

Record of meeting

Lymington Ferries Summer Review 2009 - Friday 13th November 2009

Lymington Ferries - Summer Review 2009
Presentation to the Lymington River Users Safety Committee

Friday 13th November at 15.00 hours
Royal Lymington Yacht Club, Bath Road, Lymington, Hampshire, SO41 3SE

1. Welcome and Introductions (Peter Griffiths)

Peter Griffiths welcomed attendees and invited each attendee to introduce themselves.

Names and contact details for attendees are recorded below.

Name	Representing	Contact details (email or phone)
Keith Wicks	Sea Scouts	kswicks@btinternet.com
Paul Brown	Wightlink	paul@westernparade.co.uk
Guy Digby	Wightlink	01425 621800
Elwyn Dop	Wightlink	elwyndop@wightlink.co.uk
John Burrows	Wightlink	johnburrows@wightlink.co.uk
John Bence	LHAG	Jbence@3529@aol.com
Peter Griffiths	LHC	c/o Harbour Office
Rod Perry	RLYC	rodperry@sky.com
Colin Freeman	LHC	Harbour Office
Ryan Willegers	LHC	ryanwilligers@harbouoffice.co.uk
Ian Dand	BMT	ian.dand@ntlworld.com
Julian Lockett	BMT	Julian.lockett@bmt-isis.com
John Noble	BMT	noble_marine@btinternet.com
Tony Blachford	Harbour Commissioner	tony@rainbowcopy.co.uk
Richard Phillips	LTSC	Richard.phillips@ltsc.co.uk

2. Scope and objectives of the meeting (Peter Griffiths)

Peter Griffiths (PG) set out the scope of objectives of the meeting from LHC's perspective. These would comprise a discussion of the results of BMT's Summer Review of W-Class ferry operation at Lymington as reported in BMT report "Lymington Ferries Summer Review 2009", BMT reference 31098/D0356/Issue 1 dated 29 October 2009, along with any implications of this with respect to the risk assessment undertaken by BMT previously, as reported in BMT report "Ferry Operations at Lymington: the W-class Ferries", BMT Reference: C13537.01.R01.V7, 5 May 2009, (known as the "Phase 2 Report"), and to confirm any further action required. [**Note:** All attendees were in possession of a copy of the "Summer Review" report prior to the meeting].

PG stated that a key objective of the review had been to ensure/confirm that the risk assessment is representative of operations with higher traffic density than had been observed prior to the summer.

The form of the meeting would be for BMT (Ian Dand) to outline the main findings of the study, and for other representatives to provide their response, following which there would be discussion and agreed resolution of the way forward.

3. Review of report sections (Ian Dand)

NB. This meeting note does not aim to reproduce all of Ian Dand's (ID) review; the elements of that review that comprised a verbal factual summary of the contents of the Summer Review report are not reproduced because they are already documented fully in the report. The points noted here under the headings of the report under discussion are limited to those that provide information that is supplementary to the contents of the report itself, together with those that reflect where ID brought out particular points for emphasis.

3.1 Aims and Scope

Ian Dand provided detail of the aims and scope summarised the aims of the study as follows:

- To satisfy the need for on-going assessment, consistent with good practice and the requirements of the Port Marine Safety Code;
- To seek to augment the earlier review with an assessment of navigational safety during the sailing season, to seek to take into account strong easterly wind conditions, low tide conditions, and the presence of greater leisure traffic on the river;
- To review the suitability of, and compliance with, the Safe Operating Profile (SOP);
- Given that this was the first season with W-class ferries in sole operation, to establish how completely and effectively the recommendations of the previous assessment had been implemented.

3.2 Methodology

ID noted that the methodology had been equivalent to that adopted for "Phase 2", with the addition of the Phase 2 recommendations review and SOP compliance review.

It had been hoped that it would be possible to supplement ECDIS information with data from the digital bridge radar together with other sources of data available to the study (e.g. wind measurements, photographs etc), but in the event it had not been possible to download data from the bridge radars.

