PLA HARBOUR MASTER'S RECREATIONAL NAVIGATION GROUP

Notes of the meeting held at 150 The Minories on 13th October 2014

Present: Mark Towens, Darren Knight, Mike Thomas, Kevin East, Richard Hart, Bill Mitchell, David Jones, Paul Hyman, Roger Squires, Michael Shefras, Pam Chart, Tony Reynolds, Bunny, Paul Kelly

Apologies: Grant Kinnard, Andy Soper, David Beaumont, Mike Wardle, Roger Squires, Harry Whelan

1. **Welcome and Introductions**

2. **Minutes of the PHRNG held on 20th March 2014 were approved.**

3. **Actions from Last Meeting**
    a. Kayak/Canoe/SUP Identification Marks - Canoe England and SUP to report on progress of this request at the next PHRNG.
        i. PLA met with Canoe England, Paul Hyman and Harry Whelan to see if a Voluntary Id scheme could be introduced on the tidal Thames.
            a. The meeting highlighted that it could be achieved however there would be difficulties in achieving it and extremely hard to maintain in the long-term. Therefore it was decided that the Local Clubs and Centres on the tideway would be encouraged to support having identification marks on their vessels, but not vessels owned by private individuals. It was requested that the local clubs and centres provide an update at the next PHRNG meeting
            – Action Point: Paul Hyman, Harry Whelan, Mike Wardle.

    b. 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 have met with British Rowing and are ready to implement a system where coaches would need to demonstrate their local knowledge, however they need British Rowing to approve this at the next National Safety Forum. An update will be given at the next PHRNG meeting.
        ii. This therefore remains an **on-going action point**.

    c. PLA Ebb Tide Flag Warning - AHMR to amend the wording of the 'Yellow Flag' level, in consultation with the TRRC, and re-issue the Notice to Mariners. This been completed and the new NTM on this matter is U17 of 2014. **Action Closed**.

    d. Canoe/Kayaking Guidance - PHRNG members to provide their view on the updated Canoe/Kayaking Guide to AHMR by Friday 25th April 2014.
        i. This has now been completed and further update about the future issue of this guide was given in the publication update. **Action Closed**

    e. Annual Sailing Event Calendar – AHMR and DCHM to consider a way forward to have one joint Sailing Calendar for future years.
        i. AHMR and DCHM discussed this post the PHRNG meeting with a positive result. All future Sailing Calendar's will be published as a Portwide NTM detailing all major sailing events. **Action Closed**

    f. **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 continues to work on this project with our IT specialists and Corporate Affairs team, **on-going action point.**

g. Kew Bridge Pontoon – HMU to ask the PLA Planning Officer to see what was agreed with the builders and the local council in the Section 106 and report back at the next PHRNG.
HMU had discussed this with our Planning Officer and reported that as part of the Section 106 by the local council, the developers had to allow access at a cost, to the local community clubs to the pontoon for at least 5-years. **Action Closed**.
    i. There was a request from the members of the PHRNG that if the licensee of the pontoon ever wished to change the conditions within their licence to allow larger vessels to moor there, then this should never be permitted.

4. Publications Update

a. **PLA Ebb Tide Flag Warning** – wording on the 'Yellow Flag' was amended in July/August. Since the implementation of the Flag Warning system, there has been no major negative comments and in the main supportive. It was noted that both the Environment Agency and the Canals & Rivers Trust was working on their own versions of 'High Flow Warnings'. Neither system was similar to those currently used on the Thames, the PLA noted the memberships concerns that the systems would be over complicated and not consistent.
Action: AHMR to liaise with Environment Agency and Canals & Rivers Trust to understand the work they are currently undertaking and if needs be, establish a working group to ensure there is a consistent approach between all three parties.
Action: AHMR to break down the number of days at each level of the Flag Status for future PHNRG meetings.

b. **Safety Bulletins** – three have been issued since the last PHRNG meeting:
No.2 of 2014 – Mooring of Workboats & Small Craft
No 3 of 2014 – Dangers of Inadequate Simple Maintenance Checks
No 4 of 2014 – Taking Account of Tidal Sets

A question was tabled by HMU, as to whether the PHRNG members felt they added any value. There was a consensus that they do assist river users in learning from other incidents and was an effective and useful tool for river users.

