



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

22nd May 2018 @ 10.30 hrs at London River House

Chair

Cathryn Spain CS Harbour Master Lower – PLA

Attendees

Tim Corthorn	TC	Deputy Harbour Master Lower - PLA
Sarah Broad	SB	Nav Safety Systems Coordinator – PLA (Notetaker)
Duncan Tysall	DT	Environment- PLA
Jon Beckett	JB	Manager, SMS – PLA
Natalie Adams	NA	RNLI
Jason Carroll	JC	RNLI
Richard Hart	RH	Assn. Thames Yacht Clubs
John Green	JG	RYA London & South East
Geoff Holland	GH	Harbour Master, Port of Tilbury
Terry Leach	TL	HM Coastguard
Sven Lumber	SL	Svitzer
David Allsopp	DA	Svitzer
Rachel Marshall	RM	Kent Police Special Branch
Colin Maguire	CM	Kent Police Special Branch
Mike Sharp	MS	Shoeburyness Watermans Association
Adam Stratford	AS	MCA
Phil Dulson	PD	Kotug
Tipu Parvez	TP	Cory Environmental
Trevor Harris	TH	Trinity House
Alan Hurrell	AH	Shipserv Thames Ltd.
Linda Potter	LP	Armac Shipping
Colin Hitchcock	CH	London Gateway

- 1. Apologies: Simon Phillips, Colin Middlemiss, Fiona Craven, Gravesham Borough Council, J Potter, Neil Bixby, Peter Fitzsimons, Stuart Strutton, Tanya Ferry, Alex Hurrell.**
- 2. Minutes of last RUCF (Lower & Estuary) 23rd November 2017**

Minutes from the previous meeting were agreed. There was a question raised by JG as to why the minutes of the last meeting were not present on the website. The reason behind this being that the minutes are only put up once approved by the RUCF at the meeting. CS to look at getting the minutes posted earlier on the website.
- 3. Matters Arising:**

Leigh Buoy – this has now been added to the survey programme and currently waiting for confirmation as to when this will go ahead. MS reiterated that there has been a lot of interest from recreational users in relation to this, and the buoy needs to be repositioned to take the channel into account, and to move to the starboard side. CS said that the survey should take place before the summer.

Action: CS to confirm when the minutes are sent out as to when this will take place. As soon as the survey has been completed PLA Marine Services to reposition buoy.

4a. PLA Update - Marine Operations:

There have been no changes directly within the Harbour Masters team. The structure of the Vessel Licensing team will be changing as of 1st June 2018 – when they will be reporting directly to the Marine Operations Department at Denton. Jason Rudd has now moved from his position as Marine Surveyor to take on the role of Marine Engineering Superintendent. Tom Parham has been recruited to the position left vacant by Jason of Marine Surveyor. Vessel Survey and Licensing elements will be split – licensing will be dealing with the issue of certificates/licensing elements; Vessel Survey will deal with the day-to-day surveying of vessels. Harbour Masters will continue to deal with any unlicensed vessels.

4b. Navigational Incidents:

Lower District Navigational Safety Incidents November 2017 - May 2018 (including near misses and deficiencies): Appendix 1

- There have been 3 ‘serious’ incidents in the last period compared with 3 ‘serious’ incidents in the previous period.
- Top Ten incidents are listed in the attached report – top three are Contact, Pilot Ladder Deficiency and Grounding.
- Near miss reports have plateaued. At the last RUCF there were 25 near misses for that period, for this period there have also been 25 near misses in total.
- The reporting of incidents is getting better, although difficult to identify whether incidents are increasing or just reporting has improved – reporting via Polaris for pilots is now easier (which may have contributed to the increase in near miss reporting).
- Dangerous heaving line reports are not included in these figures, as these are navigational incidents.

Recreational Incidents:

- There have been a total of 10 recreational incidents for the period 1st Nov – 30th April 2018; 8 incidents, 2 near misses and 0 deficiencies.
- Many recreational yachting incidents still go unreported – these are required to feed into risk assessments
- It is noted that the Motor Cruiser incident that came adrift off Gordon Promenade occurred during ‘Storm Emma’. TC reiterated that all river users need to check their moorings, in light of this incident, those that hold licenses must check and note any deficiencies.

It was mentioned that there have been a number a yachting incidents – navigating on portside when they should be starboard. CS said that the Harbour Launch try to intervene as much as they can, when they witness the potential for any incidents to occur, recording any educational advice that they give to recreational users. It should be noted that the majority of incidents at the Lower end of the river are made up of commercial shipping and not recreational vessels. RH commented that there are different views as to what a ‘Near Miss’ constitutes. The Upper end of the river’s near misses is generally made up of Class V vessels and lower end is rec users – proving difficult to judge. CS said it would be useful to build a picture of the near miss culture. MS – commented that it would be a good addition the Rec User Guide – to encourage the reporting of near misses, and engage clubs in the review of them. Key point of near miss reporting is what lessons can be learnt to prevent a repeat. Reporting of Incidents and Near Misses is available via the PLA website and App (potentially simplify).

