

NOTICE TO MARINERS

No. 4 – 2023

Peel Ports Medway 2nd Consultation Chatham Waterfront RIB Experience

Notice is hereby given that in December 2022 Medway Marine operations department opened a consultation on an application from a local operator who are proposing to run short RIB river experience trips from Sun Pier in Chatham. The consultation was open for one month giving interested parties the opportunity to raise any concerns or objections. The original proposal that formed the body of the consultation Notice to Mariners is annexed below for reference.

After collation of feedback from NtoM 54 of 2022 it is intended to run a second period of consultation given the comments received, this will be open for a period of 28 days from the publication of this NtoM after which a decision will be made. The ultimate ruling will be promulgated via subsequent Notice to Mariners. Please send any comments related to this consultation to: AllMedwayMarineManagers@peelports.com

We received a total of 8 responses to the initial consultation that raised various concerns which have been shared with the applicant. The following list itemises the concerns received along with respective response and mitigating factors.

1. No restriction on the number of days that the RIB rides would operate.

Proposed dates for the rides which would be published via Notice to Mariners and communicated on the day by Medway VTS via VHF Ch.74.

Saturday 1st April & Sunday 2nd April, Saturday 8th April & Sunday 9th April, Saturday 15th April & Sunday 16th April

Sunday 28th May - Saturday 3rd June

Saturday 22nd & Sunday 23rd July, Saturday 29th July

Saturday 5th August, Saturday 12th & Sunday 13th August, Saturday 19th & Sunday 20th August

Saturday 26th & Sunday 27th August, Saturday 2nd September

Saturday 21st & Sunday 22nd October, Saturday 28th & Sunday 29th October

2. Adverse wash affecting moored boats.

The proposed operational area for the RIB experience rides does not have any moorings or pontoon berths within it, see chartlet below.

3. The area in question is a busy and narrow part of the river used by other river users such as dinghy sailors, rowers and paddle boarders.

The proposed route for the rides is in section of the river that is as wide as other reaches where moored boats constrict the main navigable channel eg. Upnor, Cockham and Gillingham Reach.

A shore based member of the RIB experience team will be stationed at Sun Pier in VHF comms with the boat to advise of any smaller craft that require special consideration, see chartlet below .

4. Allowing this operator to exceed the speed limit would set a bad precedent and encourage others to do the same.

Many other ports and harbours have permitted similar activities to operate, none of which has given rise to concerns over setting a bad precedent. Examples being Port of London, Poole Harbour, Southampton Water and Rivers Waveney and Yare. Closer to home and 5km upriver from the proposal the Kent Boat and Ski Club have been safely using owner operated vessels for over half a century. They are operating multiple low draught vessels at 25 knots plus, past marinas in a 2km reed banked area less than half of the width of the proposed location. This speed exempt area has been long established in the Medway River Byelaws and no evidence exists that suggests it has encouraged other river users to break the port's speed restrictions. This activity will have been widely communicated to the local boating community who should understand that the operator will have been given dispensation from the port authority to exceed the 6 knot limit in the area, it is not an amendment to the port speed restriction. It is accepted that some visiting boats may see this differently but numbers would be minimal upstream of Chatham Marina given the restricted options for visitors to moor overnight.

5. Potential for dangerous interaction with commercial vessels.

Periods of operation would be with VTS knowledge and communicated by Notice to Mariners. Medway VTS would remain in constant VHF communications with the RIB who would also be monitoring the Port working channel. Ship movements would be passed to the operator who would cease manoeuvres or vary the route to accommodate commercial traffic. A shore based member of the RIB experience team will be stationed at Sun Pier in VHF comms with the boat who would also advise of traffic movements. Chatham Ness is a compulsory reporting point for commercial vessels which adds to the overall image of traffic movements, see chartlet below.

