

**Minutes of the 110<sup>th</sup> meeting of the 4/5 River Users Group  
on 18<sup>th</sup> January 2017 at the University of Reading**

**Present**

Andrew Wilbey (RAR & RUBC) (chairman), Sophie Smith (EA), Ann & Gordon Wicks (CBS/BMF-TVC), Peter Watson (BIBC), Julie Hall (WWC), Bob O'Neill (TRS WADRA) and Eddie Insam (TVPR & RTR).

**1. Apologies**

Apologies were received from Pat Smith, Peter Jeffery, Rob Edmonson, Seumas Munro and Colin Hounslow.

**2. Minutes of previous meeting**

The minutes were approved.

**3. Matters arising not covered by the agenda**

Nothing extra.

**4. Environment Agency Highlights**

Andy Croxford will be provisionally replacing Colin Hounslow at our meetings for the next few months as Colin is in secondment ([andrew.croxford@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:andrew.croxford@environment-agency.gov.uk)).

Enforcement: A recent patrol in the stretch between Cleeve and Mapledurham resulted in 15 notices issued from a total of 93 boats checked. In a similar patrol between Cleeve and Benson 15 boats out of 105 were found to be unregistered. In normal patrols in the Mapledurham stretch, 8 unregistered notices were issued and one boat owner was cautioned.

Refurbishment of the chamber walls at Goring Lock is now finished.

Eleven volunteer lock keepers met at Mapledurham Lock on 10 November for a work party. They cleared overgrowth from the field behind the lock and the lock site. The fallen tree on Mapledurham Estate opposite to Purley Marina has been removed. Shoal removal and reprofiling of the riverbed and the back channel of Purley Island was cleared to maintain a depth of approximately 3ft. Also shoal dredging at other places including Horsebridge at Marsh Lock.

The EA have been contacted by Reading CIC about staging a waterside event on the river this year; dates are 9th to 17th September. This may affect navigation between Reading and Caversham bridges. Any enquiries to Sophie Smith at [sophie.smith@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:sophie.smith@environment-agency.gov.uk).

**5. Thames Navigation User Forum**

No meetings since last RUG meeting (the next meeting will be on 7<sup>th</sup> February).

## **6. Member's Matters**

Questions were asked about the appearance of "rented house boats" on Christchurch Meadows, i.e. moored boats rented as ordinary accommodation for non-boat owners.

Concerns were raised about safety and lack of suitable training for tenants.

EA Comments: Registrations will be checked on all boats in the Reading area in 2017 and the boat registration team has confirmed that if any boats are being rented out they should have a commercial registration rather than a private one.

Comments were made about PLA and Euro 5 pollution regulations affecting river users, specifically air pollution and emission levels from outboard and boat engines.

EA Comment: These two articles may be useful:

<https://www.dieselnet.com/standards/eu/nonroad.php>

<https://www.pla.co.uk/Thames-ship-discount-for-environmental-high-performers>

Email note from a member: "Are the RUG aware that the 2018 boat license fee will be 20% more expensive as VAT will be added?"

EA Comments: The boat registration team are not aware of any up-coming change to the VAT rule on Environment Agency boat registrations. This issue may have been confused with the possible transfer to Canal River Trust. We still do not have a decision on whether or not there will be a transfer to the Canal and River Trust and what the outcomes of any possible transfer might be. However, there is no current plan to introduce VAT on boat registrations whilst the waterways remain under Environment Agency management.

Rob Edmonson (RBCSBC) noted that there are a number of trees on the Oxon side, a few hundred metres upstream of RBCSBC's boathouse that are encroaching on the navigation and may come adrift at any time. The EA have taken note of this and will follow with own action or attempt to notify the riparian owners.

EA Comments: we are making enquiries to find out who the landowner is in order to contact them about the trees.

Concerns were raised about lock keepers in "flying rotas", i.e. in charge of more than one lock at a time, and having to travel between them. This means locks may be kept unattended at times with consequential safety risks, especially for hire boats and untrained crew. The safety records to date for weirs and locks are very good, but the fact that they may be unattended at busy times may pose problem in the future.

EA Comments: We will continue to provide the maximum staffing coverage possible at the locks with the budgets available to us. Furthermore, all of our sites have public safety risk assessments carried out on them and applicable safety measures introduced.

Suggestions were made about the implementation of river "black boards" as an option above red boards as strict "no navigation" notices even for skilled crew. It is not always easy for even an experienced skipper to know that the section ahead is non-navigable.

