

TUGn REFERENCE 1125
MICHAEL SHEFRAS NOTE OF MEETING
TO CONSIDER CUSTOMER CHARTER FOR 2012
HELD ON 15 DECEMBER, 2011 1400 – 1640
KINGSMEADOW HOUSE, READING

PRESENT:

From the Agency:

Matt Carter	MC	River Manager and Harbour Master
Angela Quayle	AQ	SE Waterways Strategic Manager

From Boaters

Russel Chase	RC	BMF-TV (Hire Boats)
Alan Dawe	AD	Chair RUG 3
Michael Gates	MG	BMF-TV Chair and MDL
Steve Harris	SH	PBA – Oatlands Court
Louis Jankel	LJ	RFERAC – NABO Representative
Bob King	BK	Chair RUG 6
Gillian Nahum	GN	PBA - Henley
Tony Riley	TR	Thames Boaters Association
Michael Shefras	MS	Deputy Chair ATYC; RUG 8 Chair & TV RYA
Andy Soper	AS	RFERAC – DBA Chair

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 MC asked that all present identify themselves around the table.
- 1.2 Advised that the meeting was to take forward what was delivered last year and review it to deliver a Customer's Charter for 2012.
- 1.3 He hoped that we could reiterate what was good and improve the content by taking back the points made and deliver a final draft during January 2012.
- 1.4 The mandate from Howard Davidson (Regional Director) was to continue to provide service to the user by at least providing the same level of service as previous years:

1.	It would be impossible to improve the budget available last year
2	All suggestions and work has to be within that parameter.

- 1.5 MS commented that he was pleased that we would have the benefit of the Charter, but was not clear on how it was to be delivered should EA 7 October proposals be followed through.

1.	Perhaps we would learn how it is expected to man the river under any new regime
2.	How the service would be delivered with less trained and experienced staff.

1.6 **LJ** asked if that meant that there was a presumption of spend, and what was the budgeted spend going to be during 2012/13?

1.7 **MC** responding to both points saying:

1.	How the agency will respond to the ongoing negotiations is really a different subject and he would like to concentrate on how we could together deliver the Charter.
2.	In response to LJ's question he would not really know what the actual budget is going to be until March 2012 but he believed that we have to be in a position to make informed judgements and deliver the charter and provide the service.

2. REVIEW OF THE CHARTER PARAGRAPH BY PARAGAPH

2.1 MANAGING WATER LEVELS

1.	Para 1.1 – SH questioned this statement as there was more than weirs suggesting that for example the Jubilee River has to be managed and there had been problems doing that this year. The words “other structures” after “weir would be inserted
2.	AD suggested that Para 1.1 and 1.2 to could be amalgamated but MS in view of the ongoing Flood Budget debate recommended that it stood as drafted.

2.2 RAISING AWARENESS OF RIVER CONDITIONS

1.	LJ questioned the delay in amending the telephone number due to lack of cooperation within the agency. AQ will follow this through and use the appropriate numbers and references once agreed.
2.	RC 2.1.3 Consider inserting “Decreasing” levels as well as increased levels

2.3 MAINTAINING THE RIVER THAMES FOR BOATING

2.3.1 There was discussion on the inclusion of the tables but on balance it was agreed to leave them but consider putting in lowest bridge clearance in the reaches.

TUGn REFERENCE 1125

a..	<p>There was a question about maintaining the navigation channels</p> <p>i.. MS commented that he had learnt that whilst it was not possible to dredge it is acceptable to re-profile the river bed as evinced in the Dorney reach with work for the Olympics.</p> <p>ii.. MC commented that he had put in work a five year plan to consider how the navigation channel should be maintained to the standard within the Charter.</p>
-----	--

2.3.2 **GN** questioned 3.5 – asking for some better information on when there is an incident in a lock with boaters being captured within the lock chamber. There should be some indication as to when the clearance would be dealt with.

a.	<p>There was considerable discussion on this matter.</p> <p>i. With GN's experience it was during working hours but there had been no lock service and it took time for some-one to attend.</p> <p>ii. SH prayed in aid the problem of the French Bros passenger boat being trapped in Chertsey Lock from 2200 until 0900.</p>
b.	<p>There were other incidents such incidents this past eighteen months of so and MS asked Matt if he felt that there was some significance in it now happening when for the past fifty years we have never had any problem. Is it a consequence of the fact that some locks have not had Resident Lock Keepers for several years?</p>

