

PLA HARBOUR MASTER'S RECREATIONAL NAVIGATION GROUP

Notes of the meeting held at Bakers' Hall on 20th March 2014

Present: Mark Towens, Darren Knight, Harry Whelan, Mike Thomas, Kevin East, David Beaumont, Richard Hart, Bill Mitchell, Paul Hyman, Roger Squires, Michael Shefras, Coralie Vial, Pam Chart, Tony Reynolds

Apologies: Grant Kinnard, Andy Soper

1. Welcome and Introductions

- a. Mark Towens introduced himself as the new chairman and explained that he was now Harbour Master Upper, with Terry Lawrence becoming the dedicated Harbour Master for the Thames Tideway Tunnel Project.

2. Minutes of the PHRNG held on 10th October 2013 were approved.

3. Actions from Last Meeting

- a. HMU to enquire whether the LFB would attend a similar incident in the future and to seek assurances that they would proceed at a more responsible speed, if they did.
 - i. It was reported that David Beaumont had received a response from Terry Lawrence prior to the changes in the HMU team.
 - ii. This proved unsatisfactory, however neither the PLA nor the London Fire Brigade would have expected this incident to have occurred and this has been dealt with between the two partner agencies and is now considered closed.
 - iii. However David Beaumont enquired as to whether the PLA think the current LFB vessels are suitable vessel to respond to an emergency above Wandsworth Bridge? The PLA believes that the fireboat is a suitable vessel for the tidal Thames, when driven appropriately for the conditions at the time, like any other vessel operating on the tidal Thames. **Action Closed**
- b. Kayak/Canoe/SUP Identification Marks - Canoe England and SUP to report on progress of this request at the next PHRNG.
 - i. Canoe England has asked all centres to participate in a voluntary Id scheme, however there has been limited response baring one in the Upper and Lower tideway.
 - ii. Harry Whelan at Cremorne Wharf has already marked 30 vessels and will report back at the next PHRNG as to whether it has been successful or not.
 - iii. Paul Hyman was willing to mark up SUP's for a trial and report back at the next PHRNG.
 - iv. It was explained that the markings used by Westminster Boating Base was due to insurance reasons and not due to conforming to byelaws.
 - v. A paper has been sent to the PLA from Canoe England as to whether the PLA had legal powers to request that all vessels using the tidal Thames had to be marked. The PLA will formally respond shortly, but following brief legal advise the PLA does believe it has the powers to request this.

Action: PLA to meet with Canoe England, Paul Hyman and Harry Whelan to see if a Voluntary Id scheme can be introduced to trial it's effectiveness.

Action: Canoe England, Harry Whelan and Paul Hyman to report back on the Voluntary Id scheme for Canoes/Kayaks/SUPs at the next PHRNG.
- c. TRRC – to consider within British Rowing whether once a Coach has gained his Level 2 coaching qualifications that they are then assessed for their local knowledge operations.

- i. TRRC are meeting with British Rowing shortly and would expect to be able to give an update on this action point at the next PHRNG meeting.
 - ii. This therefore remains an **on-going action point**.
- d. AHMR to check how Safety Bulletins are promulgated by our SMS team and report back at next PHRNG.
 - i. Safety Bulletin's are now being issued as directed by the district Harbour Master. Either being issued as an Upper, Middle, Lower or Portwide bulletin.
Action Closed
- e. AHMR to investigate a better way to report incident statistics to the PHRNG membership.
 - i. This has now been completed and was circulated in advance of the PHRNG. The format used is in line with how Incident data is presented at similar forums such as the RUCF.
Action Closed
- f. PHRNG members please contact AHMR to discuss the potential of a Briefing, as the PLA will always be more than happy to facilitate this.
 - i. No requests from PHRNG members.
 - ii. A new initiative in raising awareness of the PLA Recreational Briefing and to encourage more members into the Tidal Thames Navigators Club has been set up, with a TTNC Pre-Season Briefing being given on the 2nd April 2014 on board the Salient.
Action Closed
- g. PLA will report back with regard PHRNG minutes on the website at next meeting and page numbering.
 - i. Page number has been included and once these minutes are approved will appear online, in line with RUCF minutes.
Action Closed

4. Publications Update

- a. **PLA Ebb Tide Flag Warning** – was introduced on the 12th February 2014 and a number of positive and negative responses to it at the Putney Public Meeting. The system has been generally welcomed and likely to have reduced the number of potential of man-powered incidents. TRRC has requested to a few word changes to the 'Yellow Flag' status and after discussions in the PHRNG it was concluded that these should be made.
Action: AHMR to amend the wording of the 'Yellow Flag' level, in consultation with the TRRC, and re-issue the Notice to Mariners.
- b. **Safety Bulletins** – two have been issued since the last PHRNG meeting:
 - No.1 of 2014 – Warning! – Very High Fluvial Flows
 - No.2 of 2014 – Mooring of Workboats & Small Craft
- c. **Rowing on the Tideway Code of Practice** – this is currently on hold, until Greenwich Reach Rowing Code has been formulated. We had a working group meeting to discuss the Greenwich Reach CoP in October 2013 but has since stalled slightly due to a number of reason. The PLA is now aiming to get the papers on the Greenwich Code in place by the May PLA Navigational Management Team's meeting.
- d. **Canoe/Kayaking Guidance** – a review has been undertaken between the PLA, Harry Whelan and Canoe England. The PLA's Safety Management team has determined that we will not require a public consultation on this revised document, provided all PHRNG members are content with the revisions to the document.

