

PLA RIVER USERS CONSULTATIVE FORUM (UPPER)
Notes of the meeting held at HQS Wellington at 10:30 on
Wednesday 25th November 2015

Present:

Mark Towens (<i>Chairman</i>)	PLA, Harbour Master Upper (HMU)
David Phillips	PLA, Chief Harbour Master (CHM)
Steve Rushbrook	PLA, Deputy Harbour Master Upper 1
Ryan Hall	PLA, Deputy Harbour Master Upper 2
Darren Knight	PLA, Deputy Harbour Master (Safety Management)
Jon Beckett	PLA, Assistant Harbour Master Recreational
Denise Rowley	PLA, Environment Officer
Sarah Broad	PLA, Navigational Safety Systems Coordinator
Chris Healy	PLA, Marine River Inspector

David White	HM Coastguard, London
Neil Withers	RNLI
Darren Tulley	London Fire Brigade
Stuart Simpson	Met Police (MPU)
Hannah Sullivan	London River Services
Scott Mc Elwaine	Port Health Authority
Kevin East	British Canoeing
Mark Berry	Environment Agency
Tony Reynolds	Thames Regional Rowing Council (TRRC)
Bill Mitchell	Thames Regional Rowing Council (TRRC)
Pamela Chart	Association of Thames Yacht Clubs (ATYC)
Richard Hart	ATYC / Docklands Scout Project
David Beaumont	Butch Barge Association (DBA)
Peter Finch	River Thames Society
Steve Davies	North Kent Yachting Association / RYA
Roger Squires	IWA / St Pancras Cruising Club
Paul Ludwig	Crown River Cruises
Craig Brown	Thames Clippers
Gary Wynn	Thames Clippers
Graham Faulkner	GPS Marine
John Field	Thames Rib Experience
Edward Livett	Livett's Launches
Richard Bain	Thames Shipping
Nick Toomey	City Cruises
Ed Langley	Complete Pleasure Boats
Nick Beasley	Thames Gateway Marine

Apologies for Absence

James Trimmer	PLA, Director of Planning and Environment
Alistair Gale	PLA, Director of Corporate Affairs
Lucy Owen	PLA, Deputy Director of Planning and Environment
Tanya Ferry	PLA, Environment Manager
Phil Wilkinson	London Home and Water Safety Council
Derek Mann	Thames Clippers
Andy Bachelor	Environment Agency
Mike Greenwood	MCA
Adam Stratford	MCA
Andrew Thompson	London River Services

Bob Prentice
Neil Caborn
Roger Flitter
Chris Livett
Andy Soper
Michael Shefras
Mark Tower

Crown River Cruises
Cory Environmental
Passenger Boat Association
Livett's Launches
Dutch Barge Association
River Thames Alliance
Thames Leisure

1. **Thames Skills Academy**

CHM gave the forum an overview of the new Thames Skills Academy. The TTA had been a good learning experience but has suffered a lack of funding. PLA and Tideway have developed this new concept, which was approved by the PLA Board in September. The academy would be a member based association where members would employ apprentices. PLA and Tideway would manage the funding, however the process requires a structured approach, hence the slight delay in setting up the academy.

A board and Chief Executive would be recruited soon.

The aim is for the academy to be established by 5th Sept 2016 and cater for 30 students each year, but this may not be fully comprised of apprentices.

2. **Matters Arising and Review of Action Points from the Minutes of the River Users Consultative Forum (Upper) held on Thursday 30th April 2015**

The minutes of the previous meeting were accepted and the actions reviewed:

Action: Ensure that moorings and access was considered in the Vision.

The vision project will include moorings and access.

Action: The use of access points on the river, who owns them and whether contact details for the facilities can be promulgated.

A piece of work has begun on looking at what other access points the PLA might take ownership of and improve.

