



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

13th November 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
Lyn Kindlen-Funnell	LK-F	Deputy Harbour Master Lower – PLA
Miles Featherstone	MF	Assistant Harbour Master Lower
Denise Rowley	DR	Environment Officer, PLA
Luke Barlow	LB	Licensing
Sandra Baker	SB	Harbour Master Assistant – PLA (Notetaker)
Ray Blair	RB	Marico Marine
Richard Hart	RH	Assn. Thames Yacht Club
Gary Ruddock	GR	Port Health Authority
Paul Kite	PK	Svitzer
Sven Lumber	SL	Svitzer
Jason Carroll	JC	RNLI
John Green	JG	RYA London & South East
Brian Corbett	BC	MSBA
Tony Lavelle	TL	MSBA
Rachel Marshall	RM	Kent Police Special Branch
Phil Dulson	PD	Kotug
Alan Hurrell	AH	Shipservice Thames Ltd.
Linda Potter	LP	Armac Shipping
Richard Bain	RB	Jetstream Tours
Alan Kew	AK	Gravesend Pontoon Ltd
Anthony Slater	AS	Peelports

1. **Apologies:** Simon Phillips, Fiona Craven, Geoff Holland, Kelvin Arterton, Kevin Boyd, Essex Police, Michael Greenwood, Michael Shafras, Neil Bixby, Peter Roffey, Philip Wilkinson, Mick Sharp, T Read, Tanya Ferry, Terry Leach, Tipu Parvez, Andrew Denton, Chris Green, Paul Hollis, Peter Norris, Colin Hitchcock, Trevor Harris, Alex Hurrell, Mizan Rahman

2. **Minutes of the last RUCF (Lower & Estuary) – 22.5.18**
Minutes from the previous meeting were agreed.

3. **Matters Arising:**

The Leigh Buoy has been moved and a NtM issued.

Noted amendment to minutes of 22.5.18: David Allsopp, is not Port Manager for City of London.

JG queried the message that many recreational incidents go unreported – how do we know about these? Some are reported to the Coastguard and the PLA finds out via the CG daily report rather than from the vessel involved at the time. CS noted that although recreational reporting of incidents is not the same as for commercial

vessels, if there is an incident that others can learn from then please do report them to the PLA.

4a. **Marine Operations**

CS introduced Miles Featherstone as the new Assistant Harbour Master (Lower District) who will focus on recreational matters and be the lead for investigating recreational incidents and work involving Personal Water Craft (PWC). Pilotage is continuing to recruit. **Action:** Post Meeting DN to forward pilot numbers to Linda Potter.

Lower District Navigational Safety Incidents May – October 2018 Appendix 1 (attached)

- There has been an increase in reported incidents (up 20%) to 67
- There have been 4 serious incidents in the last period
- Top ten incidents are listed in the attached report – top three are Contact, Pilot Ladder Deficiency and Navigational Hazards
- Near miss reports have doubled. At the last RUCF there were 25 near misses for the previous 6 month period, for this period there have been 52.
- The reporting of incidents has hugely improved (although difficult to identify whether incidents are increasing or just reporting has improved).
- Deficiencies have increased (by 150%) to 60.
- Dangerous heaving line reports are not included in these figures (in the last 6 months there has been a total of 3 reported cases – including one just noted by Svitzer).

Recreational Incidents:

- There have been 15 recreational incidents for the period 1st May – 31st October, 4 near misses and 1 deficiency.

Recreational incidents in the last 6 months: Noted on attached Appendix 1

BC emphasised that with the affordability of small cruising boats there has been an increase of people buying boats with little or no knowledge of sailing in tidal waters and Colregs and yacht clubs are noting an increase in the number of social members. CS confirmed that this is getting much more attention at government level from a security and safety point of view. Access to small boats for criminal activity is high on the agenda and the regulatory authorities are discussing the introduction of a national boat registration scheme and mandatory qualifications.

4c. **Navigational Matters – Leigh Buoy has been removed**

4d. **Risk Assessments**

The PLA plans to introduce a new risk assessment database (Resolver). This is provided by the same developer as the incident investigation database, so the two systems will be integrated.

4e. **Regulatory Update**

Recreational User Guide: Currently at the printers and will be issued in the near future. Copies will be sent to all TTNC members. 2019 tide tables have been issued and were available at the meeting.

Red Tape Challenge – Currently on hold until a new Safety Management System Manager is recruited.

