



Notes of River Users Consultative Forum (Upper)

30th November 2017 @ 10.30 hrs aboard HQS Wellington

Chair

Mark Towens	MT	PLA Harbour Master (Upper)
Nick Evans	NE	PLA Deputy Harbour Master (Upper)
Josh Rylah	JR	PLA Deputy Harbour Master (Upper)
Jon Beckett	JB	PLA SMS Manager
Tanya Ferry	TF	PLA Environment Manager
Duncan Tysall	DT	PLA Environment
Sandra Baker	SB	PLA Executive Assistant (notetaker)

Attendees

Beverley Gosling	BG	MCA
Adam Stratford	AS	MCA
Derek Mann	DM	MBNA Thames Clippers
Jake Lewis	JL	MBNA Thames Clippers
Chris Livett	CL	Livett Group
Dave Fisher	DF	Transport for London
Mark Berry	MB	Environment Agency
Andrew Lunt	AL	Transport for London
Bob Prentice	BP	Crown River Cruises
Ted Manning	TM	Crown River Cruises
Richard Hart	RH	ATYC
Barry Singleton	BS	The Barge Association
Stuart Smith	SS	London Port Health Authority
Steve Davies	SD	North Kent Yachting Association
Roger Squires	RS	Inland Waterways Association
Graham Faulkner	GF	GPS Marine
Neil Withers	NW	RNLI
Kevin East	KE	British Canoeing
Harry Whelan	HW	London Kayak Company
Neil Caborn	NC	Cory Riverside Energy
Tipu Parvez	TP	Cory Riverside Energy

1. **Apologies:**

Andy Batchelor, Gary Spencer, Sean Collins, Russell Robson, Terry Leach, John Potter, Peter Finch, Nick McKie-Smith, Pamela Chart, Stuart Jenkins

2. **Minutes of last RUCF (Upper) – 20th April 2017**

Minutes from the previous meeting were agreed.

3. **Matters Arising from Previous Minutes**

No outstanding actions

4. **PLA Update**

4a **Regulatory & Navigational SMS Update – Jon Beckett**

Thames Byelaws – Amendments undergoing approval from the DfT

Byelaw 49 – One outstanding objection to Byelaw 49 by British Marine on the amendment.

Pilotage Directions - Now in force and the PLA are currently in the process of agreeing the exam syllabus for PEC intraport tug and tows – further comments welcomed. A near final draft to be issued in the next few weeks.

Red Tape Challenge – the vision for the next 12 months on regulatory framework is to reduce the volume by approx. 50% of byelaws, codes of practice, repetition and produce an online port information book – further consultations in the coming months.

A SMS report has recently been produced covering a trend analysis on inland waterways and work boat vessels- Appendix A

[http://www.pla.co.uk/assets/atrendanalysisofinlandwaterwaysfreightworkboatandservi
cecraftoccurrencesintheportoflondon.pdf](http://www.pla.co.uk/assets/atrendanalysisofinlandwaterwaysfreightworkboatandservi
cecraftoccurrencesintheportoflondon.pdf)

4b Security Update – provided by Thames Port Security Chair – Cathryn Spain

The UK threat level currently remains at SEVERE (an attack is highly likely). Despite the two incidents over the summer where this was raised to the highest level of CRITICAL (an attack is expected imminently).

Due to an increase in maritime activity abroad and an increase in UK terrorism ashore, the DfT is giving more focus to UK maritime security, especially in relation to the threat of a marauding terrorist attack. So even though the maritime security level is low there is still a need for all users of the River Thames to be vigilant and report suspicious activity to their local police on 101, via Crimestoppers or in an emergency, dial 999.

The Thames Port Security Authority continues to regularly meet with representatives from berth operators and other organisations along the Thames. The last meeting was 11th October 2017 and the next is planned for April 2018.

There is additional work ongoing following the attacks on London close to the river in 2017 (Westminster Bridge and London Bridge) following which security has been increased and a Thames Protect Committee has been established.

