegal activity carried out from small vessels, such as RIBS. River users should remain vigilant and report anything suspicious.

5g Environmental Matters

The Marine Management Organisation (MMO) is starting consultation works on the Marine Plan for the South East Inshore area which includes the tidal Thames. The MMO is encouraging anyone with an interest in the marine area, or whose business relies on it, to get involved.

The PLA will be engaging with the MMO, but are only one voice so would encourage everyone to put forward their views. Once published, regulators will have to comply with the Plan when licensing activities.

A link to the consultation can be found below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/consultations-for-next-phase-of-marine-planning-opens>

5h River Works

- West Street Pier – Ongoing maintenance programme.
- Application in for development at Cliff Creek on the south side of the river, to accept spoil from the Thames Tideway Tunnel project. This may now change to a site at Goshems Farm on the north side, but there will still be a requirement for moorings for barges on the south side.
- Erith Yacht Club – Request to remove 8 moorings
- Paramount Park – Meeting with Licensing Team had taken place this week regarding possible links to London.
- Dartford Creek – Currently 3 proposals for bridges:
 1. Cycle bridge adjacent to the flood barrier (with airdrop criteria)
 2. Vehicle access bridge over the river Cray
 3. Cycle/pedestrian bridge down stream of lock on river Darent.

SR advised that a trip up the Creek had been planned for 20.5.16 to survey what works had been carried out and had requested local Planning to take a look at Proposal no. 1. CE raised concerns and wanted reassurance that the height of the bridges would be sufficient to allow access to be maintained.

5i River Events:

- 27th May – 28th June 2016 Balmoral (Trips from Gravesend)
- 25th June 2016 Thames Barge Match
- 26th June 2016 Nore Race
- 23rd July 2016 Benfleet YC Round Canvey Race
- 10th September 2016 Thames Trafalgar Race (Erith Yacht Club)
- 26th Sept – 2nd October 2016 Waverley (Trips from Gravesend)

For a full list of events for entire River see the PLA website

5. Members' Feedback & Questions

GH queried whether a surge incident involving the Magellan had been investigated.

Action: CS to update GH outside of the meeting

6. Members' Updates:

7a MCA

MCA, encouraged by the World Health Authority, on 29th February 2016 had launched a drowning strategy program to try to reduce drowning in the UK by 50% by 2026. It was stated that from data collected, more people die from drowning (400 per year) than cycling accidents or deaths in the home.

The MCA (survey and inspection side) is under review with the possibility of Orpington, Norwich and Harwich Offices closing down and instead operating out of Ipswich and Dover to cover the South East.

Publication Timeframe:

<i>Working Time Directive (for Inland waterways)</i>	- To be issued by year end
<i>Code of Safe Working Practice</i>	- New version issued last Autumn
<i>Port Marine Safety Code</i>	- Undergoing a substantial review
<i>Hire Boat Code</i>	- To be introduced
<i>Technical Requirements (Inland waterway craft)</i>	- Under negotiation

7b Environment Agency – No EA representative present

7c Trinity House – Nothing to report

7d Port of Tilbury

POTL purchased new land at Tilbury Power Station (including the jetty) to allow for expansion which will provide 3 new berths on the river in 2017.

Lock Gates – Currently working with Environmental Agency on upgrade, to form part of the flood defence for Tilbury, rather than having a separate barrier.

7e Medway Peel Ports

Kevin Beacon will be leaving Peel Ports in June and any further communication to be directed to himself. Grain Power Station chimney will now be demolished in Sept (not May) and a NtM will be issued to this effect.

7f London Gateway Port

No LGP representative present – CS advised new quay cranes in due for delivery in early June.

7g Police – No Police representative present

7h RNLI

RNLI undertaking a strategic review, considering development on the river during the last 15 years and plans for the next 10 years, with an aim to reduce accidents/drowning. He clarified that most drownings were due to self-harming. NW offered to do a presentation to the Group at the next meeting. The RNLI is working closely with CALM – Campaign Against Living Miserably)

Action: NW to provide a presentation for next Meeting

7i Royal Yachting Association – Nothing to report from East/South East

7j Recreational Clubs & Associations – Nothing to report

7k Vessel Operators

LP expressed disappointment at the recent notice on PISCES relative to booking Pilots that ‘a confirmed order did not mean a confirmed booking’ and that the onus was with them to check their bookings. A more personal approach would have been preferred.

Action: CS to pass on the message to Pilotage

Any other Business

NIL

7. Date of Next Meeting - Thursday 24th November 2016 @ 10.30 hrs.