c. **Rowing on the Tideway Code of Practice** – The Navigational Risk Assessment for the Greenwich Reach section of the code has now been completed and was circulated to the NRAWG members for their comments. There were no comments and HMU has passed the Navigational Risk Assessment to the PLA's Navigational Management Team for their approval of the process thus far. In the meantime the entire rowing code has been re-ordered into a more logical order for the end users to read. It has also been passed to the PLA's corporate affairs team, to see if there is any way in which the code could be made easier to read and digest. The PLA is looking at making the code a lot more user friendly and will become the bible for understanding rowing activities on the tidal Thames, with a small Z-fold leaflet being made available with all the key points to rowing listed.

d. **Canoe/Kayaking Guidance** – The new guide has been published. However due to ongoing work with the SUP Guide, it is proposed that the two guides are combined and published as a new 'Paddling on the Tideway Code of Practice'. This new code is proposed to act like the bible for all paddling activities on the tideway, in a user friendly format and with it a Z-fold leaflet with all the key points to paddling listed.

e. **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 and combined with the Canoe/Kayaking Guide to form a new 'Paddling on the Tideway Code of Practice'.

f. **Be Safe – Be Seen** – a review of this guide has begun and the PLA has been benchmarking it against the current TfL guidance for cyclists. With both the 'Rowing' and 'Paddling' Codes being refresh, it is proposed that the guide will be included in both codes and this guide scrapped. However the PLA will be launching a new scheme in early 2015, highlighting good practices of making vulnerable river users more visible to all river users and also reminding commercial operators what they should expect to see in the predominantly recreational areas on the tidal Thames.

g. **Recreational River Users Guide** – a review of this guide will be beginning shortly internally and the PLA however we would appreciate all PHRNG members comments on this document as to how it could be improved yet further. **Action:** PHRNG members to liaise with AHMR by 7th December 2014 with any suggested amendments.

h. **Boating on the Thames website & Tidal Thames Navigators Club** – this is currently under a review by the PLA Corporate Affairs team and they would appreciate hearing your comments on what PHRNG members would like changed or amended. Likewise the PLA are also looking to see what we could do to improve the TTNC and again would appreciate your comments. **Action:** PHRNG members to liaise with AHMR by 20th December 2014 on these two topics.

5. Events

a. **Autumn/Winter Rowing/Paddling Event Calendar** – NTM U18 & M40 of 2014 has been published.

b. **2015 Boat Race** – it was noted that the 2015 Boat Race will include an extra race for the Women's Race.

c. **Thames Barrier Test Closures** – questions were raised the PHRNG membership, as to why the Thames Barrier test closures are taking place on Easter Sunday as this is a major disruption to their recreational cruising activities. Likewise there was concern that the annual full day closure has now moved to overnight and with it the loss of the annual London Regatta. HMU offered to discuss the members concerns at their next liaison meeting with the Environment Agency. **Action:** HMU to discuss these concerns with the Environment Agency.

6. Incidents

a. Incident Review from 1st March 2014 to 30th September 2014 was circulated in advance of the meeting and attached as Appendix A.

b. The PLA advised the PHRNG membership that following one of the narrowboat incidents, they were extremely surprised to learn that the vessel was on hire and was being sold to encourage narrowboaters to hire their vessels on their website to complete the 'London Ring'. This is a concern to the PLA, as the narrowboats are not currently licenced to a suitable level to be hired out on the tidal Thames and the hire company in question has never approached the PLA to gain approval of their operations. A meeting with the hire company concerned has since been held with the BMF in attendance, this has led to the PLA learning that a number of companies are offering this service and have now asked all operations to cease until further notice.

