RUG 8 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT TO TNUF ON 26th FEBRUARY 2019

Reach 16 (Molesey Lock to Teddington Lock) Coordination Meeting
I chaired a well-attended Reach 16 Coordination meeting held at Tamesis Club on the 15th November. Waterways Officer Vince Hoare was in in attendance. John Adams of Tamesis volunteered to take over as the Reach Coordinator to relieve me of this duty. This was a constructive meeting at which we discussed safety issues and agreed the 2019 Calendar of Events

Incidentally, I assume that RUG 8 covers reaches 13, 14, 15, and 16, but the origins of this numbering system are lost in the mists of time.

SurreySAR
Members at the Reach Coordination meeting were briefed on plans to have a rescue vessel and crew provided by SurreySAR on patrol on Kingston Reach over the Christmas Holiday period, including New Year's Eve.

I am grateful to Thames Ditton Marina for providing a free berth for the SurreySAR vessel. The river was quiet over Christmas, but the crew were first on the scene one evening when a distressed male was threatening to throw himself into the river.

The crew and their support vehicles on the bank were a reassuring presence on the river on New Year's Eve. A number of boats rafted up under one of the arches of Kingston Bridge and had a party. Several unofficial and unsupervised firework parties took place on the bank.

Tim Rowsell of SurreySAR and I presented a report to the Kingston Council River Safety group on the 10th January. Fire, Police, and RNLI were represented. Vince Hoare now represents the EA on this group.

Patrol Vessel on Kingston Reach
The RNLI are confident that they can get through Teddington Lock in four minutes, so a rescue vessel is not needed on Kingston Reach. However, it would be incredibly valuable to have a patrol vessel on the water to act as 'eyes on the river' with a direct line to the London Coastguard to reduce call out delays.

I am now investigating the possibility of setting up a unit of the Maritime Volunteer Service (MVS) in Kingston. This would initially be under the supervision of MVS Putney and I have a meeting with them on 27th February. I am taking representatives from Warspite and Ajax Sea Scouts with me, and I have also arranged to meet the officer commanding West London Sea Scouts. TS Steadfast would be an ideal location for the new boat.

I have a dream that we acquire one of the ex police boats on the river, which now have names, like 'Fair Cop', 'Jack Frost' and 'Pleace Boat', and put it back on the river!

Permanent bases for SurreySAR and RNLI Flood Rescue Vessel
The proposal for a Watersports Centre including a base for a SurreySAR vessel at Hurst Park was refused planning permission, so SurreySAR will be looking for an alternative base. The RNLI are also looking for a base on the river to locate one of their specialist flood response vessels and a trailer. These vessels are currently located in Poole, but they would prefer to have them located in the regions.

Squatting Boats on the Sunbury to Molesey Reach
The recent BBC program 'Inside Out London' had a ten-minute feature on squatting boats on the Sunbury to Molesey Reach. I thought that this was a reasonably well-balanced piece of journalism. It presented squatters' and local residents' views. It also included contributions from:
- A local historian who concluded that the failure to register the land was an oversight
- A property lawyer who concluded that a compromise has to be reached.

My view is that, as RUG 8 Chairman, there is nothing more that I can do. It is up to the local resident groups to use the democratic process to address the issue via Dominic Raab MP and their local Elmbridge Borough councilors.

Abbey River
Finally, the public right of navigation on the Abbey River remains blocked by a weir constructed by a selfish riparian landowner. Kevin East of British Canoeing and I agree that this is an issue which must be addressed and solved by the Waterways department, not Flood Risk and Coastal Management.

Steve Collins
Chairman RUG 8 Bell Weir to Teddington Lock
23rd February 2019