4c Recreational Update – Josh Rylah

Recreational incident numbers have increased by 42.3% compared to the same period in 2016 this is due to a number of recreational river users not complying with various byelaws. In response to this the PLA produced a 8-Top Tips to Safe Navigation on the Tidal Thames leaflet (tabled) in partnership with the Coastguard and RNLI. In addition, we have recently witnessed an increasing number of incidents where recreational mariners have navigated through Richmond Lock and Weir and footbridge while the weirs were being operated. In response to this we have now established an Exclusion Zone and further details of this are contained in Notice to Mariner U18 of 2017.

Recreational codes of Practice

Following on from the PLA's Red Tape Challenge we will be looking to potentially combine the Rowing and Paddling Codes which both offer similar advice and guidance, when they are next due for review.

Thames Vision

The PLA continues to work closely with a number of National Governing Bodies (NGBs) to investigate and encourage further growth of sport and recreational activities along the tideway. The PLA has in addition taken over and expanded the remit of the East London Watersports Forum; supporting clubs and centres with recreational activities.

4d Environment Update – Tanya Ferry

It is unfortunate to report the death of the common dolphin that was spotted in the Upper Thames area – there is an increase in the number of seals and porpoises in the Tidal Thames area (especially in Kew) and a leaflet on dealing with these mammals has been issued for public guidance on mammal behaviour (tabled).

Any sightings to be reported:

- CSIP (Cetacean Stranding Investigation Programme) on 0800 652 0333 (deceased)
- Website: zsl.org.inthethames/ (healthy)

Leaflets available from the PLA Environment team and further Information available:

- #ThamesMammals
- [www. ZIs.org/thamesmammals](http://www.ZIs.org/thamesmammals)

Air Quality Strategy

There is an Air Quality Strategy consultation (released following the meeting) for which feedback would be appreciated – closing date: 23rd January 2018.

<http://www.pla.co.uk/environment/Air-Quality-and-Green-Tariff/Air-Quality>

With reference to the Mayor's target of a carbon-free London CL queried whether there would be any planned additional costs to operators. With regard to Air Strategy – no sanctions have as yet been imposed on the River but the PLA will be taking a proactive line to what will become a national project, with no intended additional costs to operators.

On behalf of individuals that cannot take a corporate stance (owners of residential/travelling barges) BS queried whether any consideration would be given to the boats that are currently run on diesel and the difficulty/expense to convert. TF explained that initially the focus is on commercial vessels, where analysis signifies a higher proportion of emissions.

Litter Survey

As previously a report will be released on the latest litter survey and the survey will be re-issued to build a data bank of details regarding economic litter.

Thames Vision

There are environment and heritage goals as part of the Thames Vision - the next conference will be held on January 24th 2018 – further details from Environment Team, PLA.

5 MCA – Adam Stratford

AS announced that he had taken over from Mike Greenwood, as Principal Marine Surveyor, and introduced Beverley Gosling as the new Business Manager, who would be overseeing the move of the MCA Orpington Office to Colchester in July/Aug next year (at which time a MIN will be issued). Thames issues will need to be channeled through the Colchester Marine Office following this move.

BML/LKE

AS reported that this year appointments for BMLs and LKEs were alternated monthly which worked well and also the availability of company 'block bookings' together with more examiners had seen an improvement, although any suggestions invited. Dates for 2018 are now available from the MCA.

BML LKEs are covered by a PLA Pilot + MCA Examiner (Initial Examination)

Revalidation: PLA Examiner + Thames Practitioner

PLA LKEs are covered by a PLA Examiner (usually a Harbour Master)

MT reported that there had been a couple of discrepancies/out-of-date BML/LKEs when checked for validation.

Action: All Operators to check validity of all crew BML/LKEs (this can be done via the MCA Office).

BML Licences – In order to address the amount of BMLs being lost/damaged AS would prefer full BML/LKE documentation (at least 4 pages/photos) to be held electronically on board vessels (phone/ipad) with back-up of a photocopy - CS requested this to be promulgated in writing to operators.