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7. River Works

a. Central/Navigational Channel Arch Closures at:

i. Battersea Rail Bridge

i. Notice to Mariners M34 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. Currently arches 1, 4 and 5 are closed to navigation until approximately April 2015. Once these arches re-open, then No 2 arch will close and 24-hr Local Traffic Control will conducted whilst works commence in this arch, likely to last for four-months...

ii. Chiswick Bridge

i. Notice to Mariners U25 of 2014 refers to the works being carried out in this location. No 1 arch will be closed to navigation during 10th – 20th October 2014 and No 3 arch will be closed to navigation during 21st – 31st October 2014. Works will cease over the 1st and 2nd November while two HORR take place and when it recommences with No. 2 arch 24-hr Local Traffic Control will be conducted from 3rd to 13th November 2014.

ii. Further short-term overnight closures are expected later in the year, whilst scaffolding is removed from the bridge.

iii. Garden Bridge

i. This project has gone very quite in recent months and the construction dates are now slipping towards the busiest periods of the TTT construction works. If this project does go ahead, significant disruption should be expected.

iv. Charing Cross Railway Bridge

i. There are going to be a number of arch closures shortly and these are likely to last until the end of 2014.

b. Thames Tideway Tunnel

i. The development consent order has been given approval by the UK Government. Initial works are due to commence in 2017 with bulk of the works commencing in 2018 until 2021. Terry Lawrence as Harbour Master Thames Tideway Tunnel is now specifically working on this project full-time.

c. Nine Elms Reach – Battersea Power Station/Northern Line Extension

i. Conversations on these projects have been relatively quite in recent months and it is expected that the main works at this site will commence in earnest by Spring 2015.

d. Baynard House

i. No. 2 arch of Blackfrairs Bridge's have re-opened, however more works are required shortly and the closure of No. 2 arch is likely to be closed again.

e. Fulham FC

i. PLA licensing committee have given approval to the works and the conditions for the licence are currently being considered by all interested parties. The exact construction details have not yet been submitted to the PLA and should the construction affect any stakeholders then the PLA will attempt to consult with all those potentially affected.

8. AOB

a. Invasive Species was discussed and information on this topic was subsequently circulated post the PHRNG meeting by the PLA's Environment Team.

DONM: 24th March 2014 11:00-13:30 (TBC)

APPENDIX A – INCIDENT REVIEW
1st MARCH 2014 TO 30th SEPTEMBER 2014

Since the last Port of London Authority Harbourmasters Recreational Navigation Group (PHRNG) held in March 2014, there have been **50** reported recreational incidents. This demonstrates incident numbers have remained relatively static over the previous spring/summer period in 2013/14, although incident number reduced in the July and August periods. It should be noted that recreational incidents in the upper district account for 46% of all the reported incidents in this area.

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	4	8	9	5	9	9	7				

MAN OVERBOARD – 4 (0) Considering that we have seen a raise in this type of incidents they have all been relatively minor.

- Two out of the four have involved younger rowing crews who were out with their coaches and simply capsized out of their vessels. All were quickly recovered and as a result of these incidents the coaches have provided dedicated capsize training sessions.

- One involved a kayaker capsizing, who quickly recovered and made their way ashore.

- The final one involved a small rowing vessel which capsized when a member of the crew was moving around in the vessel resulting in them falling overboard; they were quickly recovered by a nearby safety launch.

WASH - 3 (0)

- Two of these incidents involved larger commercial vessels not being mindful of their wash when passing more vulnerable river users. The PLA will be launching a vulnerable river user's campaign at the start of the 2015 season; highlighting the need for larger vessel to look out for smaller vulnerable vessels, but also reminding recreational river users the need to stay clear of larger vessel, especially in narrow channels.

- The other incident involved a speeding recreational motor cruiser washing out a single scull, which resulted in the scull being broken in half. This incident had the potential to be very serious; however the recreational motor cruiser could not be identified.

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CONTACTS - 13 (11) the number of incidents involving contacts has increased compared to the autumn/winter period in 2013/14, all with varying reasons.

- Two have involved: a motor cruiser and Dutch Barge miscalculating their air drafts before transiting bridges.
- Three incidents involved rowers misjudging the tidal stream at bridges, which resulted with the entire crew entering the water, but all being recovered quickly.

- Three were quite minor incidents which involved the primary vessels making contact with moored vessels on mooring trots.

- We have seen two incidents involving narrow boats being swept onto: Brentford Ait and Dove Pier, the second of these involved a narrow boat on hire and we are currently discussing future operations of these hire narrow boats on the tideway.

- The final incident involved a small sailing yacht being swept across the tide after their engine failed and being pushed underneath the swim of a moored barge. This had potentially fatal consequences and the Master has been reminded that if the anchor had been deployed as soon as the engine failed then this incident might have been avoided.