JG – Communication/VTS – London VTS does not communicate on Channel 16 (mainly used by recreational users). CS – VTS do not generally operate on Channel 16. If VTS cannot contact a vessel, then they would speak to the nearest Harbour Service launch to contact the vessel. JG – thinks it would be easier to communicate on 16. CS advised to keep a dual watch on 16 and port frequencies.

Breakdown Analysis

JB drew attention to the recent Breakdown Analysis on Commercial Shipping – the report can be found t the link below- :

<http://www.pla.co.uk/assets/commercialshippingtrendanalysis.pdf>

The report has been communicated to berths, UKHMA to name a few. The main points from the report are: Container Ships contribute to 30% of breakdowns, newer vessels are more prone to breakdown and breakdowns tend to go up the larger the vessel.

It was asked if the PLA are able to find out in particular what attributes to these breakdowns (Categorisation). CS said that the PLA are unable to find out in some cases, but as reporting has improved, it shows that it is more maintenance issues that cause breakdowns e.g. blocked valves/fuel filters etc. CS also mentioned the reporting process for such incidents, to improve information given when reporting – Machinery Deficiencies are reported to the MCA and the shipping companies are contacted via the agents to get more information from the masters.

4c. Navigational Matters – None.

4d. Risk Assessments – None.

4e. Regulatory Update

Thames Byelaws – have been officially submitted to the Department for Transport after British Marine withdrew their objection in relation to the new sewerage byelaw.

Recreational User Guide – Due for review before the end of the year, looking for input from clubs etc. as to how to improve.

Red Tape Challenge – General Directions have been simplified and will be ready in the next few months for wider public consultation.

4f. Port Security

DfT have advised that the UK threat of terrorism stands at severe, did go up to critical in light of recent terrorist activity, but has since been downgraded. Maritime Security level remains unchanged. DfT and Thames Port Security Authority continue to meet regularly and encourage river users to report anything suspicious. A new Thames Resilience Panel has been established (February 2018), covering all 95 miles of the River Thames – Teddington to the Estuary - Bringing all the emergency services and local authorities together as one to focus on resilience matters (Boroughs of London, Kent & Essex). Through this the PLA now sit on a resilience & security working group – which is now a body advising the government on security & resilience matters.

4g. Environmental Matters – Report provided in advance of Meeting:

- Air Quality Strategy – this has now been completed and launched at the PLA stakeholder forum on 14/05/18, and will be available on the website this week.
- Litter Strategy for the Thames to be published 08/06/18 as part of the Thames Vision.

4h. River Works

- Oikos – Jetty 2 Project still ongoing - to be completed by September 2018
- Repairs to Gravesend Town Pier – no date yet – a crane barge is expected to be alongside, but this will not affect pier use or ferry.
- Gravesend Canal Basin – works to replace flood gate, no date yet.

4i. River Events

Rotary Club proposing to race home made rafts, TC monitoring this.
Events page will be updated by end of this week.

For a full list of events for entire River please refer to the PLA website.

5. Members' Feedback & Questions

None noted

6. Members' Updates:

6a. Maritime & Coastguard Agency (Report by Terry Leach)

Increase in April figures. Thames River Safety Forum, has been established members include PLA and the Coastguard. The forum will be looking at various safety measures, prevention of drownings to name one.

Looking at promoting safety on the river in schools also. Attended various meetings with London Police. Crowding on vessels is being monitored (class V vessels) could be a potential risk for terrorism.

Adam Stratford – Now at full strength, Orpington office is to close on Friday 14th September and will move to the Colchester office. The office at Colchester is open for surveyors and the coastguard. Contact numbers are being transferred to Colchester and the Orpington number will eventually cease. A MIN notice will be distributed, in due course, with contact details. This change will not affect the MCA's work on the river. Currently looking at recruiting new surveyors. Chief Executive retires at the end of the year, recruitment has commenced. MCA are attending vessels in light of more reports from pilots. More information is needed, when reporting issues, than just Pilot ladders – this is being addressed by the PLA. MCA are making more visits and making their presence on the river known.

6b. Team 2100 – no representative – TC provided an update - Survey works using drones and maintenance still ongoing on defence and foreshore area.