3.3 Observations

The dates most appropriate for observations were arranged in consultation with LHC and river users in order to ensure coverage of times when the river would be at its busiest coincident with low tides. It was noted that, of the times applicable to observations, only on 22 August did a spring tide give a particularly low water. In general, water space was not severely restricted at low water.

All of the proposed dates had been achievable in practice, and they succeeded in providing for observations in low tide and in easterly wind conditions, both during the peak sailing season.

Observations had been made from both the Wightlink ferries and from the Harbour Masters patrol vessels.

3.4 Review of Operations

In general:

- Leisure users and ferries were observed to have succeeded in 'finding a way to co-exist'.
- Wightlink had not always found it possible to maintain schedules. This had resulted in some detrimental effect upon leisure users due to waiting, slower passage etc. The difficulty in maintaining schedules was generally accepted as being due to operational factors at each end, and in particular the embarkation/disembarkation arrangements at Lymington that are less than optimum at present due to the design of the existing jetty.
- Traffic density was not seen as having a major effect on overall safety, although the increased population of river users during the summer clearly had an effect on reported incident numbers as it has in previous years. Risk control measures worked well and the general standard of behaviour was good.
- Adherence with collision regulations was good.
- Ferry wash was not observed to be a big problem albeit there is a need to continue to manage the final approach to the berth and the use of thrust when on the berth. Wake was more of a factor, but no significant loss of control scenarios were observed.
- Wind shadow is more of an issue with W-Class than C-Class ferries, and awareness needs improving in some areas.
- Harbour Master patrols were generally welcomed and effective, in particular in enforcing the speed limit and rules of the road.
- Wednesday Junior Sailing was well organised, and no problems were observed.
- The use of ferry lights has been the subject of an investigation by the Harbour Master and a preferred scheme for the use of lights had been identified and implemented.
- The present jetty is not ideally suited to W-Class. There are operational delays, and the use of thrusters causes some interaction with leisure vessels. Adjustments have been made and the associated risks are being managed effectively pending the provision of an up-graded jetty.

- A particular general safety concern was observed that rests outside of the brief for the study. The concern arose from observations of a number of cases when buoyancy aids were not being worn by users in small open boats on the river.

The main points raised in respect of the ferries' operations were:

- Ferry speeds were generally within the statutory and advisory limits plus tolerance. Crews now can reach, and are comfortable with, 6 knots in river in time. Speeds in river are often lower than the limit due to the need to correct for passing.
- Speeds just in excess of 6 knots were observed due to a following current outbound on an ebb tide. Drift angles were modest, and in traffic there was enough room for all river users. In general, handling did not pose any particular problems
- Traffic density – At the start of races, groups of sailing vessels were seen to travel as 'packets', and it was possible for separation to be maintained. Returning sailing vessels were generally observed to proceed in a spaced out line, and therefore generally able to coexist with the ferries without great difficulty
- Whilst water space remained outside of the channel at low water, some bunching astern of the ferries was observed at very low water. Frustration by one or two leisure users resulted in their passing the ferry in the region of the berth while a ship was manoeuvring into the berth.
- Operational experience in easterly wind conditions had necessitated some changes to berthing arrangements at Lymington, specifically use of half/half thruster (bow and stern) on the final approach to the berth in higher wind loads where there was an easterly component. Agreement on this modification to the SOP had been reached between LHC and Wightlink albeit there is still a need to clarify the extent of the final approach where the half/half setting should apply. A Local Notice To Mariners has been issued (LNTM 11, 2009), recognising that leisure vessels passing a berthing ferry will be affected by the thruster wash.
- Handover of control was a concern during Phase 2. In July, the control systems tolerances were changed and no more problems were observed.
- Adherence to the requirements of the SOP was good. All masters had now gained significant experience, and the SOP wind speed limit with the aft thruster at the agreed 'half' setting (to minimise thruster effects on other craft) was raised from 30 to 35 knots, with the gust limit remaining 42. This to be subject to further review in the light of operational experience at the increased levels.