Domestic Safety Management Code MSIS 29 (ISM Code) for the safe operation of ships and for pollution prevention is progressing well with few teething problems on the system. Clarification on the self assessment process will be re-issued. Self Assessments are annual for each boat/each company when not undertaken by the MCA.

Action: AS to promulgate confirmation of BML documentation to be held on board electronically and clarify paperwork to be used by Offices for assessment.

6 Navigational Safety – Incidents – See Appendix A SMS Report –A trend analysis of Inland Waterways Freight, workboat and service craft

Summary:

- Rise of reported incidents in the last year (108) – increase in near miss reporting
- Reduction in the number of wash complaints from residential moorings
- 30% rise in commercial wash complaints in Central London(10 in total)
- Wash complaints against ribs increased – rib operators now supply wake wash assessments
- Contacts (commercial sector) increase from 5 to 15
- Increased enforcement action against rec. users (increase from 9 to 23) – PLA working closely with TLC
- Groundings – significant rise
- Mechanical failure – up from 14 to 21 – majority caused by debris in Thames (breakdown as detailed in appendix)
- Breaches of byelaws increased (2 operators have had Certificates of Compliance withdrawn)

In addition the PLA will be working harder to follow up on near misses and will be taking a tougher stance on enforcement action; in the last year PLA prosecuted 4 masters and 3 to date this year. In the future consideration will be given to increasing the publicity of enforcement orders, as a deterrent – possibility looking towards facebook/twitter/press announcements. Currently they are announced via the website. The MCA have the power to revoke a BML Licence; the PLA to issue monetary fines, or rescind the Certificate of Compliance (for speed incidents). RS questioned whether the names of prosecuted could be detailed in the Annual Report which would be a way of highlighting to insurers persons transgressing the rules.

Action: PLAMCA to liaise on enforcement action and consider increased media

Confirmation was given by the PLA that all the near-miss reports detailed in the trend analysis are genuine (backed-up with evidence of AIS).

With regard to the query on increased mechanical failures reported of the HSL:

- HSL report breakdowns in the same way as everyone else (not just internally)
- HSL boats are now being revamped and modified to try to resolve issues
- For the future the PLA will be looking at Electric Drive/Hybrids (although converting existing boats may not be an option due to the weight of the battery and range of 35 miles).

BS requested that a formal note to be made that there is still concern from residential barge owners about the way the boats speedily depart piers creating excessive wash.

7a Police Update – Provided in advance by Stuart Jenkins

- [Reminder for Risk Assessment Form 696 to be completed in advance of NYE \(Thank you to all the Operators that have already submitted\)](#)
- [Reminder to everyone \(especially commercial and passenger operators\) to review security arrangements and to ensure security plans are reviewed due to current threat levels.](#)

[He is happy to be contacted to for advice/assistance: stuart.jenkins@met.police.uk](mailto:stuart.jenkins@met.police.uk).

7b Coastguard – no representative

7c RNLI – Neil Withers

The Thames Review has been completed and suggested addition to the agenda for the next meeting. In 2017 there was an increase in calls - Tower RNLI received 550 calls (the majority being crisis/self harm) and was also involved in both security incidents, collaborating with Police and PLA. Looking towards 2018 river safety will be high on the agenda – a concern for the fire brigade is the number of boats now being used as Airbnb and guests not familiar with boat safety.

7d London River Services – Dave Fisher

Compared to last year the number of passengers carried is 7% down. There have been a series of suspensions of the Woolwich Ferry and complete suspension is scheduled 6th October 2018 whilst works take place on a new berth infrastructure and delivery of 2 new hybrid ferries.

Greenwich Pier – currently undergoing maintenance works due to be back in full working order by the end of March 2018 (subject to remedial works on the drydock).

TfL are currently undergoing an organisational change programme. This has resulted in London River Services (LRS) becoming a part of the new Sponsored Services directorate, which includes LRS, Emirates Air Line and Santander Cycle Hire.