Action; PLA and MCA to meet to discuss LKE re-examinations

The PLA and Watermens' Hall are meeting to discuss LKE revalidations

3. **PLA Update**

a. Regulatory and Marine SMS

i. Thames Byelaws

The PLA has undertaken an Informal Public Consultation on amendments to four of our existing byelaws. However we are now looking at a new additional byelaw and we will be holding another Informal Public Consultation in due time to consult upon this additional byelaw. It is anticipated that by early 2016 we will be in a position to go to Formal Public Consultation on all five byelaws, prior to hopefully gaining approval by the DfT in mid-2016.

ii. Code of Practice for Rowing on the Tidal Thames

The 2015 edition has been published and promulgated. It is a considerable improvement on its predecessors and more user friendly, which will set a precedent on how all future Codes of Practice should look and feel. It is important to note that the revised Code includes a new section on rowing activities in the Greenwich Reach area.

iii. Stand Up Paddleboarding on the Tidal Thames

We have recently issued some revised guidance on how and where you can SUP on the tidal Thames. However work continues to incorporate all paddling sports into a new Paddling on the Tideway Code of Practice.

iv. Guidance to Berth Operators and Mariners Guide to Bridges

The PLA has conducted a scheduled review of both of these documents in the third quarter of 2015. The conclusion was that both remained current and fit for purpose. They are both now scheduled for review again in 2018.

v. Review of the Passenger Boat Code of Practice

This Code of Practice is currently undergoing a scheduled review and is being made more user friendly. It is anticipated that the code will be revised and published fully before the start of the 2016 season, your comments and suggested improvements will be most welcome, so please share them with Steve Rushbrook.

vi. 2016 Review Schedule

Early in 2016 the following PLA publications are subject to their 3-yearly review, they are; Code of Practice of Commercial Vessel Operations, Code of Practice for the Safe Mooring of Vessels, Code of Practice for Embarkation and Disembarkation of Pilots. In the second half of 2016 the General Directions and the Pilotage Directions are also due for their 3-yearly reviews. If you have any comments and suggestions, please share them with Darren Knight.

b. Port Security

i. ISPS Security Level

UK Ports ISPS Security Level remains at Level 1 (low), however incidents outside of the UK demonstrates that there is a credible maritime capability within some terror organisation.

ii. Threat Level

The national overall threat level has been increased to SEVERE.

iii. Port Security Authority

The Thames Port Security Authority met on 14th October 2015 and will next meet on 13th April 2016.

c. Recreational Update

There is an overriding downward trend in incidents, with total incident numbers for 2015 well on track to being less than 2/3 of the total 2013 incidents.

The cause of most recreational incidents remains Human Error (71%).

Some recent incidents have shown people have received either no advice or poor advice from marinas both on the non-tidal and tidal Thames, so we will be liaising more closely with the marinas in the coming months so accurate advice reaches more of the leisure community.

We will be improving our dedicated leisure website Boating on the Thames (as the internet is the first point of call for most people) giving them more guidance on passage planning, peak traffic periods, rights of way, making the most of the tides and locations of visitor moorings / chandleries / refuelling points, etc. Advertising is available on the website.

i. The Rowing Code

The new code has been produced, which is also available online. The new document is clearer and more of a training aid, particularly for schools, it is also easier for other vessels to be able to understand how the rowing rules work.

The new code now includes details on rowing activities below Tower Bridge.

ii. Standup Paddleboarding

New regulations and guidance has been published recently, as per Portwide NtM 20 of 2015.

2 levels of courses will be setup and run by a local SUP club, heavily scrutinised by the PLA. Please refer to the Notice or the 'Stand Up Paddleboarding on the Thames 2015' document for more info.

iii. 'Vulnerable River Users' Campaign

The Vulnerable River Users campaign continues, with the 2 most posters recently introduced regarding small recreational users keeping out of the main channel and the importance of being aware of and using sound signals.

d. Environment Update

The PLA's litter campaign "Cleaner Thames" was launched in September 2015, looking to reduce the amount of litter entering the river. This has obvious benefits with regards to navigational safety to reduce the amount of floating debris.