c.	<p>MC responding gave answers, some of which were vehemently questioned!</p> <p>i. EA cannot guarantee “Out of Hours” attendance to incidents , however the majority of problems are resolved by giving instructions over the phone, with most other incidents being attended, and where the EA cannot attend during night, attendance is arranged for the beginning of normal working hours</p> <p>ii. Where there was an emergency there was an escalation process from national control centre to duty officers working 24/7</p> <p>iii. If the problem cannot be resolved over the phone, the Resident Lock keeper will be called first, and if not available then a relief lock keeper or Operations Delivery staff will be called, who can also resolve situations</p> <p>Iv MS comments re Resident Lock keepers would be noted.</p>
d.	<p>AS and SH where not comfortable with that response and did not think that the escalation process for one reason or another is working properly. MC responded by saying that he would improve the recording of incidents and progress so that we had a record for the future.</p>
e.	<p>SH said that there appeared to be more problems since we had 24/7 power and there should be a manual over ride. MC advised that he was talking to Paul Power about this and it is dependent upon budget.</p>
f.	<p>LJ questioned what he believed was an instruction to Lock Staff not to do anything for out or hours problems? MC advised that this exact instruction had not been given, however, lock staff have been advised that they are not expected to resolve out of hours power issues, but maybe called upon as part of our normal incident management process (noted above).</p>

2.3.1 **TR** asked that there be just one list of closures

2.4 The discussion then moved to the major item of what should be the levels of service for 2012.

TUGn REFERENCE 1125

1.	<p>AQ had provided a table (<i>Providing for lock staffing Person 1</i>) which indicated how the locks could be managed throughout the year. The table is attached as Appendix A and is called “Customer Charter Preparation 2012 Version 2). It shows</p> <p>a. Number of staff required on a monthly basis between February to October varies from 49 to 81</p> <p>b. .It suggests just 59 full time lock keepers (remembering that now under EA Proposals from April 2012 there will now be only 38 Residents and 21 full time Reliefs.) Now all designated Lock Keepers</p> <p>c. The schedule shows that it is intended to employ 26 Seasonal Reliefs</p> <p>d. The number of Seasonal Reliefs required to deliver single manning from February to October varies between 11 to 20</p> <p>e. The budgeted cost for nine months amounts to £1,884k</p> <p><i>(Within this it has to be noted that there is an allowance of 14% to cover down time and employee costs.)</i></p>
2.	<p>A second table (<i>Proposal for lock staffing person 2 – ie Summer Assistants</i>) that it is intended to employ 31 Summer Assistants.</p> <p>a. This shows that during June, July and August there will be 52 days in June and 279 days in July and August not covered.</p> <p>b. The cost of this additional resource is £124k</p>
3.	<p>The third table (<i>Proposal for lock staffing for person No2 – Volunteers</i>) indicates that it is intended to find between 100 to 150 volunteers to provide the second person.</p> <p>a. It suggests that volunteers are used between June to October.</p> <p>b. It indicates that there will be between 440 – 660 days worked during June – August</p> <p>c. And further in June there will be 100 in June; 57 in July and 87 in August not utilised.</p> <p>d. The cost of this additional resource is £45k</p>

4.	<p>There is further information:</p> <p>a. The customer charter suggests that there are 31 locks that require a second person and the cost to give complete cover is £52k more than budgeted above.</p> <p>b. That is why it is suggested that using Volunteers service can be provided</p> <p>c. The use of Summer Assistants gives a much more flexible lock service as they can be directed to where they are required whereas the volunteer will only work in the lock that he or she has been signed of on.</p>								
5.	<p>It was noted that the challenge was to deliver the Customer Charter within the above budget and at the same time provide a service that does not cost any more</p> <table data-bbox="392 689 794 929"> <tr> <td>a.Paragraph 1e</td> <td>1,884k</td> </tr> <tr> <td>b.Paragraph 2b</td> <td>124k</td> </tr> <tr> <td>c.Paragraph 3d</td> <td>45k</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>£2,053k</td> </tr> </table> <p>NOTE: Subsequently we have been advised: <i>We will have 59 Lockkeepers during November/December and January which will cost approximately £472k</i></p>	a.Paragraph 1e	1,884k	b.Paragraph 2b	124k	c.Paragraph 3d	45k		£2,053k
a.Paragraph 1e	1,884k								
b.Paragraph 2b	124k								
c.Paragraph 3d	45k								
	£2,053k								
6.	<p>MC indicated that it is a nightmare programming these schedules taking into account day or sickness and volunteers not turning up for duty. MC and AQ would wish to identify the choke locks and where additional service is required within this budget. Where priority should be given.</p> <p>a. They would appreciate guidance on how breaks should be covered.</p> <p>b. Any input now or shortly after would be appreciated so a draft delivery plan can be attempted.</p> <p>c. MS noted that the schedules were all theoretical. Consideration has to given to geography and the way volunteers are spread throughout the system to make the tabled proposal have any chance at all!</p>								