Danny Price is the new General Manager of Sponsored Services and Dave Fisher has been appointed Head of London River Services and Emirates Air Line (reporting to Danny Price). there will be a new River Services, headed up by Danny Price and the new structure will be promulgated once newly appointed personnel are in place.

7e Fire – no representative

7f EA – Mark Berry

One defence closure to date this winter on 5th October, but moving into the winter season more to be expected with high risk being in the next couple of months. In 2018 the Annual Test Closure date is scheduled for **Sunday 23rd September** – time to be confirmed. Major maintenance is ongoing with the replacement of brighter, more energy efficient lights.

7g Port Health – Nothing to report (Stuart Smith)

8 River Works

8a Central/Navigational Channel Arch Closures at Hammersmith Bridge

NtM issued for works starting early December – there will be further significant works at a later stage next year. To be kept on agenda

8b Rotherhithe Bridge (Limehouse) – Andrew Lunt, Lead Programmer

The Mayor's new Transport Strategy 2017 has stimulated the project for another crossing in the Rotherhithe Peninsular/Canary Wharf area with focus on the preferred option of a unique proposal for a high level, opening, bridge for walking/cycling. This would involve significant investment and promotion of change in culture. Currently there is a 'hotel' cruise crossing. The Public Consultation will be open until 8th January 2018 and currently surveys are being undertaken on the river to reach a 'data led' decision:

To have your say: Visit: www.tfl.gov.uk/R2CW-crossing

Email: consultations@tfl.gov.uk

CL commented that as an operator he would like to see a "zero impact/zero cost" for operators and opening privileges they have as with Tower Bridge.

8c Nine Elms Footbridge

There is a proposal by Wandsworth Borough Council to put a footbridge across the river at Nine Elms. Initial liaison took place with the PLA, but final design went to competition with 9 new locations suggested. It is expected that the final design will have a span of approx. 150m slightly downstream of Westminster Boating Basin

(outside the navigational channel). Another meeting is due prior to Xmas – further details to follow.

8d Fulham Football Club

RWL granted for stand extension, but a redesign has been requested by the owner. Although the footprint won't change, the overall look of the stadium will be more elaborate - PLA will be considering the impact of wind/sailing in the area – work in progress. Start date in the near future.

8e Blackfriars Zipline

There is currently a proposal for a one/two year temporary zipline in the Blackfriars Railway Bridge area – potentially in between the 2 bridges or over the railway, which now has a roof – meetings to take place in the near future to review. (Proposal by same company that offer the O2 experience).

8f Thames Tideway Tunnel – Report prepared in advance by Terry Lawrence

Victoria Embankment - Cofferdam construction ongoing. No.1 Arch Charing Arch is closed until approx. 23rd March 2018 but will reopen for the contractors' Xmas break 22nd Dec to 3rd Jan.

GF – Going well, ahead of schedule and will open No. 1 Arch over Xmas maybe earlier (there may be a river closure Dec 16/17)

Blackfriars - Deconstruction of pumping station and construction of the cofferdam cells at the western part of the site has started. It is also hoped to open No. 2 Arch Blackfriars Bridge for the contractors' Xmas break – to be confirmed

MT: PLA aware of the challenges of No. 2 arch being closed and will be meeting next week internally to discuss further and make further improvements prior to next summer

Chambers Wharf - Continues as an operational berth. Import one rebar barge per fortnight and export 3 barges of shaft arisings per week

Carnwarth Road - Installation of the tow sheet wall piles continues. As of 21st Nov. construction started on the sheet pile wall for campshed at Eastern end. Discharge of TBM parts planned for 1st December and a promotional event taking place.

Kirtling Street - Export of shaft arisings from the previous Cemex Jetty continues.

Installation of additional berthing face piles has been completed. Segment loading barge installation taking place Mid January 2018

Putney Embankment - Main work site set up continues ashore. Hope to start main site river works Jan 18 (to be confirmed)

Albert Embankment - Hope to start bed levelling outside Tintagel House 1st week December followed by cofferdam wall construction Jan 2018.