6c. Trinity House

No major changes to report, everything remains stable. No buoys have been moved. Recently a special mark was recovered just to the North East of the Sunk, it transpired that it had come from the windfarm so had gone across the estuary. Thanet Windfarm – Trinity continue to be joined up with the PLA and the MCA. It was asked if a number could be provided for the staff at Trinity who deal with consents for Marine Licenses – CS – would be easier if any feedback could be fed straight back to the licensing team. **Action – CS to look at**

6d. Port of Tilbury – Geoff Holland

Tilbury 2 – Layby ship at Tilbury 2. Planning is still going ahead – building will commence at the end of 2018.

6e. Medway Peel Ports – no representative

Medway VTS have now relocated to Liverpool.

6f. London Gateway Port – Nothing to report.

6g. Police

Counter Terrorism Team – Rachel Marshall & Colin Maguire – main aim is to reduce the risk to the UK coastline of any terrorist threat – remit is from Rye Harbour including the Medway, Thames up to the Dartford area. Have recently been promoting ‘Project Kraken’ – this is predominantly led by Border Force. A new campaign ‘Don’t ignore it, share it’ –

<https://www.kent.police.uk/advice/terrorism/live-near-the-coast-or-a-river/> has been launched (leaflets distributed).

A free app (Country Eye) is also available for download, maritime and aviation reporting has just been added and has proved to be worthwhile. Encouraged to download if you work in in predominately a maritime or aviation area. Any information given via the country eye app will be passed onto the Counter Terrorism Team. The team is engaging with as many maritime and aviation communities have built up a database, so far, of over 300 contacts for both communities. CM also encouraging anyone who sees any suspicious activity on the river, to phone into the Port Control Room, which is based at the channel tunnel. The teams at the control room are trained only to take any calls in relation to maritime and aviation issues. The main reason for this being established, is that the 101 system is slow, and any calls that go through 101 are not being put to the counter terrorism team until at least 24 hours later. Contact details have been given. A presentation has also been put together, if needed the team can come out and deliver this to the organization.

Other teams will be established elsewhere to encourage the reporting.

MS has offered to circulate the Burnham & Crouch Marine Unit email address (used for Essex area).

Note: Any suspicious activity to be reported

6h. RNLI – No serious incidents in the first quarter of 2018. Although incidents the RNLI have attended have increased and will probably rise within the next two quarters. A community safety network has been established in the lower end of the Thames. Natalie Adams was introduced as the Community Safety Officer for the Gravesend area. RNLI are looking at reducing drownings by 50% by 2024, and are engaging with external stakeholders, such as the PLA. Lifejacket clinics were also promoted encouraging recreational users to come along to. There will be a clinic on 2nd June at the PLA Open day. There will also be advice delivered on board, and advice on calling for help. Keyrings were distributed – which are aimed at the leisure users giving details on how to call for help and how to stay safe. Jason Carroll is the main contact if you need advice on any of the above etc.

6i. Royal Yachting Association – John Green

Nothing to report

6j. Recreational Clubs & Associations

Mooring guide has been produced, another section to be added following an incident. MS requested that Lyn Kindlen-Funnell attend the next Interclub meeting on 27th June, and said it is useful for a PLA representative to be there. Also a call from MS to get the steps reinstated at Southend Pier, on the inside of the East point, they have been out of use for about 10 years. They are useful to have in an emergency, useful for when the tide is off. Some funding has been given from the European Fisheries Fund, but this needs to be matched by Southend Council. MS is looking for support from the local clubs to reinstate the steps. MS to keep the group updated.

6k. Vessel Operators – Svitzer

Nothing to report.

Linda Potter – Armac Shipping

Issues with Pilotage, understands that the PLA are currently recruiting, but would like to know the number of Class 1, 2, 3 and Haven Pilots, to have an idea and to see how pilots are moving up the ranks at the PLA. LP accepts that there will be problems at certain times of the year with pilotage. CS said there will be times that are difficult to manage. The PLA are currently in the process of reviewing training, certification and grades, and in turn this will ensure that the classes and grades are fit for purpose, the new software that has been introduced at the PLA (INSIRIS) will help. CS - There is a strict ruling for how many trips pilots do. There are four classes of pilot currently, this is becoming quite confusing and work has commenced to review this. PLA's aim to have 100 pilots, currently this number stands at 90. PLA would like to ensure that 100% availability of pilots at all times and will be employing accordingly to ensure that this is covered.

Post Meeting: Pilotage figures forwarded to LP by Dave Newbury.

6I. Others

TC – there is a going to be a new operator between Sheppey & Southend – Island Cruises – they are aiming to start operation around 26th May 2018, but are still waiting for consent from the PLA and MCA.

7. Any other Business

PLA Open Day – Saturday 2nd June 2018

9. Date of Next Meeting – 13th November 2018 - PLA London River House @ 10.30 a.m..