

RIVER USERS GROUP

AREA 7

BOULTERS TO BELL WEIR

Minutes of Meeting held on 16th October 2019

Present;

Chairman, Mr Chris Turner.

Representatives;

Matt Orchard	BBU Highways England
Jo Verleysen	BBU JV
John Paine,	TMBA
Tony Riley,	TMBA, ATYC
Neil Winckless,	LRYC, IYFR, LRYC
David Gibson	Boat owner
Vincent Hoar	EA Technical Officer
David Jones	ATYC
Andrew Cotter	TSCC
Celia Cotter	TSCC
Fiona Brewer	Eton Excelsior Rowing Club
John Skuse	RTS
Simon Shepherdson	EA Hambledon Lock and RUG 6
Melanie Pope	TWYC
Karen Weight	TWYC
Dan Taylor	EA
Barry Russell	EA Waterway Manager, Harbourmaster
Alan Beaven,	Old Windsor Angling Club and TVAA

(minutes)

Apologies for Absence.

None

1. Chairman's welcome, and Minutes of previous meeting.

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

Attendees introduced themselves.

RUG 7 information on website; www.thamesriverusersgroup.org

2. Matters arising in Reach.

a) Chris has attended bi-ennial meeting (RUG Chairs and EA) where various issues in the reaches were highlighted, and a common denominator was that of overhanging trees. Chris considers it to be urgent in this reach and noted that trees are the responsibility of landowners. Areas of concern; Penton Hook down to Windsor, above Old Windsor Lock, trees in water at Datchet, Romney lock cut, up and down, Windsor Racecourse, trees are likely to fall, and Monkey Island, which is a pinch point. Further up the river is wider so less of a problem until Maidenhead, where Tony Riley has been in discussion with new RBWM leader, who has ideas about cleaning up the riverside and removing abandoned boats. EA have been consulted and tree work is imminent. Head waiting area at Bray needs attention.

How high does canopy need to be? Chris reported an incident where a boat veered to avoid another and the occupants were hit by branches. Trimming needs to be part of a maintenance regime.

Cookham Island, EA owned, EA barge downstream at present, can carry out trimming, Bigger trees will need heavier kit. Farmers get Stewardship grants which includes bankside tree trimming. NFU being contacted to raise the subject.

b) Sunken boat upstream of Bray Lock is still there, but EA have it on their to do list.

c) Yellow ships lifeboat at Ruddles Pool, no name or registration.

d) Unoccupied narrow boats above Boveney, EA has in hand, notices being served, charging for mooring is problematical.

e) Chris has identified various sites as potential legitimate moorings for cruisers.

f) Queens Eyot, vegetation cut back, signage needed, ("EA mooring, 24 hours") and a maintenance regime set up. Dan Taylor commented that as a Public Safety Risk Assessment would be needed, it is not that simple, and resources are not available.

g) There has been a mooring at Datchet since 1784, and Parish Council (Ian Thompson) have replaced the pontoons and tried to improve moorings. Rings have been incorrectly fitted, and there is rubble in the water, thought to be from since the slipway was built after WWII. Parish Council have no money, EA to progress.

h) "Team D Group update. 63 Internal requests for work, (Requests to our internal operations team to repair/upgrade aspects of our lock sites), 2 lock site enforcement days which saw 260 boat registrations checked as they navigated through the locks, Trees are being surveyed within the Windsor and Maidenhead area to be cut back to aid navigation, Meetings with rowing clubs? and schools to discuss their conduct on the river, M4- Works still ongoing but due to a landowner dispute the position of the walkway pontoon may move but we will be consulted if this happens and will update the RUG Chair if this does occur, New signs and lights on the walkway pontoons to make them visible in low light after the rowing collision? No river closures have been agreed by Waterways and we will be meeting with the contractors to ensure this does not affect our customers."

3. M4 Road bridge update

The pontoon for temporary walkway is in place and being used. Upstream warning sign to be moved further upstream towards lock. (suggested signs on locks) Rowers asked for back of signs to be reflective/more visible. Closures will be late evening/night, 10pm to 5am, and the bridge will have scaffolding hanging below, clearances being 5.5metres with a width of 33m. Starts Feb 2020 to Dec 2020. 20th June 2020 Sat/Sun at night, cranes will be lifting beams. Rescue boats will be in attendance. Thames path will be closed during these operations.

4. RTA Update

Tony Riley went to a meeting at Henley River and Rowing Museum. RTA is having difficulties with budgets and ways of working. The concerns have been listed in a 2 page summary document for future. The AGM proposal for a working group of 6 members to review and provide proposals for the future, was passed.

The group to report asap or by the end of Feb 2020. Local Authorities have been dropping out due to cost, and the driving force, Michael Shefras, is very ill. (RUG contribution is £25)

John Skuse commented that the “Green Corridor” document was produced in 2003 by Oxford Brookes.

The RTA was set up as a business, and perhaps should revert to being more voluntary.

5. Report from EA

Vince noted that most things had been covered already. The issue of boatyard accommodation was in the system.

Telemetry at Sumptermead Ait is still working and Romney and Bell operating systems now working better after up-grading.

In response to a question about boats from Harleyford experiencing only one lockkeeper in the stretch down to TWYC, EA confirmed that temporary staffing now finished after end of September, and keepers were sometimes manning more than one lock. Noted that the EA does not have a Statutory duty (or the funding) to provide assisted passage.

In response to a comment, EA confirmed that legal steps are being taken with regard to itinerant boaters, although may not be obvious.

6.Reports from River Users

Old Windsor Angling Club

Very hot Summer again was bad for fishing. Heavy rain recently causing different problems. Some inconsiderate boaters not aware of problems caused by their wash. EA has conducted a survey about the Angling Close Season, and it is to remain the same.

Eton Exelsior Rowing Club

Usual activities, and trees causing problems (especially as the rowers look the wrong way!)

RTS (John Skuse)

There is a paper about Local Authorities responsibilities to house travellers? Comments about landside facilities for moored boats, some too expensive to sell, so being rented out. Floating “shed” moved down to Penton.

Thanks to EA for work in dealing with Floating Pennywort.

Vandalism and theft of outboards at Red Lion, Henley and Hobbs.

Alan Beaven noted that Himalayan Balsam had been spotted at Home Park, Windsor, and the Angling Club would be dealing with it, but it may spread.

Andrew Cotter noted lots of mink, EA have information leaflet.

Also rowers do not seem to understand sound signals from cruisers. There are several different signals.

Chris noted an unusual visitor below Old Windsor lock – a Black Swan.

7. AOB

Thanks to TWYC for use of Clubhouse.

DONM Wednesday 18th March 2020.

Chris wished all a Happy Christmas!