Byelaws Revision – Currently sitting with the DfT – These will hopefully soon come into force, with revised sewage regulations. The General Directions and Byelaws are being revised to make them more user-friendly and are currently with our legal advisors for comment. There has also been a small administrative change to the Pilotage Directions on PEC B.

4f. Port Security

No change in general with regard to security levels. The last Thames Port Security Meeting was held on the 11th October with training at the end of September (Project Argus), which was a useful exercise delivered by Kent Police. The National Maritime Committee emphasizes the need to remain vigilant and report anything unusual.

4g. Environmental Matters

- Beluga Whale – First reported sighting was at the beginning of September with regular recent confirmed sightings. The Notice to Mariners remains in place. Following many discussions with Beluga experts the whale's behavior suggests that it is feeding well.
- The Air Quality strategy was released in June and is on the PLA website.

4h. River Works

- Tilbury Landing Stage: River works currently on hold.
- Gravesend Canal Basin – works to replace flood gates started this week (which is being managed locally).
- Thanet Offshore Wind Farm: went to Planning Inspectorate a couple of months ago – formal consultations submitted with an initial meeting planned for 11th December and a hearing on 12th December which will be attended by the PLA (with objections to the proposal together with the MCA and Trinity House).
- Phoenix Jetty: Dolphins are being removed and changes to the light configuration.
- Purfleet: Demolition works to the inner jetty.

4i. River Events

In the last 6 months there have been several events including the Round Canvey Race and Benfleet Cadet Week – which included the presence of the PLA this year. Please advise the PLA about all club races – with one generic risk assessment to be submitted to cover all – any queries to be directed to Miles Featherstone:

Miles.featherstone@pla.co.uk.

Action: MF to forward a risk assessment template to Tony Lavelle.

Gravesend Firework display was postponed due to the arrival of the whale – any future event will be promulgated via a Notice to Mariners.

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

5. Members' Feedback & Questions

None noted

6. Members' Updates:

MCA – no representative

Post Meeting Note: The MCA Orpington Office has now closed and moved to Colchester. Any queries to: MOcolchester@mcga.gov.uk Tel: 020390 85165

MCA Colchester MO

Iceni Way
Colchester
Essex
CO2 9BY

6b. Team 2100 – no representative

6c. Trinity House – report provided in advance by Trevor Harris:

“A quick update on our operations in the Estuary is that following buoy line surveys this year we have not had to move any of the buoys in recent months. This includes around Long Sand Head which we are due to survey again before the end of the year. Trinity House will be undertaking a review of all of our aids to navigation over the next year and there will be a public consultation period commencing just after the festive period. This will be announced by a Notice to Mariners and all stakeholders will have the opportunity to comment.”

6d. Port of Tilbury – no representative

6e. Medway Peel Ports – Anthony Slater

Number of recreational incidents: 7/8 with one quite serious incident between a yacht and commercial vessel whereby a health issue caused the master to become seriously ill. The boat was spotted navigating erratically by a commercial vessel. Peel are currently revising the Liverpool Byelaws which are with the Secretary of State. Medway byelaws will be next on the list.

Riverworks

- Thamesport – works soon to be starting
- Kingsferry Bridge – Notice to Mariners will be issued – maintenance work by Network Rail – possibility of down-lighters to be installed
- Montgomery wreck– will have a survey undertaken (not by PLA) on the next Spring tide.
- Tide tables will be available soon from Archway House Office

6f. London Gateway Port – no representative

6g. Police

Counter Terrorism Team – Rachel Marshall – main aim is to reduce the risk to the UK coastline of any terrorist threat by engaging with recreational, commercial and volunteer groups – covering North Kent and Medway. A presentation named ‘Don’t ignore it, share it’ is available to clubs etc.

<https://www.kent.police.uk/advice/terrorism/live-near-the-coast-or-a-river/>

A free App (Country Eye) is also available to download which includes a GPS location, for reporting purposes. Any information given via the Country Eye App will be passed onto the Counter Terrorism Team.

A presentation has also been put together with can be delivered to organisations.

Of concern is the number of migrants being dropped by larger vessels into smaller vessels/ribs (on the East coast) and an increased reporting of jet skis causing problems in the area, involved in connection with drugs. Also in the Sheppey area there have been reports of small craft (such as kayaks) being used for the movement of drugs.

Drones: Police are interested in reports of drones (which shouldn’t be used out of sight of the operator).

