**Litter of the Thames minutes – Tuesday December 16th 2014**

**PLA London Office, 150 Minories, EC3N 1LS**

**Attendees**

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| Tanya Ferry, Chair (TF) | Port of London Authority (PLA) |
| Pat Fitzsimons (PF) | Thames Estuary Partnership (TEP) |
| Sue Harrington (SH) | Thames Estuary Partnership (TEP) |
| Rebecca Carswell (RC) | London Aquarium  |
| Debbie Leach (DL) | Thames 21  |
| Dave Morritt (DM) | Royal Holloway College  |
| Paul Clark (PC) | Natural History Museum  |
| Brian Clark (BC) | British Marine Federation  |

**Apologies**

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| Joe Churchman | Ecotales |
| Gerard Morgan | Transport for London |
|  | RYA |
| Fatimah Abidi | Global Oceans |
| Tomas Maes | CEFAS |

**Minutes and Actions**

TF reported that the British Geological Society will use PLA grab samples to assess for mini plastics. As there was little research funding available only small elements could be investigated. The geographical spread might be increased through the random selection of existing in house samples, but not until later in 2015.

Additional invites – Rebecca Carswell was welcomed as a new group member. It was agreed to invite a representative from Thames Tideway Tunnel rather than from Thames Water [ACTION]. TEP has information on similar strategies in the Forth Estuary. RYA or Green Blue Project should be asked to clarify attendance/membership [ACTION]

**Events**

DM suggested delaying these until 2016. Suggestions were made for publicity opportunities at the London Boat Show, the London Marathon and the Science Festival on March 7th – RHC – plastic awareness will be included in ‘Discovery’ programmes with opportunities to participate. DL suggested an Evidence Group with a National and European focus, demonstrating flows and pathways of litter from land – drawing together all research leading to dialogue with agents. The February Day of Action is being coordinated by Julia at Thames 21 with a Litter Survey and clean-ups. TF enquired whether specific input to the Day of Action was required from partner organisations. Was there potential for an exhibition? PLA was working with Thames 21 to look at the volume of waste since 2009 -now equivalent 111 new Routemaster buses or twice the height of Canada Tower. This information can be publicised through TEP’s enewsletter ThamesTalk.

PC stated that it must be stressed now that it is a different kind of pollution – chemically clean, but litter is worse.

PLA sends off the material collected to be recycled, but it is difficult to sort and quantify. DL commented that once plastic is in river it becomes degraded and not worth recycling. PC queried why the PLA should be paying for this. DL noted that Local authorities use larger funding. TF commented that the GLA had yet to contribute to the group [ACTION TO CHASE], particularly regarding the Plastic bag tax proposal. Regarding the Corporation of London, Robin Catchlove had no resources or staff to add to the group, although the Corporation of London Port Health Authority would be interested in plastic in fish guts - DM has images of this.

PF commented on artists and Totally Thames – TF said that Eco Tales produced plastic artwork and could be contacted regarding an awareness campaign [ACTION TF]

TF reported on meeting staff at City Cruises - they had no knowledge of the issues and thought others would deal with it. River commerce was a key grouping, particularly the Passenger Boat Association – presentations could be given at their meetings. PC suggested asking the Passenger Boat Association about procedures e.g. safety briefings to include litter awareness and could provide a fact sheet outlining common factors. TF suggested getting articles in RYA and IWA newsletters [ACTION]. TF noted that all PLA codes of practice when revised will include an anti-litter message, as they want people to take ownership of behaviour to reduce ink of blown litter and will seek broad assistance in getting the message across. Regarding the volume of material in the non-tidal section of the river, TF commented that the rubbish may not be local, and may be impacting on downstream deposition – quantifications of litter data are needed, so that information can go out to all recreational users, for example via the British Canoe Federation, and to towpath walkers. Cefas have information on the economic impact of litter. PF suggested that this might be an issue for TEP’s Recreation Action Group [ACTION] RAG contacts list to TF.

PC reported that if grant funding from NERC or Leverhulme were forthcoming, they would put nets across to work out how much is coming down e.g. Mogden Sewage Treatment Works, although the Environment Agency would not be keen due to possible fish damage. It was too soon to assess whether winter flooding had brought more litter down the river.

The meeting discussed various images that would convey the appropriate message about the volume of litter in the river, using iconic London buildings. Local areas where concentrated rubbish occurs e.g.at London Eye – ask suppliers to address issue and place more bins – this would make a useful case study. DL reported that the type of litter was changing but was uncertain regarding changing volume [ACTION] send 20 year data to TF. PC reported that plastics are found in flounders and the seals eat these, so there may be plastic in their guts too. Share paper with group [ACTION]. DM reported that 100% of Erith flounder had plastic, reducing to 70% at the Isle of Sheppey, and 30% of mitten crabs at Chelsea Bridge.

TF reported that at Benfleet rubbish has been found in the creek over long periods including building waste. PLA is investigating as EA has not taken action. Eventual clean up would be a good news story.

It was agreed that the meeting minutes, once signed off, would go on a dedicated page on the new TEP website litter page to be used to promote the forum [ACTION]. TF requested that the email and phone contacts list be circulated for the next meeting [ACTION]

Date of Next Meeting

After March 15th, venue tbc

ACTIONS:

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| Invite a representative from Thames Tideway Tunnel rather than from Thames Water. Clarify if RYA and Green Blue Project should be members of the group as two entities, or one | Tanya Ferry |
| GLA had yet to contribute to the group | Tanya Ferry. To chase |
| Eco Tales produced plastic artwork and could be contacted regarding an awareness campaign | Joe Churchman/all |
| articles in RYA and IWA newsletters | Tanya Ferry/RYA/Brian Clark |
| Recreation Action Group - RAG contacts list to TF | Pat Fitzsimons |
| DL reported that the type of litter was changing but was uncertain regarding changing volume - send 20 year data to TF | Debbie Leach |
| PC reported that plastics are found in flounders and the seals eat these, so there may be plastic in their guts too. Send paper to RC | Debbie Leach, Paul Clark |
| a dedicated page on the new TEP website litter page to be used to promote the forum | Pat Fitzsimons |
| TF requested that the email and phone contacts list be circulated for the next meeting | Tanya Ferry/TEP |