The PLA website includes videos, posters and further information.

The litter campaign team intend to liaise with Local Authorities.

It was also suggested the RUCF should formally write to Local Authorities, as well as the London Waterways Commission in support of the campaign.

Action: PLA Environment Team and HMU to send a formal letter, representing the members of the RUCF, in support of the Litter Campaign to Local Authorities and the London Waterways Commission.

4. MCA District Safety

There was no representative from the LFB and no update given, however HMU will be meeting with the Company of Watermen and Lighterman to discuss LKE revalidations.

5. Navigational Safety

a. Incident Review

- i. The Incident Review was circulated in advance of the meeting and attached as Appendix A.
- ii. The statistics for wash incidents was questioned. It was noted that many of the wash complaints the PLA have received were unsubstantiated and no physical damage was sustained. Wash complaints are not included in the Incident Review statistics given to the RUCF members.

HMU described the procedure carried out when receiving and reviewing wash complaints. It was noted that HMU had met with 'i-wash' and agreed a simpler procedure to follow specifically for houseboat complaints.

Action: A full review of reported wash incidents will be produced for future RUCF meetings

6. Other Updates

a. Police MPU

- i. The terrorist threat level is Severe, moving to Critical. MPU will maintain their 24/7 police presence on the river, regardless of funding cuts.
- ii. The Drink Drive campaign is building momentum on the lead up to New Years Eve. It should be noted that the Police test for drugs as well as alcohol when responding to an incident. Companies should have drink and drug policies for their staff, which should be included in their DSMS.
- iii. A letter has been sent to passenger boat operators explaining the MPU's New Years Eve Policing Plan and the requirements for operating on New Years Eve.

b. Coastguard

- i. London Coastguard will become part of 'Future Coastguard' as of 30th November.
- ii. Staff Resilience can be provided by any CG centre (London knowledge required)
- iii. 151 people have been recovered from the river with 20 lives lost overall this year. There is an on-going anti-suicide effort involving the Coastguard, RNLI and Local Authorities.

c. RNLI

- i. Neil Withers introduced himself as the new Thames Operations Manager – this being a new role to act as one point of contact for the RNLI.
- ii. An open forum is planned in March / April 2016 to discuss the current arrangements and the future of the RNLI on the river.

d. London River Services

- i. Works have started on the Bankside Pier extension – should be complete by Christmas. Westminster Pier extension is obtaining planning permission while LRS are engaging with stakeholders on the Embankment Pier extension.
- ii. You can now use Oyster cards at river bus piers, with the introduction of contactless payment next July.
- iii. Plantation Wharf opened on 11th November – a new stop for the RB6 service. Plantation is available on a charter basis and includes 2 visitor moorings.

e. Fire

- i. LFB are looking to replace their fleet with 2 new vessels within the next couple of years, as well as improvements in training and equipment.

f. Environment Agency

- i. There are no proposed changes for the Thames Barrier's scheme of operations.
- ii. A question was raised whether the EA would continue to use the Thames Barrier as a defence against fluvial flooding – the TE2100 plan was for the barrier to alleviate tidal flooding, however it was realised that it can reduce the impact of fluvial flooding. It is envisaged that over the next 30 years there would be a reduction in the need for fluvial closures, due to other EA projects including construction of new flood water channels above Teddington.

g. Port Health

- i. No update

7. River Works

a. Central/Navigational Channel Arch Closures at:

i. Hammersmith Bridge

The bridge requires urgent works which will involve a total refurbishment. This should allow the bridge to take double-decker buses when complete. Works are expected to last around 12 months beginning summer 2016. Due to the nature of the works there will most likely be the need for a piled structure to span part of the river, with Local Traffic Control in force for the duration. It's early in the planning stage and the contract has just gone out to tender.

b. Baynard House

- i. Sheet piles for the works remain in position as the piles have proved difficult to remove.
- ii. Contractors plan to dig down below bed level and cut the piles. This would need to be deep enough to accommodate the dredging works for the new Blackfriars Pier. The piles will be retained on a River Works Licence.

