

Lee Navigation Forum

Notes of the meeting

The first meeting of the Lee Navigation Forum (LNF) was held on Tuesday 12 October, 4:30-6:30pm on Zoom. It was attended by representatives from:

Broxbourne Cruising Club
Broxbourne Rowing Club
Canal & River Trust
Lea Rowing Club
Lee Valley Boat Centre
National Association of Boat Owners (NABO)
National Barge Travellers Association (NBTA) London
South Island Marina
Spring Lee Cruising Club

Apologies:

Lee Valley Regional Park Authority

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 Forum with a statement on their interest in the Lee Navigation. Discussion followed the agenda, circulated in advance of the meeting.

1. Understand the purpose of the Forum

It was **agreed** that the Forum's purpose is to:

- Create a log of issues causing concern, and use subsequent meetings to work through them, with all Forum members bringing relevant evidence and information to discuss them effectively
- Incident reporting
- Consider broader safety issues
- Focus on and work towards solutions to the above.

2. Review the draft Code of Conduct

In response to a discussion on whether a Code of Conduct is required at this stage there was **agreement** that this should be worked towards as the Forum's work develops. The Forum agreed that the Code of Conduct should not limit the ability of stakeholders to scrutinize proposals for managing safety on the River Lee. It was hoped that the Code could be implemented in due course to develop a shared agreement amongst users of the River Lee on how the Canal & River Trust and stakeholders will engage in the future. This includes methods of communication and responsibilities on the River Lee.

3. Terms of Reference (ToR)

It was **agreed** that the LNF will be useful for frank discussions on the issues and for understanding all members' reactions to the issues. It was also reiterated that the LNF is not a decision making body. It was also **agreed** that:

- The Forum's remit should cover the specific stretch of the river that concerns the Water Safety Zones proposals, but that discussions may refer to other areas in the broader context if it leads to understanding and solutions
- Agreed that LNF should include mechanisms for understanding different stakeholders' reactions and look at specific issues in detail in a phased way across the meetings
- There needs to be clarification of where rules will be applied & a suggestion that looking at the map as a group would be helpful
 - ACTION 1: A sub-group of the Forum will meet in advance of the next Forum meeting to discuss the current implementation of no mooring regulations and for the Canal and River Trust to set out how these relate to existing rules
- The Forum discussed membership. ACTION 2: HVM to invite the local angling club to join the Forum

4. Hopkins Van Mil report

HVM introduced the stakeholder engagement report published in September 2021 including in summarising the points of agreement and conflict referred to on p. 1 of the executive summary. In the discussion the Canal & River Trust clarified that extra teams are currently on the ground to support education on the Lee Navigation.

In the light of the summary of the report, Forum members discussed the need for transparency and more detailed information to raise awareness and inform including on:

- Current enforcement of no-mooring, including a request for clarification from the Canal & River Trust on the historical map on which no-mooring signage is based
- A request was made that some work i.e. installation of no mooring signs be stopped until dialogue through the LNF is concluded:
 - LNF discussed this as being a safety issue which should be prioritised and the responsibility of the Canal & River Trust as the navigation authority was emphasised
 - The Canal & River Trust clarified that signs would not be coming down, there is no historic no-mooring map but the rationale for the current no-mooring areas is based on long-standing rules and that this would be discussed at the sub-group meeting agreed as Action 1.

The group discussed the fact that the situation has changed over time and that there are now a bigger volume of users on the river and ways of sharing the space need to be found. There was discussion about the volume of boaters and rowers, and that there are boaters who are using the water temporarily with little or no knowledge of how to navigate the river safely. The Forum **agreed** on the importance of ongoing knowledge, awareness raising and education.

- It was stressed that rowing clubs are a volunteering organisations without the ability or resource to educate new boaters continually
- There was recognition for the need for signage which makes all river users aware that there are unpowered craft on the river, and why accidents happen
- Incident reports to be usable by everyone
 - ACTION 2: Canal & River Trust to ensure wording that everyone can use

A discussion was held on the river profile, scour and vegetation, including clarification that the Trust are future proofing, looking forward to assess future risks, including:

- The suggestion that the Canal & River Trust should reassess the profile of the river for safety, particularly where weed and scour is, as it's not always possible for boats to pass on the right e.g. at Tottenham Lock
- Concern over vegetation e.g. water hydrangea and weed at Broxbourne

A discussion was held as a result on the limited budget held by the Canal & River Trust for works on the river profile and the potential for, and recognition of, volunteer support available from LNF members. It was **agreed** that a future LNF meeting should be dedicated to the river profile, scour and vegetation. Points raised include:

- The issue of sunken craft e.g. a boat above the rowing club, with no buoys marking it, just a fluorescent jacket which should be removed from navigation swiftly
- Navigational issue on bend where weir is located (moored boats, CRT crafts and island of branches to be cleared)

A concern raised about a perceived Canal & River Trust bias in favour rowing clubs. An example was given that safety was not an issue during a recent boater flotilla in the ongoing opposition to implementation of WSZ. Rowing clubs confirmed that their rowers were asked not to use water during the flotilla, and so safety was not a concern as the rowers weren't present. An example was described of an incident of a collision between a rowing boat and a narrow boat, where the latter was being skippered by someone new to the water. This was a life-threatening incident and rowing club representatives stressed that preventing such incidents, which could result in very serious harm or injury was their priority. It was agreed that all river users want to share the river and work together to find a solution but this requires awareness on all sides of different uses and needs of river

5. Timing and frequency of future meetings

- Agreed that a separate meeting be arranged to discuss the no-moorings sections and rules and regulations (Action 1)
- Agreed that each meeting would focus on no more than a couple of issues/concerns as follows:
 - Vegetation, dredging and removal of debris
 - River usage: information, education and awareness campaigns
 - Risk assessment: examining collisions & near misses to identify what could have prevented them or mitigated the impact on the safety of those involved
 - Clarifying existing mooring restrictions: including feed-back from the Action 1 separate meeting
 - Volunteering on the Lee Navigation
- Agreed that the Forum will meet monthly, with a series of conclusions as an outcome
- **ACTION 3:** Information to be shared with Forum members beforehand to enable representatives to share with wider stakeholder group
- **ACTION 4:** Share the notes with those who couldn't attend the first meeting and confirm attendance at next meeting
- **ACTION 5:** HVM to circulate invitations and agenda for next Forum meeting (16 November, 4:30-6:30pm)