

## **Notes from PLA Public Meeting, 18<sup>th</sup> March, 2008**

Present from BCC: Clive Evans, Michael Cunnington, Andrew Kirkwood

The evening was somewhat dominated by protests and counter-protests relating to the PLA's work on the riverbank around Barnes. It would seem that the river wall is being badly damaged by the trees that have been allowed to grow into it over the past many years. The PLA removed a considerable number of them without much consultation, and thereby upset the many interest groups in that area. By contrast, sailors and canoeists are delighted at the improved safety and accessibility. The PLA promised fuller consultation in future, but insisted that its main responsibility was to the maintenance of the banks, rather than pretty river views.

There was some mention of visitor moorings along the Tideway, and it would seem that the message has got home – the PLA is insisting that visitor moorings are provided as part of any new developments and believes that we shall see a few more appearing over the years. It clearly has no plans for major improvements.

They are constructing two new sewage pipes, routed along the riverbed, to prevent future overflows into the Thames: one will run from Abbey Mill along Bow Creek to Beckton and the second from Hammersmith to Beckton. This is a vast engineering project, will be paid for by Thames Water and is planned for completion around 2020.

The new Rowing Rules and buoyage are deemed a success in general.

There is a new standing river users group, which has grown out of the group which developed these new Rowing Rules. Its formal title is the PLA Harbourmaster's Recreational Navigational Group (PHRNG) and we are represented on it via the ATYC. It will meet twice a year.

A new manager has been appointed at Richmond Weir – his name is Alex Brown. I met him after the meeting, and he is very keen to have informal contact with the likes of us. I promised him our support. In particular, he is keen to hear of any incidents of abuse from rowers: any skipper who is subject to strong language should note the identification of the boat involved (all rowing boats should now have an id marked on the hull) and report it to Alex. He will report it to the Rowing Association, who will take it seriously. Ultimately, a club can be thrown off the River if it is a persistent offender.

The PLA does seem genuinely willing to consult river users of all sorts before implementing its future plans: however, as this evening demonstrated, achieving consensus is pretty unlikely.