PWCs: BC mentioned an organisation called Personal Watercraft Partnership (known to the PLA) that can often help to resolve problems involving jet skis.

Note: Any suspicious activity to be reported

6h. RNLi

JS reported that 2018 had been a busy year with the Community Safety Network established in the lower end of the Thames committed to looking at reducing drownings by 50% by 2024, and are continuing to engage with external stakeholders, yacht clubs and more recently with the Sikh community.

Incident calls to London Coastguard and VTS are encouraged – they are collated with the top risks being:

Swimming in the River at Gravesend, Swanscombe and Canvey Island.

The RNLi has also engaged with the PLA and Kent Fire and Rescue to try to reduce the number of drownings. (One death reported this year at Thamesmead).

In 2019 recruitment for safety volunteers will be completed and the RNLi will be available to assist with lifejacket safety and presentations. They will also be working in collaboration with the Police and other emergency services and leisure users.

The Thames Port Safety Forum has been established in London and hopefully this will be extended to cover the lower part of the river.

6i. Royal Yachting Association – John Green

With regards to new policies: “Education not Legislation please” A lot of boat owners are not now club members and the MSBA are now reaching out to Marinas (MDL) to get the message across regarding legislation.

Diary Dates:

24th November 2018 Affiliated RYA Conference – New Line Academy

6j. Recreational Clubs & Associations

9th March 2018 MSBA Conference –Details: www.msba.org.uk

The MSBA Conference will be looking at the future of sailing and sailing clubs with lots of people now just joining marinas without the need to join a club / pay club subscriptions. The Medway will be nominated as the first UK Maritime Heritage Harbour – all welcome.

The PLA will be looking at various ways to promote the River for recreational use (Pay as you go e.g. for paddleboards, etc) and are trying to encourage that these facilities are made available in developments.

6k. Vessel Operators – Richard Bain – Jet Stream Tours

This year has been a successful year with tours from Rochester to Southend, although Rochester Pier is currently closed until the handrails are replaced on the pier. They have also purchased another vessel. The Gravesend Ferry has seen increased usage (with the opening of Amazon at Tilbury), but due to no subsidy allowance for a Sunday there is no intention to run a service on a Sunday.

Svitzer/Kotug

These two companies are now looking to meet up to discuss future collaborative working and operational issues. Currently there are works taking place on the Denton moorings – if anyone is operating near there to be aware and avoid the central pile. The Svitzer Meridian has joined the London fleet (mainly operational around Medway).

Linda Potter – Armac Shipping

There have been definite improvements to the Pilotage service, although there still appear to be problems around school half term holidays. CS reported that this did appear to be coincidental with a high peak of acts and not reduced number of Pilots available.

Of concern is the fact that Finance Department has commenced charging surcharges for change of ETA – aware that these have always been in the charges, but there is now a reluctance to change Pilot times (when ships' times are amended) in order to avoid this charge (this has been discussed with Dave Newbury, Pilotage Manager, and Julie Tankard, Finance Director PLA). CS confirmed that there is a plan to simplify and update the PLA charges.

Supported by SL he also confirmed that the ETA time is being 'managed' without anyone wanting to take responsibility (in order not to avoid being charged). Point noted by PLA.

7. Any other Business

Ray Blair, Marico Marine - Introduced himself as the PLA's Designated Person, tasked with auditing the PLA's Safety Management System. Now in the 3rd year of the contract, he has audited the PLA in general and the Middle and Upper District and next year will concentrate on the Lower District. His role involves attending meetings, reviewing minutes, analyzing statistics and incidents (of which the PLA is 'industry leading') and writing a monthly report to the Board, mostly PMSC related, flagging up any anomalies. Full contact details can be found on the PLA Safety Management System Page.

Miles Featherstone – Assistant Harbour Master

Introduced himself and advised that he has been patrolling the creeks in the Benfleet area and that there was a harbour launch presence in this area during the summer. A jet ski launch site at the Muckings has been identified, run by a fishing club, and was visited by Essex Police. All persons now using this site need to register their details and notify when launching (currently via email, in the future this will possibly be by text). Jet ski activities are being closely monitored and with the potential security risk of jet skis approaching London (as witnessed recently), all sightings of jet skis heading up river should be reported to London VTS, who will pass them on to the Police Marine Unit in order for them to intercept.

9. Date of Next Meetings:

21st May 2019 @ 10.30 a.m. London River House

21st November 2019 @ 10.30 a.m. London River House
