

RIVER USERS GROUP

AREA 7

BOULTERS TO BELL WEIR

Minutes of Meeting held on 13th March 2019

Present;

Chairman, Mr Chris Turner.

Representatives;

Chris Turner,	
Matt Orchard	BBU Highways England
John Paine,	TMBA
Tony Riley,	TMBA
Neil Winckless,	LRYC, IYFR
David Gibson	Boat owner
Vincent Hoar	EA Technical Officer
Roma McGurk	MDL Thames
Paul Hallas	MDL Thames
David Jones	ATYC
Robin Bartropp	TWYC
Andrew Cotter	TSCC
Celia Cotter	TSCC
Fiona Brewer	Eton Excelsior Rowing Club
Kevin East	British Canoeing
Ian Campbell	CSAS
John Skuse	RTS
Alan Beaven,	Old Windsor Angling Club and TVAA

(minutes)

Apologies for Absence.

Ian Thompson, Datchet Parish Council

1. Chairman's welcome.

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

2. Minutes of last meeting and matters arising

Chris has attended TNUF meeting (RUG Chairs) where various issues in the reaches were highlighted. It was noted that attendance at different RUG 's varied. RUG 8 has 100 attendees sometimes, which can be unwieldy. RUG 7 information on website; www.thamesriverusersgroup.org

3. Smart M4

Matt Orchard gave an overview and update of the works to be carried out on the M4. This will involve not only closures of the motorway, but also the River. Work has started on the M4 river bridge now, with ramps for construction vehicles. Work in River being left until June 2019, coffer dams for bridge supports, compensation ponds will be provided for flood alleviation in Trumpers field. A temporary footpath and cycle track is to be provided on pontoons. There will be River and M4 overnight closures, 10pm to 5 am, cranes will be at foot of embankment to maintain maximum traffic flow and weekday working. Dates to

be confirmed in due course, but will be in June 2020. Leaflets giving dates and locations of public exhibitions made available.

Questions;

How are River closures to be notified to users? Details to be agreed with EA help.

How long will work take? Dependant on many factors.

Noted that the Thames does not have “closures” only “restrictions”. Rowers and paddlers to be informed of narrowing locally to works.

Matt invited to next meeting in October.

4. Illegal Mooring, abandoned boats and overhanging trees.

Half a mile from the meeting is an abandoned boat. There is illegal mooring upstream and downstream of Boveney, and a tree has fallen into Romney lock cut. The EA’s warranted officers are ticketing boats. TNUF have requested that RUG 7 /Chris Turner provide a list of known instances, so if you see anything, take a photo and report details to Chris.

5. TNUF update.

Tony Riley reported that the EA’s enforcement work last year has been substantial, they have checked 16 marinas, 4,400 boats, and dealt with 392 registration offences, 25 speed/wash notices and others.

Bell weir and Romney locks have been unreliable, and repair work is due to start at Bell on 19th March, and Romney a week later.

Five Lock houses which were rented out will revert to EA staff when present leases run out. Rosters are being worked on, there may be senior staff supporting volunteer lockkeepers, who should not work alone.

The Customer Charter, covering manning of locks, should be available by Easter. TMBA advising EA on priorities.

24 hour visitor moorings; An organisation, “Thames Visitor Moorings” was set up for a trial period in 2015, between Bell and Teddington, and proved a success, with only a handful of miscreants. The contract has been terminated, without the EA having prepared alternative tenders, and signs removed. New signs expected soon. Queens Eyot, Ruddles pool and other moorings. TNUF expressed concern about lack of signage, and understands that tender documents are now in hand, to enable a new contract to be in place for the new season.

Advance bookings of lock site moorings is now available.

Fit for purpose user instructions are being prepared for all locks. Possibly electronic downloads may be available for boat owners.

Registration increase of 5.7% due next year, and a charging plan to be established/reviewed. New Deputy Director of EA appointed. EA need £20m but only collect £5m at present.

EA Waterways team, part of DEFRA, are going into lockdown due to Brexit, until October.

6. EA report

Vincent introduced himself, and noted that much of his report had already been covered. He is ex Police, based at Shepperton, with a range from below Teddington up to Romney. He said that more rain is needed, and that moorings are being staffed by EA for time being. Molesey opened on time, Caversham due to open on Saturday. Teddington now fully staffed, and rota to be fine-tuned. EA are aware of trees at Maidenhead, which are on RBWM land, Boulters and Monkey Island are also areas of concern.

7. Reports from River Users.

Civil Service Angling Society.

It was noted that CSAS had lost the fishing rights at Datchet, unable to agree terms with Crown Estates.

Old Windsor Angling Club

Very hot Summer was bad for fishing. Thames Valley Angling Association have been working with EA, Thames 21, Thames Water, and Eton Wick Waterways group to reinstate the Roundmoor ditch across Dorney common, erecting fences to prevent cattle damage to banks, and providing proper cattle drinks, repairing banks and installing flow deflectors. In time this will improve the flow, reducing silting and the problems of flooding, as well as enhancing habitat for wildlife.

Eton Exelsior Rowing Club

Usual various activities have taken place. Quite lucky with the weather this Winter. Others had concerns about controlling rowers going out in bad conditions.

British Canoeing

Concern that Jubilee river portage points being overgrown. Working with Thames 21 regarding WFD.

CRT/EA to issue new Boaters handbook which will include paddler information. Meeting held with Maidenhead Waterways scheme, noted pressure from Environmentalists, who prefer habitat/ecology to navigation, despite Thames Navigation Act which permits it.

John Skuse

John has had discussions with a “professional” about traveller problems, who seemed to be ill informed. Councils and others are attempting to work together to present a joined-up approach.

AOB

RTA document to be attached to minutes.

Thanks to TWYC for use of Clubhouse.

DONM Wednesday 16th October 2019.