c. Garden Bridge

- i. The program for the construction has been moved back, which creates a possible conflict with Thames Tideway Tunnel works which are looking to be moved forward.
- ii. The Garden Bridge Trust and Tideway are scheduled to meet to discuss a solution; however Tideway Tunnel will have primacy.
- iii. Construction will involve 5 large sections being transported to the site by river and craned into position. This would involve 3 x 12hr closures (likely over a Sunday evening). The methodology minimises the impact on the river.

d. Thames Bridge

- i. There are proposals for a footbridge between Rotherhithe and Canary Wharf.

- ii. This will likely be a bascule bridge with a 185m span, air draft of 20m when closed and a channel width of 135m when open. It would be the longest bascule bridge in the world.
- iii. A feasibility study has been completed, but it is unclear who will now take the bridge forward.
- iv. Simulator trials would be carried out to confirm the bridge's suitability, whether additional tugs are required, etc.
- v. The option of a ferry has been proposed to them – with reduced initial costs, similar running costs and possibly a shorter crossing time - this may be a more sensible option.

e. Nine Elms Bridge

- i. There are proposals for a footbridge downstream of Westminster Boating Base.
- ii. A number of designs have been assessed to determine the design team.
- iii. Would be a 150m width (drying line to drying line) main span and will be constructed using 1 central span lifted into position.

f. Fulham Football Club

- i. The stand extension at Fulham Football Club is due to begin construction in April/May 2016.
- ii. The main construction phase will be from the river utilising jack-up and flat-top barges.
- iii. The contractors will be engaging river users to develop their methodology in order to reduce the impact on recreational activities and events.

g. Thames Tideway Tunnel

- i. Jack up barge will be positioned on north shore between Blackfriars Bridges on 3rd December to end of 2016, No 2 arch closed to navigation. **M76 of 2015**
- ii. UXO surveys near Blackfriars Pier location in mid December, sheet piling works beginning in February / March 2016, dredging in April / May 2016 and the installation of the new pontoon in August 2016, complete by November 2016.
- iii. Tattersall Castle relocation will happen between February 2016 and October 2016
- iv. HMS President 1918 will be moved to drydock in February 2016, and the existing moorings and piles will be removed in July 2016.
- v. MWC have been asked to consider the feasibility for accelerating the program to a tunnelling start in mid 2017 instead of the current mid 2018. Tunnelling is programmed to last 1 year. A scheduling and main works program is expected to be available in March 2016.
- vi. Removal of existing spoil pile at Chambers wharf is scheduled January to March 2016, day time working only.
- vii. The More-By-Water initiative was explained. The vast majority of linings intend to be transported by river

8. Commercial Vessels

b. NRAWG 53 – Large Freight Vessels

- i. The current length limitation in London (65m) has been reviewed.
- ii. With mitigations in place, such as propulsion types, wheelhouse visibility, manoeuvring aids and crewing the current limit could be extended to 80m, which would increase the possible tonnage capacity for a vessel.

c. Capacity Study

- i. With the increase in passenger and freight traffic on the river and the recent work on the Thames Vision, a study was carried out to look at central London's capacity.
- ii. The study looked at what constraints there are on capacity on the river and what can be done to alleviate congestion.

- iii. At times, the river does reach capacity in certain areas and the study produced a range of outcomes and recommendations to take forward:
 - Review passenger vessel timetables with LRS and Operators
 - Increase Pier capacity (pier extensions)
 - Survivability of Passenger Vessels
 - Manoeuvrability of freight vessels
 - Use of the river during the night for freight traffic
 - Relocation of some moorings
 - Scheduling bridge arch closures at night
 - Holding areas for piers
 - Sharing of Passage Plan information

d. Passenger Vessels

i. High Visibility Sterns

Operators are reminded of the requirement under GD9 to have a clearly visible and lit orange stern of the required area. This requirement comes from the Marchioness recommendations. The Harbour Launch will be checking for compliance.

ii. Code of Practice

The Code of Practice for Passenger Vessels is currently being reworked and it's hoped to be out next year ahead of the summer season. Operators will be asked for their input in the coming months.

e. RIB Operations

- i. A Navigational Risk Assessment Working Group (NRAWG) has been setup to look at RIB operations below Tower Bridge, due to the recent increase in the number of vessels. Passage plans and the number of RIBs operating at once will be reviewed.