NB: It was felt that in the long term the Canoe/Kayak and SUP Guide's could be made one document with some key points on a poster – this is to be considered again in 18-36 months.

Action: PHRNG members to provide their view on the updated Canoe/Kayaking Guide to AHMR by **Friday 25th April 2014**.

- e. **Be Safe – Be Seen** – a review of this guide is to begin, August 2014. PLA will look at benchmarking it against the current TfL guidance for cyclists as well as looking to visually improve the document to make it more user friendly.
- f. **Standup Paddleboarding on the Tidal Thames 2013** – this is currently under a review being led by CHM via a Navigational Risk Assessment Working Group (NRAWG). It is hoped that the conclusion of this work will be completed by the end of 2014 with a revised guide.

5. Events

- a. **Annual Sailing Event Calendar** – NTM U1 of 2014 has been published and the PLA was requested to consider a joint NTM with the Lower District Sailing Events in 2015.
Action: AHMR and DCHM to consider a way forward to have one joint Sailing Calendar for future years.
- b. **Spring/Summer Rowing/Paddling Event Calendar** – NTM U7 & M15 of 2014 has been published.
- c. **Shared Internet Calendar** – a suggestion was tabled by Paul Hyman as to whether the PLA could set up a 'Shared Internet Calendar' for event organisers to put their events online and other event organisers knew who to contact to see what possibilities there was in arranging an event on the same day. There were concerns tabled that this may lead to a race to secure dates well in advance instead of liaising through the PLA as required in the byelaws. The PLA also advised that events must be organised through the PLA to ensure there wasn't conflict with other events or marine operations, which weren't publicly available.
Action: AHMR to investigate options for providing advanced notice of events to event organisers and river users via the PLA's website.

6. Incidents

- a. Incident Review from 1st September 2013 to 28th February 2014 was circulated in advance of the meeting and attached as Appendix A.

7. River Works

a. Central/Navigational Channel Arch Closures at:

a. Battersea Rail Bridge

- i. Notice to Mariners M21 of 2014 refers to the works being carried out at this location, which are likely to last until 2015 and will involve the closure of all arches at some point during this period.
- ii. 24-hr Local Traffic Control is being conducted whilst works commence in arches 2 and 3, with a break during the summer before resuming again in the autumn.

b. Chiswick Bridge

- i. The PLA remains in discussions with the contractors with works likely to commence on or about 12th May 2014 until the end of the year. At the start of the works each arch will be closed in turn for a period of approximately 8-days each. Further information regarding these works will be promulgated by Notice to Mariners shortly.

c. Hammersmith Bridge

- i. The current works as described in NTM U28 of 2013 has now been completed. However extensive works are likely to commence in late 2015 or 2016 and the PLA waits for a formal application for these.

b. Thames Tideway Tunnel

- i. Public Inquiry is currently underway and is considered all representations that have been made on the issue. It is expected that a decision will be made in September 2014.

c. Baynard House

- i. There are two cofferdams in the river adjacent to Baynard House as described in NTM M1 of 2014 and the PLA expect the works to complete on time in late April.

d. Fulham FC

- i. PLA licensing committee are still being reviewing FFC and a final decision is yet to be made.

8. Kew Bridge Pontoon

- a. The PLA explained that there have been a number of issues regarding the Closed Arch Signs and the PLA are hopeful that these issues will be concluded shortly.
- b. A number of navigational safety concerns were raised regarding this pontoon, especially for those launching at Kew Drawdock.
- c. The local recreational clubs were not consulted on regarding these proposals by the Local Council and believe that this is a much larger and bigger hazard than the original plans. They were also concerned that under the Section 106 they would have free access to the pontoon; however they are now being requested to pay to gain access. Long-term they are concerned that this will lead to people taking a chance by launching at Kew Drawdock and becoming entangled with this pontoon.

Action: HMU to ask the PLA Planning Officer to see what was agreed by the builders and the local council in the Section 106 and report back at the next PHRNG.