TUGn REFERENCE 1125

7.	<p>BK was concerned about the customer ie the boater's perception of service when they approach a lock with 'out of service' signs.</p> <p>a. He wanted to know what boxes where ticked to give the statistics suggesting the good service that was promoted in the quarterly returns which he and his members do not accept.</p> <p>b. The ways riverside targets are shown are confusing.</p> <p>c. There has to be a record lock by lock</p>
8.	<p>TR also questioned the statistics and there was wide acceptance that what was agreed at the meeting last year's meeting had been misinterpreted by the way the statistics had been presented in the Quarterly Report.</p> <p>a. MC recognised these criticisms and will attempt to ensure the collection of the statistics took cognisance of what users required.</p> <p>b. MS asked when it was going to be possible to transmit the lock statistic information via electronic means – ie IT connection and MC advised that he was improving IT for Team Leaders but the budget will not go to connect Locks to Reading. He was also considering Black Berry as an interim move for improvementt.</p>

<p>9.</p>	<p>SH was concerned that at times the volunteers were not up to doing the work. Use of well trained Summer Assistants to his mind was preferable. This led to a discussion on management and training of volunteers.</p> <p>a. LJ questioned the management of the volunteers at the lock side. This season showed programming was not very good. There were incidents of a summer assistant and two volunteers in one lock where the next lock was single manned – this should not be allowed to happen.</p> <p>b. He continued that when working single handed at Beam Locks, boaters were pleased to assist and suggested a ‘Request for Help’ notice at these locks could be useful</p> <p>c.</p> <p>RC asked for clarification on Indemnify for volunteers.</p> <p>i. Volunteers had to be signed off as competent and until that time were not allowed to work on their own, and only at the lock they were signed off.</p> <p>ii. Whilst boaters could run the lock under their own responsibility during times when there was power or manually they were responsible for their own actions.</p> <p>d. There was complaint that it took too long for some volunteers to be signed off with different lock staff each time the volunteer attended and it was requested that this be improved.</p> <p>e.</p> <p>It was thought good practice that once a volunteer had been signed off to manage the lock it was in order for the resident or relief to leave it to the</p>
-----------	--

10	<p>There was then considerable discussion on how “Breaks” be handled.</p> <p>a. It is safe to say that most delegates at this meeting were confused why this should still be such an issue.</p> <p>b.</p> <p>On the locks that required two person manning it is expected that the schedules are devised that when the hours are to 1900 that lunch and tea breaks be covered by summer assistants or volunteers and if these personnel cannot comply then they should not be employed either as a paid assistant of volunteer.</p> <p>i. GN advised that she had considerable experience working as a volunteer in other fields and when given the work the expectation of delivery was agreed.</p> <p>c.</p> <p>MS recommended that the custom of a temporary black-board advising if the lock keeper is temporarily absent should show when the lock will be manned again.</p> <p>i. There was wide agreement that this practice should be mandatory.</p> <p>ii. MC took this on board</p>
----	---

2.5 **TR** had circulated a different schedule which had no costs indicated..

1.	MC felt that it would probably turn out very similar to that already on the table
2.	It was left for TR to cover this outside the meeting.

2.6 Paragraphs 5 – 14 were accepted with little comment.

2.6.1 Paragraph 5 – Protecting your interests on the river will be amplified taking into current work on “Enforcement and Accommodation issues”.

2.6.2 There was discussion on complaint and congratulation and a suggestion that there be a line expecting what the EA should expect from the user in the way the user talk with river staff.

a.	SH commented that it was unusual for him to make a full blown complaint, but he had to say when he did, it had been handled commendably.
----	---

3. SUGGESTED CODE OF PRACTICE

3.1 It had been suggested that there be a code of practice.

3.2 **TR** had distributed a list of Do and Don't's

3.3 **MS** felt that there was no place for this in the Charter.

a.	Thames Water to NRA to EA had published a handbook that came from work carried out by RUG 6 and 8 in 1983 which suggested how each discipline could work together in harmony and was still in printed form published by the EA but now with the new restrictions on publication no longer available: – why are we trying to reinvent the wheel.
b.	Further ATYC have covered this within the Thames Boating Instruction Manual and BMF-TV in their Cruising Guide to the River Thames.
c.	It was agreed to leave with this out of the Charter and leave it to other forms of distribution.

4. PROGRESS

4.1 **MC & AQ** would take all the comments and work through with them during January and come back to the group with a final draft for discussion during January 2012.

TUGn REFERENCE 1125

- .3.2 There was discussion on printing and it was agreed that by one means or another it will be printed and **MC** felt that through RUGs he could find a budget to assist.
- 3.3 **MG** advised that BMF-TV will be providing sufficient copies of the Cruising Guide to be distributed to license holders and **MS** would seek a price for the Charter so that it could also be widely distributed.

The meeting concluded at 1645