9. Events

a. Review of events from 2015

- i. The Events Review was circulated in advance of the meeting and attached as Appendix B.
- ii. DHMU2 thanked the group for accommodating the Bond filming earlier on in the year. The lighting of the bridges has encouraged the mayor to push for lighting on all of London's bridges.
- iii. 5 other large filming projects are planned for next year.
- iv. **The Great River Race**
Dragon boats were excluded from participating, which was supported by the fact that 20 people entered the water from bell boats. The different types of boats will be categorised for next years event to assist with the decision of exclusion of certain vessels.

b. Forthcoming events for 2015/16

i. New Years Eve

70 boats are anticipated to be underway during the fireworks. Operators are reminded to pass on their Risk Assessments to the MPU and to obey the Notice to Mariners for the event and to be out of the closure area before it is put into place. Operators are asked for vigilance when it comes to spotting any form of terrorist activity on the river during New Years Eve and to report (101 / 999) if anything seems out of the ordinary.

ii. Universities Boat Race

The Boat Race will take place on Easter Sunday next year (27th March). There will be 4 races this year (2 Men's and 2 Women's races)

10. AOB

a. Thames Vision

- i. A call for evidence for the Thames Vision project was carried out and a series of sector specific meetings have been held.
- ii. 4 studies have been carried out – Public Amenity, Economic Prosperity, River Capacity and Future Trade.
- iii. An initial document for public consultation will be available soon and we're committed to producing a final document in Spring 2016, after which the strategy for delivery will be taken forward.

b. Northern Line Extension

Spoil recovery for the Northern Line Extension is underway, with 1 barge visiting Battersea Power Station per day.

c. Charing Cross Bridge

No. 1 arch will be closed from January (**M70 of 2015 refers**)

d. Flow rates

- i. A discussion was had on the possibility of the PLA installing flow rate monitors on the river – as the speed limit is through the water, this could assist in determining a vessel's speed and the enforcement of the speed limit.
- ii. It was decided that it wouldn't be practical to have flow meters, as the river flow varies at different locations on the river. Hydrographic can estimate the flow rate at certain locations and have modelled data.

e. Re-categorisation of the river between Brentford and Teddington

- i. A question was raised whether the PLA would support a request to the MCA for this area of river to be re-categorised from a Cat C to Cat B.
- ii. As the categorisation of waters impacts on master qualifications and other restrictions, the PLA sees a change of category to have no benefit.

