

RTA Co Ltd March Link Update Newsletter



RTA Co Ltd '**LINK**' UPDATE  
*Bringing the Thames together to  
Facilitate Knowledge Exchange and Unite Skill Sets  
(If you represent a large organisation it would be appreciated  
if you can ensure that this update is widely circulated*

**DATE LINE 7 March, 2019**

**February is a short month. But it went very fast. BBC on London news on a Sunday evening and then again on the Monday showing how the problems of social housing have spread onto the river. It seems that some of those now squatting on river side are fencing off the river bank!**

**The backbone of RTA Co Ltd is the delivery of the Waterways Plan 2015/21. We cover this with some depth in this issue.**

**Delivery of all of this now has lead RTA becoming the campaigning body taking the message to decision makers. As in the Plan. RTA Co Ltd acts as the secretariat of the Thames All Party Parliamentary Group and this is reported. RTA Co Ltd requires funding members continued support is an essential. We finish as expected reporting on domestic.**

**RTA delivers viable and efficient service protecting the interests of all who live in the Thames Valley Catchment.**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **BREXIT**

➤ In one way or another it will happen. Why it is reported here.

### **WATERWATS PLAN 2015/21**

- Why and How
- 'A' Flood Risk
- 'B' Environment
- 'C' Planning
- 'D' Tourism and Marketing
- 'E' Navigation and Moorings
- 'F' Sport and Recreation

## **THAMES ALL PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP**

- Next meeting chaired by John Howell MP – 30 April, 2019.

## **DOMESTIC ISSUES – ALMOST END OF YEAR 5**

- Business plan outcomes

## **DELIVERING THE OBJECTIVES**

- Comment within the introduction of the W.W. Plan 2015/21 advised, *“...but RTA’s capacity is limited and a comprehensive Action Programme will require some RTA members to take on a leadership role in organising implementation of particular parts of the Programme.”*

## **BREXIT**

RTA does not have to enter the fray of Brexit. We only mention it because we were advised by Julia Simpson Thames Area Director at the TNUF meeting (26 Feb) that all government departments which includes the EA are at this time very much immersed in working to deliver a working Brexit. This might impede some of the other Thames work expected. For example we were advised that the next TNUF meeting would not be until October. We report further below.

## **WATERWAYS PLAN 2005 – 2011 (7 Years)**

RTA commenced work leading to a Draft Version in 2004 for an internal consultation which included the RTA Committee. Thames Waterways Department at the time did not spare any money developing this as it was seen as a ‘flag ship’ exercise to promote the Thames. The officers managing the exercise were Angela Morris and Andy Yeates who reported to Eileen McKeever – Thames Navigation Manager at the time. The draft was in a bound copy very professionally drafted and went to 53 close typed pages.

We copy the last paragraph 13.0 Targets, Monitoring and Review.

**“Monitoring and Review Policy - We will monitor the impacts from implementing the Thames Waterways Plan”**

**“Possible Actions – Carry out Strategic Sustainable Assessment of the plan as it developed and review (incorporating the requirement of the SEA Directive)”**

**“Gather data and research patterns on recreation use”**

**“Set realistic, measurable targets with a time scale for implementation”**

set realistic, measurable targets with a time scales for every policy.  
“Measure social, economic and environmental impacts and formally review the plan in 2010.”

It continues saying:

“We need to be able to assess how successful we are in meeting plan’s objectives. It is important to respond to changes in people’s activities and lifestyles. We must also be able to detect any adverse cumulative impacts from incremental change.”

During 2005 the work continued and with considerable flair it was promoted widely and introduced at the London Boat Show in 2006. It proved to be the bible for EA staff who worked to the policies and strategies in the document and Local Authorities welcomed it. And so did the wider public and regional organisations.

## **WATERWAYS PLAN 2015 – 2021 (7 Years)**

In 2011 we faced a different political climate. Austerity had started to bite. Government proscribed involvement with third party initiatives. EA Thames Region had to cease funding and managing the RTA. The existing RTA Committee believed that their work was too important to come to an end!

There were 80 members listed under the EA regime and enough of these plus others came forward prepared to pay a subscription to continue and maintain the RTA’s work. The existing committee pressed the button in 2012 and the ‘New’ RTA commenced work.

Its first initiative was to take the Waterways Plan forward as it had by now passed the 2011 life span of the first iteration of the plan. Work commenced at the AGM in December 2015 the new plan was approved for publication.