COLLISIONS AND NEAR MISS COLLISIONS - 5 (4) There has been an increase in the number of reported near misses since the last report, however it should be noted that:

- Three of these involve commercial operators and recreational river users both wishing to navigate in narrow channels. As mentioned under 'Wash' incidents above, we will be running a campaign in early 2015 reminding recreational river users of their obligations when navigating in narrow channels to keep clear of them for larger and deeper drafted vessels that are requiring to use them.

- There was a minor near miss incident between a group of scullers and SUPs, which was discussed with both parties and resolved amicably.

- The final incident involved a near miss with a motor cruiser and sailing yacht, the Master of the sailing yacht believed he had the right of way however the Duty Marine River Inspector explained to the Master of the yacht the relevant byelaws which are applied to sailing yachts.

GROUNDINGS - 3 (0) There has been an increase in groundings in the last 6 months;

- Two involved motor vessels running aground in the Richmond area, which the PLA have tasked our Hydrographic Officers to investigate.

- The other incident involved a rowing crew running aground when manoeuvring to get out of the way of a larger commercial vessel requiring the authorised channel.

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FIRE / EXPLOSION – 1 (0) There has been one report of a small fire on a Dutch Barge in the Upper District in the last six months. The owner of the vessel was only made aware of the fire, when a passing PLA launch raised the alarm. The owner has since invested in fire detection equipment.

MECHANICAL FAILURE - 10 (10) Half of these incident involved narrow boats either overheating or suffering an engine failure. The others involved motor cruisers, speed boats, yachts and Dutch barges and all had similar issues as the narrow boats. We have in the past 6 months issued a Safety Bulletin highlighting the dangers of inadequate and simple maintenance checks, in the hope of reducing these incident statistics.

BREACH OF BYELAWS & GENERAL DIRECTIONS – 3 (2) We have issued a Harbour Masters Warning to a commercial operator for speeding in the 8-knot speed limit area and for dangerous weaving between bridge buttresses. The PLA have also offered some educational advice for transiting through a closed arch and for cutting across the corner of a bend.

SWAMPING – 4 (0):

- In one case a rowing crew were swamped by a passing motor cruiser who was passing them too fast.
- There was two other incidents where rowing crews did not assess the prevailing weather conditions thoroughly enough and resulted in their vessels becoming swamped.
- The final incident involved a hovercraft, who was unable to cope with the river conditions in London, with the vessel being swamped and requiring assistance from the London Fire Brigade to pump water out the vessel prior to proceeding outward bound for Gravesend.

LOSS OF HULL INTEGRITY – 3 (0):

- There has been two cases in recent months where vessels had loss their hull integrity. In both cases it is not entirely sure how these cracks in the hull just on the water line occurred. One vessel has since been repaired and the other vessel is suffering severely with rot and will be salvaged during the annual draw-off.
- The third incident was a case of miscommunication where it was reported to the PLA that a vessel was sinking by the London Fire Brigade, however on inspection the following day it was clear it see that the vessel had not sunk but had left a hose on to water his garden.

INAPPROPRIATE NAVIGATION – 1 (0) The PLA spotted a vessel paddling boat near the Woolwich Ferry, which was not appropriate for navigation in this area. After a conversation with the Duty Marine River Inspector, the vessel was safely towed to a landing place and the Master was advised to navigate his small vessel the confines of a dock area in the future.

