

Lee Navigation Forum

Notes of the meeting

The fourth meeting of the Lee Navigation Forum (LNF) was held on Tuesday 8th March, 4:30-6:30pm on Zoom. It was attended by representatives from:

Broxbourne Rowing Club
Broxbourne Cruising Club
Canal & River Trust
Hertford Anglers
Lea Rowing Club
National Association of Boat Owners (NABO)
National Barge Travellers Association London (NBTAL)
Spring Lee Cruising Club
The Leaside Trust

Apologies:

Moo Canoes
Lee Valley Regional Park Authority
River Lea Anglers Club
South Island Marina
Lee Valley Boat Centre
MJP Water Transport

Hopkins Van Mil (HVM) was present to facilitate the meeting and act as meeting secretariat. The meeting began with introductions from each member of the. Discussion followed the agenda, circulated in advance of the meeting.

1. Notes from last meeting

The Forum confirmed their agreement with the notes of the previous meeting.

2. Update since last meeting

a) Leaside Trust on community based offside mooring

Leaside Trust gave an update on the narrowboat given to them (a 50ft boat named Martin Sinclair). This boat will be used to take members of the community up and down the river and teach young people how to become skippers; there are also plans to include an educational package as well. Additionally there are plans to work closely with the Hackney Food Bank to perhaps use the boat as a means to help vulnerable boaters along the river by distributing food parcels. It is basically a community boat to be moored on the Leaside Trust's land (near Walthamstow Marsh, where outdoor centre is found opposite). This will be situated on an outside garden space that already has pontoons situated on it, this doesn't encroach on the river width.

The Forum congratulated Leaside Trust on this initiative. It was requested that the boat avoid busy times on the navigation, particularly on Saturday and Sunday mornings.

ACTION 1: The Leaside Trust confirmed it would work in partnership with other Lee Navigation users to ensure the Martin Sinclair avoids busy times.

b. Navigational Risk Assessment

The Canal & River Trust confirmed that the proposal from Nash Maritime is not being taken further due to cost. The Trust remains committed to having an independent risk assessment. Two further organisations are now quoting for the work.

ACTION 2: The Canal & River Trust will provide an update at the next LNF meeting.

c. No Mooring Zones

The Canal & River Trust are currently reviewing the NBTA paper circulated in February and are working on the response. The following points were made – The Trust:

- Welcomes that NBTA has supported no mooring zones in some sections
- Is looking to carry out some more specific targeted risk assessments, navigational risk assessments in the areas where NBTA have raised objections
- Will work with the Navigation Advisory Group and mooring sub-group on that
- Will come back to NBTA outside of this meeting with their response

NBTA representatives at the meeting made the following points in response to the update:

- A distinction should be made between policy and guidance
- Guidelines should reflect that not all bridges along the Lee Navigation are the same and have varying degrees of risk in relation to mooring

It was noted that the updated maps issued to the Lee Navigation Forum in February show that the Trust has reduced most of the no mooring sections closer to bridges. It also highlighted that there are multiple reasons for not mooring under bridges including:

- Navigation
- Impacts on structures including from fire/ explosion

ACTION 3: The Canal & River Trust will come back to NBTA with a detailed response to the paper once the internal review and meetings with the Navigation Advisory Group and sub-group have taken place.

Additional points made on no mooring zones:

- The improper mooring process is being implemented; this does not include fines which the Canal & River Trust has no power to issue; it is linked to license renewal
- NBTA is supporting boaters to moor in the no mooring zones they believe to be safe, this includes support if any legal action is taken
- Rowing clubs stated that these actions, including stickers instructing boaters to moor in no mooring zones, are a risk for rowers and other Lee Navigation users and have resulted in near misses including risk to life

- NBTA is willing to collaborate to understand where these pinch points are and if an agreement can be reached, based on evidence, it is willing to reconsider their position
- Rowing Clubs confirmed that their position is that the no mooring zones are the minimum that is required and should be adhered to.
- Some express the view that the Lee Navigation Forum has continued a bias in favour of rowing clubs
- A point was raised about a provocation to move rowers away from the water, reminding the group that the Lea Rowing Club has a 175 year history on this stretch of water
- It is hoped that working together on the educational and awareness raising materials could provide a route through, particularly on moving through the water.

HVM reminded the group that the LNF should be a respectful forum for sharing information and understanding each other's perspective. Careful use of language was advised so that the group could continue to work together without causing offense.

d. Education and awareness raising

The update notes that education and awareness-raising was discussed during a productive sub-group meeting in February meeting and the importance of perspective sharing was established. There is a table about the type of boats that use the water and members agreed this would be a starting point. It was agreed resources should be produced to help people to use the river safely.

ACTION 4: HVM to re-circulate this document so members can add to the sheet. Spreadsheet to be filled to represent each craft type

3. Meeting focus: Vegetation, dredging

The Canal & River Trust gave an update to the meeting two presentation in December on dredging and vegetation. Key points include:

- The main issue is on sites where the levels of siltation are forcing boats into a much narrower corridor, problematic for passing safely, this is being considered in the annual business planning to find a cost-effective solution, which doesn't have to be revisited annually
- Trial dredging will take place to see if alternative solutions can be found to using a dredger with a weed rake on it to tackle issues on the Lower Lee
- It was confirmed that issues around floating weeds and debris are broadly covered by the annual floating weeds collection process
- Equally overhanging vegetation will be dealt with through routine off-site vegetation management.

The scale and scope of the work proposed to widen the deep channel south of Pymmes Brook is at about £500,000. This will be considered in the next round of business planning and there is definitely a requirement for this.

On the towpath side north of Tottenham Lock, pricing for dredging is in the region of £625,000, this will be considered with acknowledgement that it isn't essential simply for navigation.

Other sites to be looked at in London include:

- Pymmes Brook
- Turkey Brook
- Hanwell Flight – visit every 2-3 years
- London Docklands multiple times a year

It was confirmed that there are many points across the network that need routine dredging which takes most of the budget. The sites that require prioritisation are decided upon annual in business planning.

Points raised by the LNF in response to the presentation:

- The cable in the Lee Navigation will be reviewed by the utilities team to ensure it doesn't cause an issue for dredging, as an exposed cable it might be a problem
- Wick Woods where it is hard to moor because of metal along the bank – dredging of this area only really beneficial for mooring but increasing mooring capacity here might aid in alleviate problems elsewhere
- Old bank protection: the Trust would not normally dredge hard material as it's harder to work through, but the Trust will work through these points where old bank protections are deteriorating to ensure that it's possible to make use of the full width of the Channel for navigation
- pontoons were suggested to cover this material, but it was acknowledged this is a costly option.

ACTION 5: LNF to send any further dredging or vegetation issues, particularly those that impact most on navigation, with HVM to share with the Canal & River Trust by 1 May 2022. The Trust will send a further update to the LNF following the business planning process.

ACTION 6: HVM to circulate survey visuals with the meeting notes.

4. Focus topics for future meetings

The next meeting is likely to focus on education and awareness raising and no mooring zones.

5. AOB

Forum members noted the following:

- Parity of action between vandalising no mooring signs and removal of safety bars
- Fly tipping as an issue of concern which appears only to be addressed if members of the public take action

6. Post meeting note

Following this meeting HVM has suggested that, Covid-19 allowing, the fifth meeting of the LNF is held face to face and run as a workshop for LNF members. This will be confirmed in the week of 4th April with the meeting held in the weeks of 16th or 23rd May.

Hopkins Van Mil
30 March 2022