The main points raised in respect of the leisure users' operations were:

- Wind shadow – this was observed to be small problem in general but two more serious examples did arise, one involving RS dinghies passing inbound and outbound ferries (*Richard Phillips of LTSC noted that this had been the subject of separate discussion with Harbour Master and the Club*) and the other involving a Folkboat attempting to sail past a berthing ferry.
- ColRegs and speed limits. Adherence to the first was good, and most users were seen to achieve good compliance with the second, with exceptions usually being RIBs and/or ZapCats.
- Lane discipline was good.

- Wash and wake. Users were affected and many were observed to manoeuvre in the ferries' wake but BMT witnessed no catastrophic losses of control.
- Water space. Generally good throughout observation period because of highish tides so there was room outside of the channel for small craft.
- Ferry berthing (See above).
- HM patrols – these were observed to be good, effective and appreciated by leisure users.
- Interaction – it occurs and users should be ready for it. Presence of traffic had no effect.

3.5 Risk Assessment

ID noted the following:

Incidents:

- A more robust reporting system at Lymington from 2007 had resulted in many more incidents being logged. Incident data from between 1 January 2009 and 30 September 2009 was reviewed and compared with data for the same period in 2008 when the C Class were operating. The incident records at Lymington provide a useful barometer of behaviour on the river, adherence to ColRegs, speed limits, effect of SOP etc.
- AIS speeding events: only 12 ferry ones in 2009 (4 C-class) compared to 49 in 2008 with C-class.
- There were four reported groundings in 2009, which included one ferry.
- More ferries were impeded in 2009 and there were more reported thruster slipstream incidents.
- Most incidents recorded were in Horn Reach followed by Short Reach, Ferry Terminal then Long Reach.

Risk Register:

- The overall format stays the same, with comments/additions in blue representing the update made as a result of the Summer Review.
- Two risks (associated with con hand-over and use of thrusters at the Lymington berth) were now considered ALARP due to additional risk control measures.
- The overall assessment is unchanged from Phase 2 as to comparative and actual level of risk on the river with W-class operating in place of C-class ferries. It is as reported in the "Phase 2" report.

Compliance:

- Observations showed good compliance with the SOP - the SOP seems to have worked well and is beneficial.
- Most recommendations made in the Phase 2 report have been taken up by Wightlink and LHC.
- The recommendation previously made for Navigation posts to be relocated in the river is scheduled to be addressed in 2009/2010 (over the winter)
- The issue of control handover was now considered to be of As Low As Reasonably Practicable (ALARP) risk.

- The introduction of grab lines on ferries was considered by Wightlink, who had also discussed with Red Funnel. Having given this recommendation consideration, they concluded that the introduction of grab lines would not be appropriate or beneficial.
- Berthing Following operational experience, Wightlink masters had found it necessary to use half power on front and rear thrusters to maintain optimum control on the final approach to the berth when there was an easterly component to the wind. However, the need to agree and define the exact dimensions of the restricted areas between Horn Reach and the berth remains.

3.6 Conclusions

ID drew attention to the stated conclusions of the report.

3.7 Recommendations

ID drew attention to the stated recommendations of the report.

4. Discussion

Comments were invited from each organisation represented in turn in response to ID's summary of BMT's report.

LTSC (Richard Phillips)

- There had been a detrimental affect on starts to sailing events (racing) events on a Wednesday, exacerbated by uncertainties in ferries' ability to maintain schedule
- The photos presented that related to RS open were open to various interpretation. LTSC has been putting out notices as part of standard briefing notes relating to how best to maintain coexistence with the ferries.
- There was come concern at the need for 2 ferries to pass in the River impacting negatively upon leisure users.