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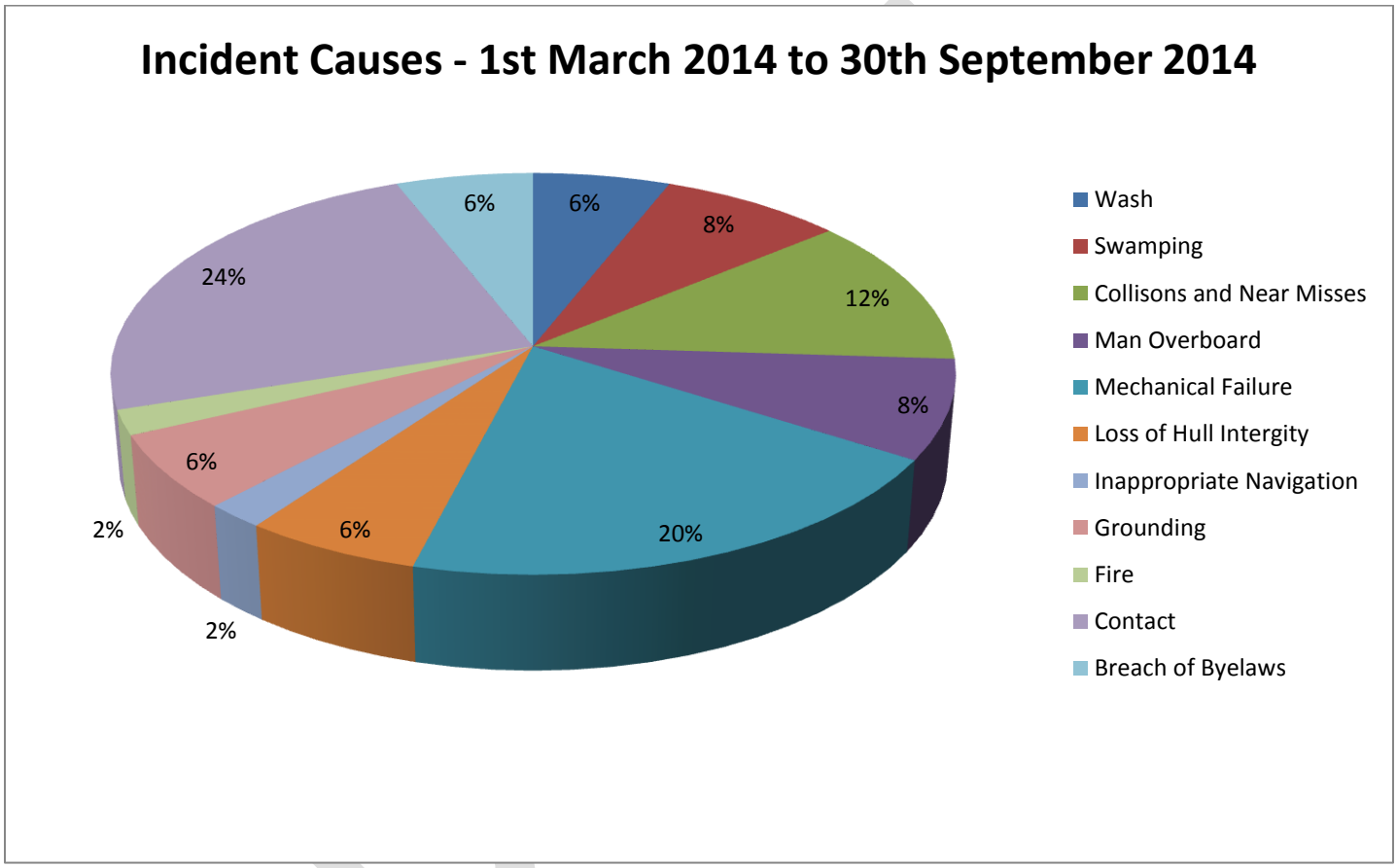
Cause Analysis

The breakdown of incident causes in the PLA's Upper District (Margaretness – Teddington) is displayed in the chart below. We note that the percentage of mechanical failure and contact incident account for the majority of incident in this 6-month period. We ask river users to ensure effective maintenance regimes are being conducted and determine whether they could make any improvements in these areas.



Safety Bulletins

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

- No. 2 of 2014 – Mooring of Workboats & Small Craft
- No. 3 of 2014 – Danger of Inadequate Simple Maintenance Checks
- No. 4 of 2014 – Taking Account of Tidal Sets

TRRC/PLA Lookout Poster Campaign

A joint ‘Lookout’ campaign has been launched by the TRRC and the PLA in the past six months, with some striking posters designed by Neil Pickford, a member of the TRRC. This campaign was launched when the TRRC/PLA reviewed the incident statistics from the previous 12-months, with the cause predominately being down to failing to keep a proper lookout. We will review whether this campaign has been successful when we review the autumn/winter 2014/15 incident statistics.

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