EA Comments: we have passed this onto our colleague who sits on a national group looking at river advice for boaters.

Members were invited to help update the listing of local river events (attached).

## **7. River Thames Alliance**

Questions were asked about the effectiveness of the online mooring booking system.

## **8. Local Authority Matters**

Thameside Promenade bank repairs have started.

The Great House at Sonning has permission to build a carpark near the river.

Rivermead Leisure Centre extension on the flood plain under approval, built on a rubbish dump.

EA Comments (contaminated land team). They have seen the planning application and made comments and put forwards suggested planning conditions. You will be able to see the Environment Agency's response on the RBC planning website at: [http://planning.reading.gov.uk/fastweb\\_PL/welcome.asp](http://planning.reading.gov.uk/fastweb_PL/welcome.asp)

## **9. ATYC Matters**

Nothing to report.

## **10. Correspondence**

Nothing to report

## **11. AOB**

### **Reading-on-Thames Festival.**

Reading CIC, the Economic Development Company for Reading is planning a major festival based on the Thames in central Reading. The Festival will be bookended by two spectacular free outdoor events on the Thames in central Reading (Sat 9 & Sat 16 September) with a programme of arts, cultural and heritage activities programmed in between (some on the water, some on the banks and some in the town centre). RUG4/5 members are invited to participate in the water events, and we shall email interested members with any developments. The contact at CIC is Alex Brannen <[alex@livingreading.co.uk](mailto:alex@livingreading.co.uk)>

Thanks were given to Reading University Senior Common Room for hosting the event.

The meeting was closed at 9:30 pm

### **Dates of next meetings**

17th May 2017 (UTMYC)

4th October 2017 (UTMYC)

18<sup>th</sup> January 2017, 7.30 pm at University of Reading (tbc)

## 2017 river events in RUG 4/5 area, from Cleeve to Marsh locks

26 <sup>th</sup> February	Thameside 1 canoe race: Aldermaston to Reading Canoe Club. Start window 10:30–11:30
4 <sup>th</sup> March	Reading University Head of the River Race, Tilehurst to Caversham, with river closures 10:00–12:30, 14:00–16:30
12 <sup>th</sup> March	Thameside 2 canoe race: Reading CC to Longridge canoe club, Marlow. Starts from 10:00 to 10:50
14/15 <sup>th</sup> April	Devizes to Westminster International Canoe Race, downstream from River Kennet at Reading
21 <sup>st</sup> May	K4 canoe races, a circuit between St Mary's and De Montfort islands, races start 10:00–12:15
28 <sup>th</sup> May	Canoe race: A circuit between De Montfort and Mapledurham Islands
10 <sup>th</sup> June	Pangbourne dragonboat event
10/11 <sup>th</sup> June	Reading Amateur Regatta, St Mary's Island to Caversham Bridge, 1500/1100 m with navigation channel, races 09:00–19:00 on each day
11 <sup>th</sup> June	Thames Valley circuit race 08.00–19.00 with navigation channel, TVP Waterside Centre
18 <sup>th</sup> June	Thames Valley Park Regatta, 500 m with navigation channel downstream of TVP Waterside Centre
15 <sup>th</sup> June	Combined Services Regatta, 800 m with navigation channel downstream of TVP Waterside Centre
24 <sup>th</sup> June	Reading Town Regatta, 800 m with navigation channel downstream of TVP Waterside Centre
? July	Thames swim at Beale Park, 2000 m with navigation channel
22 <sup>nd</sup> July	Goring and Streatley Regatta, 300/500 m
29/30 <sup>th</sup> July	National Canoe Marathon Championships – circuit race between De Montfort and Mapledurham Islands plus promenade
4/5 <sup>th</sup> August	Shiplake and Wargrave Regatta, ≈100/360 m
9 September	Reading-on-Thames Festival Water Event
17 September	Reading-on-Thames Festival Water Event
1 <sup>st</sup> October	K4 canoe races, a circuit between St Mary's and De Montfort islands, races start 10:00–12:15
1 <sup>st</sup> October	UTMYC Sail Past, between Sonning Lock and Kennet Mouth
7 <sup>th</sup> October	Reading Small Boats Head of the River Race, Tilehurst to Caversham Bridge, 3 divisions

*Summary as at 17<sup>th</sup> February 2017*