

RIVER USERS GROUP

AREA 7

BOULTERS TO BELL WEIR

Minutes of Meeting held on 15th March 2017

Present;

Chairman, Mr Chris Turner.

Representatives;

Chris Turner,

Vic Wright, BCC

John Paine, TMBA

Tony Riley, TMBA

David Jones, ATYC

John Skuse, RTS

Ian Thompson, Datchet Parish Council

Kevin East, TNUF & British Canoeing

John Forsaith, TWYC

Fiona Brewer, Eton Excelsior Rowing Club

Neil Winckless, LRYC, IYFR

Alan Beaven, Old Windsor Angling Club

(minutes)

1. Apologies for Absence.

Jesse & Gordon English, Thames Scouts Cruiser Club

2. Chairman's welcome.

Chris Turner welcomed everyone, including some new members. Attendees introduced themselves.

3. Minutes of Last Meeting.

Minutes circulated and on website.

4. The Willows, an update.

Chris stated that he is backing off from this item, as it is not really a RUG issue. Currently there is a "houseboat", with an outboard engine, navigation lights, etc. EA has accepted it as a boat, and it now needs a safety certificate and registration, and then it can be taken onto the Thames. It is currently with an Estate Agent in Maidenhead for £750k. This boat was launched via Windsor Marina and caused serious damage to the grassed area. Any future boats will be brought in by river. The item will not be on agenda again.

5. Report of meeting with CEO of Canal & Rivers Trust

In 2011, the Government set up CART with the intention that it would be a charitable trust responsible for all rivers and canals and would take on some of the EA's responsibilities, predominantly Navigation. TUGN was formed, due to

concerns that services to boaters would be reduced. TUGN have met with CART representatives to discuss these concerns.

Tony Riley reported on these meetings, which are held under Chatham House rules, ie, no public disclosure of details at discussion stages. CART and EA are working together to agree demarcation and come up with proposals to put to Govt. This could take some time, due to complex issues involved, and Govt's current work on Brexit. Funding for EA is controlled by the Treasury, but CART has control of its own finances. There are concerns that Govt funding may not be sufficient for agreement to be reached, and that the Thames may lose its identity and be absorbed into CART's 10 regions. Hopefully the Thames will be seen as "special" and will be the 11th Region. This will run for several years, to decide what is passed to CART and what remains with the EA.

6 Matters arising in Reach

a) Comment from EA that retiring lock keepers would be replaced promptly, firstly by internal advertising, then on open market, but this conflicted with report in River Thames article.

b) Ian Thompson noted that the 2010 Water Management Act designated "Main Rivers" and "watercourses", which will need to be clarified if CART take over navigation responsibilities, as costs of maintenance of smaller watercourses could be passed to Local Authorities.

c) Windsor Triathlon is on Sunday 18th June 2017, and seems to be less popular now. Less money is being made and Human Race no longer running the event. Things may change.

d) Slum boats, (squatters) EA have removed some from Teddington, but now back on river. There is one near the Bells of Ouseley at Old Windsor, and the problem may increase in this reach. Concern that the EA is spending Navigation funding dealing with this problem.

e) Moorings at Datchet. Ian Thompson reported that the new frontage had been installed, but that rings had been placed on the front face, which is a H&S issue, and there were protruding bolts which could damage moored craft. Once these details are resolved, work on the jetties could proceed.

f) New River Thames Flood scheme starts at Datchet, and design is in progress. Kevin East is concerned that Rights of Navigation may not be considered. There are many details to resolve with water levels, riparian ownership etc. This will take some time.

7. Reports from River Users.

Old Windsor Angling Club

River Fishing season finished yesterday, and resumes on 15th June. Winter fishing has not been particularly good. Too cold (for me anyway) and water levels too low.

New River Thames Flood scheme

This starts at Datchet, and design is in progress. Kevin East is concerned that Rights of Navigation may not be considered. There are many details to resolve with water levels, riparian ownership etc. This will take some time.

Eton Excelsior Rowing Club.

Fiona reported “Learn to Row” session last week, and confirmed that tree in river is problematical. Eton College are landowners.

British Canoeing.

Kevin noted that the portage areas on the Jubilee River were overgrown. It was noted that Right of Navigation on the Jubilee River was by default. Is maintenance of bankside foliage the responsibility of landowner?

7. AOB.

- a) Devizes to Westminster Canoe Race to be at Easter as usual.
- b) Romney, Bray, and Boveney locks have been upgraded, and should be better manned.
- c) Maidenhead Waterways will be classed as “Thames”.

Thanks to TWYC for use of Clubhouse.
DONM Wednesday 18th October 2017.