

**Minutes of the 112th meeting of the 4/5 River Users Group
on 4th October 2017 at UTMYC**

Present

Andrew Wilbey (RAR & RUBC) (chairman), Andrew Coxford (EA), Ann & Gordon Wicks (CBS), Philip Sachse (UTMYC), Margaret Rennie (UTMYC), Rob Edmonson (RBCS) and Eddie Insam (TVPR & RTR).

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Sophie Smith, Bob O'Neill, Peter Watson and Nick Haskings

2. Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes were approved.

3. Matters arising not covered by the agenda

There was nothing to add.

4. Environment Agency Highlights

Enforcement: Island encampment near Sonning visited by EA together with Police. Materials and rubbish removed and people in unregistered boats moved on.

A number of successful "Flag Days" with speed and wash speed guns combined with witness based statements resulted in a number of successful prosecutions. This was also seen as a successful deterrent. More Flag Days are planned for the future on a more regular basis, perhaps monthly or even fortnightly.

Contacted land owners on island near Moulsoford who agreed to cut back trees and growth

EA is aware of towpath collapse upstream of Blue Coats School where repair work is in progress at present. EA is also aware of fallen tree on opposite side of the river in same section. The Land owner is being contacted.

Full refurbishment of Blake's Lock (leaking gate) starting around November, including study of possible project on Blake's Island (to be defined)

Reading Festival. Full EA presence resulted in no enforcement reports and a good deterrent for illegal boats taking passengers.

Staffing: Due to sudden retirement and difficulty in allocating and training replacements, there was a noticeable lack of manned lock service last summer. However, ten new posts have now been allocated, who are now under training for the coming season. This includes a number of extra temporary staff.

5. Thames Navigation User Forum

Update conditions of RT merger are not imminent.

River Charges are planned to go up approximately in line with inflation since the last rise.

6. Member's Matters

PS noted the new Archimedes Screw at Sonning was drawing too much water at times resulting in water level drops at UTMYC moorings. EA suggested this should be reported to the Lock keeper.

Sunken boat at The Leech: (Sonning reach) EA has placed marker buoys around the wreck, noting that a full, proper safe removal can cost several thousand pounds, money which could be used elsewhere. As the boat is not in the navigation channel, this is not a priority.

Speeding Boats: Need to educate boaters re damage to banks and other river users. Perhaps stickers or leaflets that could be given away at locks, or by hire operators.

Instructions on how to operate locks: Some of the printed instructions at electrically powered locks are not too clear, especially to first time users. Furthermore, not all locks operate in the same way.

Some locks have no night lights, making approach difficult.

Lock Volunteers are not allowed to use lock power, only public power when operating the locks. Why can't they use full power? EA will report this to the Ops manager

Downstream of Moulsoford, no direction signage is visible.

Tesco's residential moorings: Patrols report that illegal mooring users tend to pay at the last minute just before being taken to court, making it inefficient to police the area effectively.

There were a few comments about booking moorings via the website. This does not guarantee that a mooring place will be available on arrival.

Comments were made about fees going up by 5% this year.

7. River Thames Alliance

Mooring working party has met three times in the last 6 months.

Work being done around Windsor to seek more moorings, some in EA's land.
The online mooring booking system is taking off.

8. Local Authority Matters

RBC has issued a Gypsy and Traveller's Programme Document but no need had been identified for residential moorings.

9. ATYC Matters

Next meeting will be on the 18th October. ATYC Rally at Beale Park was cancelled.

10. Correspondence

Nothing to report

11. AOB

Items were covered in Member's matters.

The meeting was closed at 9:30 pm

Dates of next meetings

Wed 17th January 2018, 7.30 pm at University of Reading (AGM)

Wed 16th May 2018 (UTMYC)

Wed 3rd October 2018 (UTMYC)