It is hard to believe but we are now over half way in March 2019 in delivering the plan 2015 – 2021. There were over 50 action points for RTA to take forward. How to measure against action is complicated but we did it in 2018 and we continually follow through this work. It was advised when the report was published it was a living document and actions had to be recognised as climate and positions alter.

How do we now in March 2019 measure what we have achieved against the Actions called for in the 2015/21 plan? And what is new that has to be recognised as these actions are followed through.

## **FLOOD RISK - SECTION ‘A’**

There are 8 action points. Every one of these are continuing to be worked on. With even more emphasis because that despite the Oxford By Pass Channel scheme is on the way the plan in Abingdon has been cancelled because of cost and the most urgent Lower Thames Flood relief scheme has stalled. With all urgency RTA is campaigning to get the funding restored!

In a book just published on global warming "The Uninhabitable Earth" by David Wallace he says and we quote, "Damage from river flooding could increase sixty-fold in Britain with a global warming of four degrees" It suggests that the world is already one degree warmer from the industrial revolution. *More flooding can be expected.* It has to be a priority for RTA Co Ltd to build a Flood Prevention Group to consolidate all the work that took place in 2014 and fight for the Lower Thames Scheme commence again.

RTA was present at the public meeting called by Layla Moran MP on 7 March, 2019. It started with a statement by the MP, followed by an address by Julia Simpson Thames Director. There were questions followed by an explanation on how the flood protection measures worked under the EA. The real reason for the meeting was to explain to the Abingdon residents who completely filled the room with people standing at the back why the original plan to store flood water has stalled because of cost. What has to be said that despite comments made by the EA the residents of Abingdon like many others who are at risk, should the situation be the same as at times of previous flooding many will still be at risk.

It has to be a priority that with support from RTA office we seek person or persons to work with RTA to fight to have the flood protection plans re-booted!

It will be on the Agenda for the Thames All Party Parliamentary Group

## **ENVIRONMENT - SECTION 'B'**

There are 12 action points. Defra initiated catchment level engagement and planning to develop a Catchment Based Approach in 2011/12.

RTA has had a watching position being able to talk Catchment managers within EA and more specifically working with Thames 21 who have the brief covering the Thames from Putney to Maidenhead.

It has to be said that within the limited resources within RTA Co Ltd other than monitoring this most important segment there is little 'In House' resource to take the actions forward as it should. It appears that there are probably 35 different interested organisations involved. There has been a conversation with a third party who is attempting to coordinate Catchment Planning and RTA Co Ltd would be pleased to work with them but to date there has been no positive outcome.

We invite any interested person to volunteer to work to bring together there many different avenues now being discussed throughout the Thames Valley. Support will be available from RTA office.

## **PLANNING - SECTION 'C'**

This is a burning issue within the RTA Mooring Group and active work is being to encourage the EA to consider their advice to planning authorities to see how in the longer term it would be easier to obtain planning permission to allow for long term residential moorings.

Other than that there has to be more work on the 6 action points listed. Assistance

is required from any member who could pick up the RTA Co Ltd Planning Environment portfolio! Support will be available from RTA office.

## **TOURISM AND MARKETING - SECTION 'D'**

From earlier work carried out by RTA there continues to be the Marketing Committee which stands on its own with its own funding and web page. It is chaired by Jonathan Hobbs who coordinates with the RTA Co Ltd office. It is essential that work continues to promote the River Thames. RTA Co Ltd has to work to maintain the river so that those who visit the Thames see a well-managed and attractive working River Thames.

## **NAVIGATION and MOORINGS – SECTION 'E'**

There are 8 action points listed under this heading. Assumptions were made to cover Actions 35, 36, and 37. Life in 2019 has proved to be different.

Since 2005 there has been a group set up to coordinate control and funding of the navigation. It is called Thames User Group (Navigation) (TUGn) and has every organisation representing Thames Boaters within its membership. Every discipline from canoes, rowing, sailing to recreational motor boats, the Trade and event and trip boats are in membership. The Board of RTA and the Committee of TUGn agreed that this group would become the specialist group to advise RTA Co Ltd.

### **MOVING TO THE ACTIONS:**

Action 35: The assumption was that current levels of service on the non-tidal Thames will be maintained by the EA. The plan advised that if that ceases to be the case RTA will campaign for the maintenance of high levels of stewardship. We know that all is not well with the funding of the navigation. Boaters already pay over 60% of the revenue costs of the river. Registration charges have been increased to double inflation for 2019 and is expected to be the same for 2020. There is expected to be a five year funding plan – all of this demands continued monitoring.