f. Wash

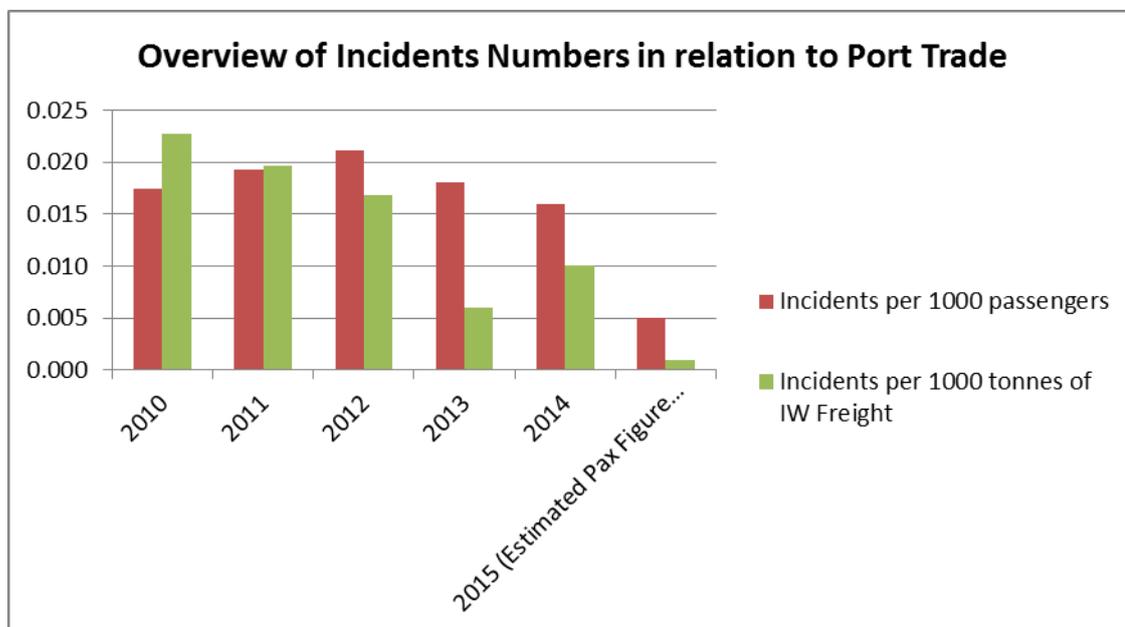
- iii. A question was asked whether the PLA regularly monitor vessels' speeds, as some houseboat residents have noticed that vessels frequently break the speed limit. It was noted that data from Marine Traffic can be inaccurate as it averages speed and doesn't take a position as regularly as the VTS systems.
- iv. It was suggested that the PLA should look at other ports that have high speed craft – New York for example, however there are not many ports that have similar conditions to the Thames (New York has a tide range of 0.5m)

Date of Next Meeting

28th April 2016 at 10:30. Watermen's Hall

INCIDENT REVIEW 1st APRIL 2015 TO 30th SEPTEMBER 2015

There have been **97** reported incidents since the last review of incidents at the RUCF meeting in April 2015.



Monthly Incident Numbers

2013												
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
13	11	7	14	23	22	34	26	12	13	8	13	196
2014												
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
9	4	7	15	14	18	17	22	18	11	13	8	156
2015												
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
6	6	9	15	18	13	25	12	14				

MAN OVERBOARD - 1 (3) There has been one report of a man overboard incident occurring in the last six months. This was in the upper reaches of the Thames.

WASH COMPLAINTS - 9 (5) A number of wash complaints have arisen over the last period from a variety of sources. Mostly these are a result of not following agreed passage plans and easing down in specific locations.

There continues to be a number of wash complaints from houseboat owners along the river (not reported in the above figures); these continue to be investigated with the majority being unsubstantiated and found to be of a disturbance in nature rather than any physical damage. These issues continue to be addressed with a view to reducing complaints in the future.

CONTACTS -11 (5) The number of incidents involving contacts is similar to this time last year over the last six months. A more even spread of Class V and recreational user is becoming more evident.

COLLISIONS AND NEAR MISS COLLISIONS - 15 (3) This figure is slightly up on this time last year, a more proactive approach to reporting incidents from the rowing community has seen the number of reports rise on this occasion.

We continue to encourage near miss reporting.

GROUNDINGS - 2 (1) Both of these incident were minor and in central London.