RLymYC (Rod Perry)

- RP noted that observations had been undertaken on 7 days, and stated that impacts on leisure users had been observed on 6 of the 7.
- In respect of co-existence, leisure users are seeing an impact; leisure vessels have moved around the ferries.
- Wind shadow - RP stated that this could result in a serious incident at some point, and that the risk could be mitigated with fewer sailings. He said that he would have liked to see this as a recommendation in BMT's report.
- RLymYC would like to see only 2 ferries operating, with these maintaining their advertised schedule.
- RP stated that the bulk of mitigations/impacts have fallen on leisure users.
- RP noted that masters "need or strongly wish for" rear thrusters to be used above the low ('idle') setting at Lymington, and gave his view that the new arrangements don't have the full confidence of masters.

- RLymYC observed that 3 boat operation is not working well in respect of maintaining compliance with schedules, also that Wightlink is still operating this at some times in the week
- RP stated that RLymYC would not wish moorings to be removed.
- The greater wind shadow and footprint of the W-class ferries remains a concern to RLymYC.
- Increased use of sound signals would be helpful.
- RP suggested 2 ways that Wightlink can reduce burden on leisure users (“and pick up the tab”):
 1. Maintain a 2 ship schedule, with no passing in the river
 2. Engage in further dialogue with leisure users to reduce impact upon them and achieve more effective co-existence.

Lymington Harbour Advisory Group (John Bence)

- JB said that LHAG supports the clubs’ views.
- JB was concerned about lack of adherence to timetables and stated that this causes difficulty. He suggested that the Lymington terminal “is part of the problem”.
- JB noted that the W-Class appears to be a much more controllable vessel than C-Class, and said that he had been impressed when travelling as a passenger on board
- JB would like to see 2 ferries only operating a schedule, pending development of the new terminal, and wants planning permission to be vigorously pursued.
- JB cited ‘anecdotal and real evidence’ that thruster usage was impacting negatively on leisure users. JB alleged a failure of masters to obey the SOP in respect of adherence to the ‘idle’ setting. JB would like ferries to be equipped with an automatic means of recording thruster settings that can be used to support incident investigation where appropriate - the maintenance of a ‘rolling record’ was advocated.
- JB cited a specific concern that a proposed mitigation measure for Risk Ref 3 was for sail only vessels to have an alternative means of propulsion. It was clarified through discussion that this suggestion was made to enhance the ability of sailing vessels to move out of the channel if becalmed before conflict with ferries or other vessels arises (for example dinghy’s could carry a paddle). JB said that this measure is not enforceable, nor is it practicable in a number of cases.
- JB stated that he felt that the risk assessment process had been conducted very well.
- JB emphasised the need for an ongoing process of review.

Sea Scouts (Keith Wicks)

- KW said that he supports the clubs views, in particular concern over passing in the river and that increased use of sound signals would be useful.
- KW stated that the sailing area used has been affected by wash and wind shadow, but that the Sea Scouts have “learnt to cope with the inconvenience”, the adopted procedure being to clear boats from channel, when departing or incoming ferries approach.
- KW added that the Sea Scouts use moorings to rig boats, and that passing ferries can adversely affect these.

Wightlink (John Burrows)

- JB stated that Wightlink had no comments on the report
- Grab rails - JB clarified that this recommendation had been considered carefully and rejected after discussion with Red Funnel.
- JB advised that, whilst automatic recording of thruster settings is not possible, a manual log of thruster settings is maintained, and would be available to assist any incident investigation.
- JB clarified that trippage had in fact been less during the current year than in the previous year. Key points regarding the comments received regarding scheduling were that:
 - 2 vessels cannot cope with the demand:
 - Trippage for a given demand will be less than C Class, but if the demand is there, as a commercial organisation, Wightlink will operate 3 vessels.
 - Crossing in the river would be necessary for a 3 vessel operation. Whilst an asymmetric schedule could allow for 3 vessels to operate but not pass in the river, this doesn't work from a commercial point of view as it would result in highly irregular timetabling that would not match demand.
 - Wightlink need to keep to a fixed schedule, and had made great improvements in this regard
 - Shore factors are the same as C-class, but W-class is additionally hampered by the inability to use side doors for disembarkation of passengers at the Lymington berth.