Action 36: At the time of publication no decision had been made as to whether or not EA Navigations would be transferred to the newly formed CRT. During 2018 Defra made a decision that no such transfer would take place within the foreseeable future – taken as five years. There currently (March 2019) suggestions there should be a recommendation from TUGn that Thames navigations be moved to be managed by CRT. No such decision has yet been made but it is reported as it will be discussed within TUGn when it meets later in March.

Action 37: RTA advised that it attached considerable importance to resolving the problems of unauthorised moorings. It is very sad that despite an enormous amount of work by RTA and others and with a few good 'wins' the situation has in March 2019 deteriorated. It will be a burning issue at the next RTA Mooring Group chaired by John Please which

is now scheduled for 16 April, 2019. It will also be included on the Agenda of the Thames APPG (See Below).

Work continues of the remaining 5 Action Points which will always be ongoing.

### **SPORT AND RECREATION – SECTION ‘F’**

There are 6 action points. There was an effective working group but with the retirement of John Hall-Craggs there has been no chair. There has been some good movement on some of the actions but without doubt the Group requires revitalization.

### **THAMES ALL PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP**

The next meeting of this group is now set for 30 April, 2019. The agenda is currently being worked up. We can advise that the PLA will be making a presentation on “Air Quality Strategy”. John Howell has asked that we include discussion on challenges facing sections of the tow path being fenced off by boats who do not have a home mooring. We will also come back to what is going to happen to flood protection for the vulnerable homes and businesses below the Jubilee River.

### **FUTURE VIABILITY OF RIVER THAMES ALLIANCE Co.**

March is month 12 of Year 5 with the end of the financial year 31 March, 2019. The accounts will be finalised as at 31 March and sent to the company’s accountants for checking as to accuracy. A full report will be sent to members as soon as is practical.

All those members who have not responded to our request for their renewal will be deleted from membership as 31 March, which will allow RTA to give an accurate members position at the end of year 5.

We gave a budget forecast for 1 April, 2019 to 31 March, 2020 which indicates that the company will be viable subject to a semi-voluntary service by Michael Shefras. Nothing has transpired that alters this.

We will be sending to all members our business plan and forecast for Year 6. We are of course dependent upon members subscriptions and we thank all those who have paid their renewals. If your renewal invoice has not yet been paid – PLEASE let us have it so we can close the ‘books’ for Year 5.

### **UPDATE SIX MONTH BUSINESS PLAN – October 2019 to 31 March 2019**

Now to the end of February, 2019 – five months actual against plan

VARIANCE – Savings/Losses against budget (+ = Better performance: - = Loss against forecast)

OCTOBER	NOVEMBR	DECEMBR	JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH
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SUBS less costs	ACTUAL	ACTUAL	ACTUAL	ACTUAL	ACTUAL
340.	100	550	550	250	
-148	-411	-123	-110	165	
+ 192	-314	427	440	85	
Ahead of budget without management costs	£-122	£305	£745	£830	

As at 6 March, 2019 the company has bank balances of £1,129 and debt of £120.

DESPITE RTA Co Ltd.'s LIMITED FINANCIAL RESOURCE!  
 We continue to deliver efficient delivery of the logistics required to deliver the vision of a sustainable River Thames into the next decade.

**Your subscription is vital!**

RTA Co Ltd appreciates those who have renewed  
**If you have an outstanding invoice please make your payment.**

**RTA HAS TO MAKE NEW SUBSCRIBERS PLEASE HELP**

Volunteers are required in the working groups  
 The groups can be supported by RTA management  
 To aid delivery enthusiastic support is required

Through this **'LINK'** RTA Board wishes to update members.  
 How they deliver the progressive strategic plans to sustain the Thames.  
 RTA Co Ltd provides cohesive over-arching coordination to involve subscribing organisations currently working independently to deliver a **SUSTANABLE RIVER THAMES INTO THE NEXT DECADE**

RIVER THAMES ALLIANCE Co Ltd **DOES NOT** compete with the many organisations already working for their constituents.

It provides **THE ONLY** organisation embracing the diverse work these local authorities, businesses, organisations and people deliver  
 River Thames Alliance Co Ltd **DELIVER** HOLISTIC AND OVERARCHING WORK