Cory Hop Pole Mooring - Relocating Cory barge from approach to No. 4 arch Blackfriars Bridges – week commencing 4th December as per NtM

King Edward Memorial Park - Cofferdam construction and filling ongoing.

Cremorne Wharf - Bed levelling planned for January 2018 followed by berth operation

Heathwall Pumping Station - Trial pits at the toe of the Embankment are ongoing.

Nine Elms Rail Tube Extension – GF confirmed tunnelling completed.

Diamond Jubilee Footbridge – Back in the news but no discussions/consultation with the PLA

8g Illuminated Bridges Project – Josh Rylah

The aim of this new project, which is still in the planning and design phase, is to draw more people to the River and make it a tourist attraction and the illuminations will be replicated on 15 bridges; each bridge having a unique design, based on its history – details to follow early next year. (The artist involved was successful with the San Francisco Bay Bridge)

There was assurance that Tideway Tunnel tug and tows would take priority and there would be no interruption to works and that they would be liaising with over 150 stakeholders. Phase 1 to be completed by Feb 2019, Phase 2 by Jan 2020 and Phase 3 by Dec 2022. The RNLi suggested that thought process for pink lighting (as witnessed in Japan) is given due consideration as there is evidence that pink lighting can help reduce self harm.

Action: JL to follow up liaison with RNLi on consideration for pink lighting

9. Commercial Vessels – Nick Evans

9a Passenger Vessels - Timetables

In conjunction with LRS and the increase in river traffic the PLA/LRS have signed an agreement that changes in timetables have to be signed off by both parties, in an attempt to de-conflict the river.

Action: Some operators still to submit timetables for approval from PLA/LRS

Freight Operations

Non-passenger, Inland Waterway incident statistics showed an improving trend between 2010-2016 but this did not continue into 2017.

Looking at the trend analysis on the PLA website, there is a rise in machinery breakdowns particularly in 2017 (18%) with occurrences caused by breakdowns accounting for nearly 30%, which are largely workboats, and freight incidents have doubled. Contact is the biggest incident type, however 21% are near misses.

Full Details – See Appendix A attached

9b Communications

Highlighted is the inappropriate use of VHF 14, which adds to congestion – clarification is recommended for clear, concise use of Ch 14 – the MPU/PLA/Ofcom are working together to improve this. Using DF, Ofcom can identify offenders and any complaints of racism/sexual discrimination will be followed up – this could lead to Ofcom withdrawing the licence from some operators.

Action: All to take a stance against inappropriate use of CH14

9a MCA Document MGN432 – Action: All to take note and have a risk assessment in place for passenger transfers to/from small boats

10 Events – Josh Rylah

Filming on the river has increased. Looking ahead to NYE this will be a similar format to previous years – only change is that the lower closure will finish at the end of the event and upper closure will have an additional 5/10 minute delay to avoid the rush of Class Vs. In 2018 there will be a big filming event for which a NtM will be issued together and an increase in warships and cruise ships in the port. Recommendation for early communication of any event on the river to ensure clarity for other users – please note feedback is welcomed on traffic management following an event.

11 Any Other Business

JB reiterated the SMS report and trend analysis details available on the PLA website with a request for continued reporting of near misses.

CL would like noted that although business is down by 7%, there is still an increase in charges of 2.9% and a plea for sympathetic consideration to increases.

Action: HMU to pass on charges increase for operators to Finance team

BS mentioned again the need for further moorings and wash considerations.

Steve Davies

In order to assist operators or masters that are unfamiliar with sailing boats, Steve Davies (and some colleagues) are offering to meet up and discuss with small groups in order to give a better understanding and familiarisation of sailing. Anyone interested to contact Steve by email: nkya@ryase.org.uk

12 Date of Next Meeting

Watermen's Hall – Wednesday 25th April 2018 – Outlook calendar invitation to follow