9. AOB

- a. None

DONM: 13th October 2014 11:00-13:30 Baker's Hall

APPENDIX A – INCIDENT REVIEW

1st SEPTEMBER 2013 TO 28th FEBRUARY 2014

Following the last Port of London Authority Harbourmasters Recreational Navigation Group (PHRNG) held in October 2013, the Port of London Authority (PLA) reviewed how we would present the Incident Data to this group and has decided to bring it in line with similar formats used for the River Users Consultative Forum Upper (RUCFU).

There have been **18** reported recreational incidents since the last review at the PHRNG meeting held in October 2013. This shows a decrease in the incident numbers over the same autumn/winter period in 2012/13, despite the unprecedented increases in the fluvial flow rates over the same period.

Monthly Recreational Incident Numbers

2012												
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
0	3	2	4	3	4	9	7	8	3	8	5	56
2013												
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
5	6	6	4	6	7	15	13	1	4	3	4	74
2014												
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
4	2											

CONTACTS - 9 (9) The number of incidents involving contacts has remained static compared to the same autumn/winter period in 2012/13, but the incident that have occurred have been more serious in nature. The vast majority of these incidents have been rowing related and occurred during the higher than normal fluvial flow rates in the upper district. The PLA have since worked closely with the Thames Regional Rowing Council (TRRC) and sought Canoe England’s support for the introduction of the PLA ‘**Ebb Tide Flag Warning**’ system. There has been a few teething problems with the new online based widget, but these have hopefully now been resolved and we will continue to monitor the system accordingly.

Of the remaining incidents; one was caused by a narrow boat going athwart of a pier’s brow and having to be rescued by the Marine Policing Unit (MPU). The other contact occurred on New Year’s Eve, when a vessel contacted a mooring in the river, putting a sizeable hole in its hull and leading to its eventual sinking. It was noted that the Master had been drinking on New Year’s Eve and prior to New Year’s Eve 2014, this incident will be highlighted to recreational mariners wishing to enjoy the festivities and reminding them not to ‘Drink and Drive’.

COLLISIONS AND NEAR MISS COLLISIONS - 2 (9) There has been a reduction in the number of reported collisions since the same period last year, however we have noted that the number of near miss reports have reduced. We are concerned that near misses are occurring, but not being reported and we urge all river users to report near misses when they occur. The one near miss reported was between one of the PLA’s Harbour Service launches and a sailing yacht involved in a race. The Duty Marine River Inspector (MRI) reminded the sailor that they do not have right of way when they are racing and this matter was taken up with the club involved. The collision involved a Dutch Barge and a double Scull, which was a very serious incident. It was

concluded that both vessels were not maintaining a proper look out (Rule 5) and as a consequence of this incident the rowing club involved updated their risk assessment with engagement from all their coaches.

MECHANICAL FAILURE - 3 (5) We have noted the reduction in mechanical failures resulting in an incident, which is very positive, but we are aware of the still significant number of mechanical breakdowns occurring each year. We would encourage river users to conduct regular checks of their vessels prior to boating on the tidal Thames as well as ensuring an effective maintenance regime. We also encourage river users to ensure they are familiar with their vessel's anchor and know how to use it. We would also like to remind the recreational river users of the important safety lessons identified in [Safety Bulletin 2 of 2013 – Dangerous Not Deploying Anchors When Broken Down](#).

BREACH OF BYELAWS & GENERAL DIRECTIONS – 4 (12) We are very pleased to see a reduction in a breach of byelaw, general directions and general guidance. It seems that recreational river users are now aware of the new byelaws introduced in 2012, especially in relation to speed limits. In addition the number of unlit canoes, rowers and other small recreation vessels is decreasing, which we are very pleased to note. Please note that the 'Be Safe – Be Seen' guide has not been reviewed since 2010, and the PLA will be conducting a thorough review of this document in the later stages of 2014.

Safety Bulletins

During the last period the PLA has issued one Safety Bulletin following incident investigations:

- [No. 1 of 2014 – Warning! – Very High Fluvial Flows](#)

MAIB Safety Investigations and Safety Bulletins

Following the fatal incident in Padstow on the 5th May 2013, the MAIB has concluded their investigation which is downloadable from: http://www.maib.gov.uk/cms_resources.cfm?file=/Milly.pdf. The report identifies the following key safety issues:

- A Kill cord was not attached to the driver at the time of the accident.
- The drivers were unprepared for the boat's reaction when it was turned at speed and then "hooked" as they did not have the level of boat handling skills required to control such a turn.
- Trials undertaken on the boat found that it developed a high angle of heel when turned at high speeds.
- Occupants should be seated, holding on and as far aft as possible when boats are travelling at speed.

We have had an excellent response from the vast majority of river users; however can we remind all those operating RIBs, Tin Fish and other small vessels to wear your kill cords at all times.

The PLA actively encourages and welcomes recreational mariners reporting all incidents and near misses. As can be seen they are all closely analysed from which we determine where to focus our attention and where changes need to be made to assist in preventing their reoccurrence and thus improving **your safety** on the river.