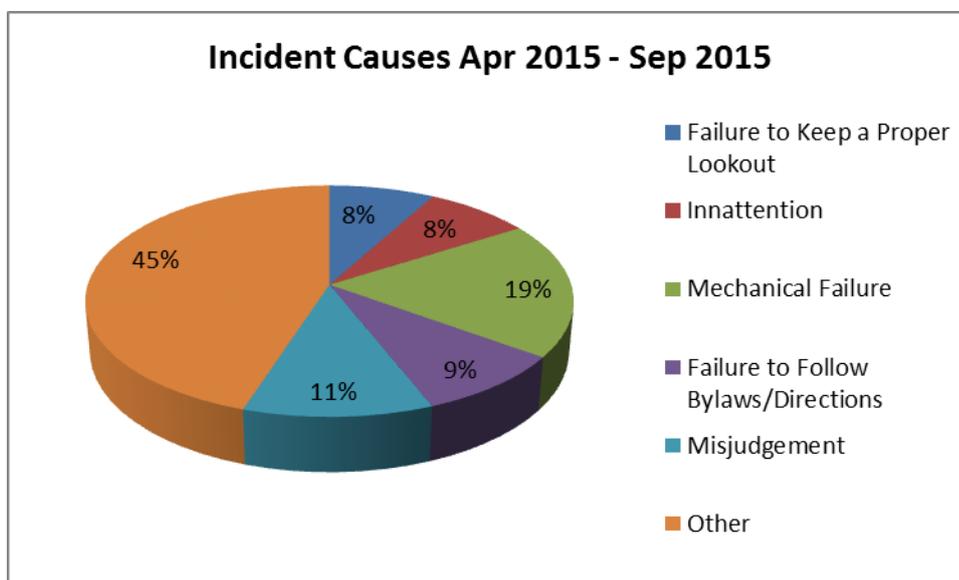
FIRE / EXPLOSION – 0 (0) Nothing to report.

MECHANICAL FAILURE - 22 (12) There continues to be a significant number of mechanical failures on commercial vessels in the Upper district. These incidents range from steering failures to engine problems and fortunately they did not result in any further collision or contacts. We continue to encourage all operators to ensure regular checks of their vessel's mechanical systems are conducted as well as ensuring they have an effective maintenance regime.

BREACH OF BYELAWS & GENERAL DIRECTIONS – 5 (5) There were 5 breaches of PLA Byelaws & General Directions in the last six months and, of these incidents 2 related to a breach of the PLA's speed limit byelaw. The PLA continues to consider options to raise awareness of the speed limits through central London, especially to the recreational community, to improve this situation and to try to reduce these incidents further in 2015.

Cause Analysis

The breakdown of incident causes in the PLA's Upper District (Margaretness – Teddington) is displayed in the chart below.



As always we welcome and fully encourage the reporting of incidents. As can be seen they are all closely analysed from which we determine the focus of our attention and where changes need to be made to assist in preventing their reoccurrence and thus improving **safety** on the river.

River Events November 2015 – April 2016

Name of Event	Date
Greenwich Yacht Club cruiser Race	28 November
Vesta Scullers Head of the River Race	05 December
University of London Allom Cup	06 December
Trial 8s - Womens	10 December
Latymer Scratch	12 December
Trial 8s - Mens	13 December
GYC Dingy Race	13 December
SBSC Downriver Race	19 December
Remenham Challenge	19 December
New Years Eve Fireworks	31 December
Richmond Canoe Club Race	03 January 16
Barking and Dagenham Canoe Club Event	10 January 16
Quintin Eights Head of the River Race	23 January 16
United Hospitals Winter Regatta	24 January 16
Dewar Shield	07 February 16
Greenwich Head	14 February 16
Boustead Cup	14 February 16
Hammersmith Head of the River Race	20 February 16
Hammersmith Women's & Juniors' - with HHORR	20 February 16
Women's Eights Head of the River Race	05 March 16
United Hospitals Head Race	06 March 16
Schools Head	17 March 16
Head of the River	19 March 16
Vesta Veterans Head	20 March 16
Devizes to Westminster Canoe Marathon	27 March 16
University Boat Race	27 March 16
Devizes to Westminster Canoe Marathon	28 March 16
Oxbridge Wattermen's Challenge	09 April 16
Tudor Pull	17 April 16
London Kayakathon	23 April 16
Hammersmith Amatuer Regatta	24 April 16
Chiswick Regatta	30 April 16