LHC (Ryan Willegers)

- RW stated that the area that stands out for further management is the area of water between the RLymYC and the Lymington berth, and it is particularly important to minimise thruster usage for final manoeuvring on the approach to the berth.
- RW observed that, throughout the trials, no need to equalise thrusters when berthing was identified. However, subsequent operational experience in winds with an Easterly component had demonstrated that in order to maintain optimum control at the slow approach speeds and for final manoeuvring onto the berth a half/half equalised setting is now the preferred approach.. RW stated that he would like the SOP to specify idle setting when berthing except when there is an easterly component to the wind and asked for Captain Digby's view on whether this was a practical approach to minimising thruster impacts in this area. Wightlink agreed, but there is a need to agree the applicable area (see previous comments).
- RW noted that in final approach the W-class had been taking longer to come alongside than was the case for C-Class. Initially a significant component was because of the need for crews to familiarise with the new vessels and there was been an improvement as the season progressed. However, because the existing berth arrangements have not been modified for the W Class, berthing still takes longer than the C Class which means that thrusters are on for longer with a greater likelihood of leisure users being affected. RW added that the arrangements are probably as good as they can be with the current set up.
- Additionally, during the early part of the season it had been identified that some masters felt the need to use thrust to hold the vessels against an easterly wind once secure in the berth again because the berth has not been modified for the W Class vessels. Following a meeting with Wightlink procedures have now been modified to require the use of additional stern lines before considering the need for thrust. In exceptional circumstances where this does not resolve the problem to the masters satisfaction for the security of the vessel, minimum thrust may be used but subject to a lookout being on the bridge wing

and the thrust shut down in time for approaching vessels to pass. RW stated that it is now incumbent on Wightlink to comply.

General Discussion

In general discussion of the above:

- Peter Griffiths asked whether there were any more comments on the report. Rod Perry (RLymYC) expressed the view that he felt that the report should be reworked as he "considered the balance of the report to be biased as all through it assumes that the ferries have the prime right to the river and that leisure users can co-exist, as long as they keep out of the way of the ferries even if it means going outside the channel or other evasive action. The report does not adequately consider the impact on leisure users."
- RLymYC stated that most of the inconvenience of co-existence had fallen on the shoulders of leisure users, Wightlink felt that they had also needed to make a number of significant changes as a result of the risk assessment activities.
- RLymYC added that they would have liked to have seen measurement and recording of thruster settings to be recorded as a recommendation in BMT's report and to be the subject of future reviews.
- The Lymington berth was agreed to be less than ideal for W-class operation, and that there was a shared interest in getting the berthing arrangements right.
- Whilst greater use of sound signals was seen as desirable by the sailing community, there had been some representations from local residents that would suggest that they would oppose excessive use of sound signals at certain times of the day.
- Wightlink advised that they had moved to a 40 minute schedule, and it was appreciated that communication of this to leisure users could be of assistance in reducing potential conflict.
- Wightlink will be running a 2 or 3 vessel service through the year and, without commitment, indicated as follows:
 - 2: Jan, Feb, March
 - 3: from Easter at weekends only, 2 during the week
 - 3: at peak season approx June - September
 - 3: at weekends, 2 in week, October to December
- LHC (RW) stated that there was an intention to use the Lymington River Users Safety Committee as the forum that would continue to review and manage safety, and that this management approach would include ongoing formal reviews as and where appropriate. These reviews may or may not be assisted by external consultants.
- BMT (John Noble) thanked all present for their cooperation, and in particular LHC and Wightlink, whose operations he said that he had found to be very professional.
- BMT (Ian Dand) added that it is greatly to the credit of leisure users and to Wightlink that they had succeeded in finding an effective way to co-exist.

5. Way forward

Peter Griffiths stated that the current version of the report (that provided to the meeting) is not for release, and that an updated version would be supplied for that purpose in due course.

BMT is to produce a note of the meeting.

Julian Lockett
30 November 2009