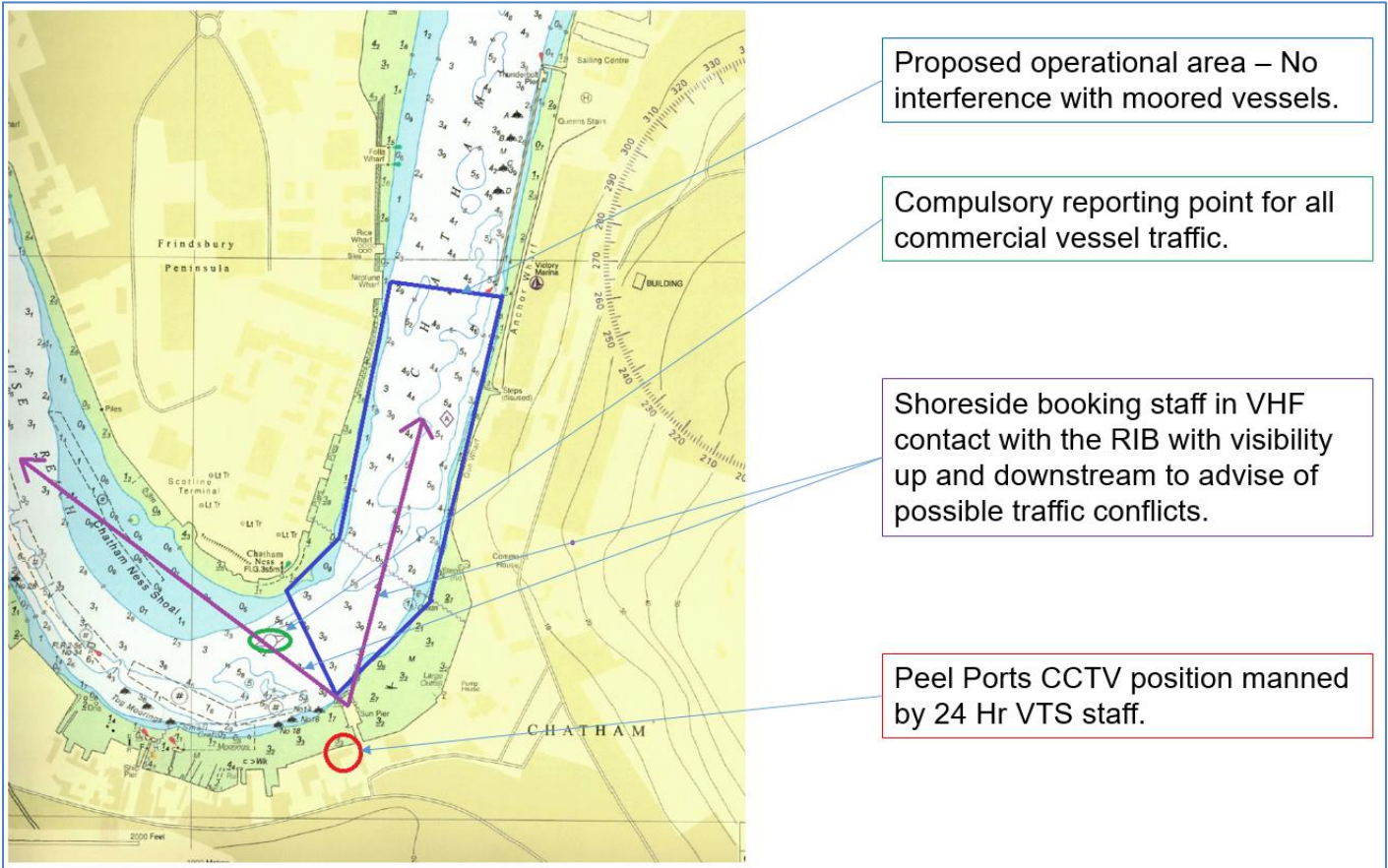
6. The boat being used is also contracted to perform enforcement patrols on behalf the statutory harbour authority, this could lead to a mixed message for other river users.

Europe's largest RIB charter company have a matched fleet of 8m RIBS based in the Solent for bareboat charter including stag and hen parties whilst regularly chartering them to various agencies including law enforcement on the south coast, see attached images.



The RIB operates in a distinct livery when engaged by the port authority which includes Peel Ports clothing/PPE supplied to the crew.

Chartlet showing the operational area and mitigating safety factors



General Considerations.

From Medway Council

The application synchronises with Medway Councils desire to provide valuable public amenities in central Chatham and “clean up” Sun Pier during the School holidays. They write;

“We have worked with the applicant and we are really supportive of the tours and activities they have been running on the river. They are a really professional team who have liaised with us about their plans and programmes. Their aims fit strongly with our new Medway Tourism Strategy, and we are keen to see this business grow and provide more trips and activities for visitors and locals alike especially during school holidays. We are confident that they bring a safe and reliable river experience given their strong track record so far.”

From the applicant / operator

To operate only on specific days with rivers users notified accordingly.

Operated by properly qualified skippers and an established business with a proven track record, that not only puts safety first but also has the interests of river users and boating community at its heart.

Run the experience exclusively on a short half mile section of river with no moorings present.

Create minimal disturbance as running time is likely to be no more than 4 hours per day due to safety briefing / embarkation / disembarkation etc.

Strict observance to COLREGS and the activity would give way and pause as appropriate to other river users including but not limited to; Commercial, Sail, Canoeists, Rowers, Paddleboarders etc.

Peel Ports

The port authority has a robust incident and accident reporting policy, if this activity is approved we would welcome any reports from the local boating community that highlighted and evidenced any dangerous occurrence or near-miss related to the RIB experience rides. Any reports would be investigated and, if necessary, the activity would be suspended.

**Marine Operations Department
Peel Ports London Medway**

9th February 2023

Body and wording of the original NtoM 54 of 2022

Below is a summary of what is being proposed, where it will take place and what safety measures are being planned to mitigate safety concerns.

Chatham Waterfront RIB Experience

General RIB Experience Protocol

Participants would be greeted on Sun Pier. They will be issued with appropriate life jackets, safety briefed and escorted down the brow to the awaiting vessel. A demonstration of how to embark safely will be conducted and participants boarded and seated properly according to the skippers instructions. Visual checks of the approaches to the operating area will be conducted by both the skipper and shore team on the pier and departure made only when safe to do so. Shore team will continue to monitor traffic during the trip and notify the boat of any potential conflicts.

Once clear of Sun Pier the vessel will conduct a short 10 minute experience at speeds not exceeding 25 knots, around a pre-determined course and constrained specifically within a strict and specific area detailed in the appendix. Speed will be reduced for approaching vessels in accordance with collision regulations and the activity paused (giving them priority) to allow them to safely transit the area.

The service will be carried out at all times by a suitably qualified skipper with no less than RYA Powerboat Advanced (commercially endorsed) RYA First Aid, Sea Survival and Professional Practices and Responsibilities certification.

Skippers will maintain VHF communications with Medway VTS on VHF channel 74 at all times and call on each departure confirming passenger numbers and upon return to Sun Pier.

Only these authorised skippers will operate the RIB.

Regular examinations will be carried out on the vessel and its equipment.

Safe procedure for the embarkation and disembarkation of passengers

The vessel should be securely moored alongside appropriately.
 A document to confirm passengers have understood the above should be provided and signed accordingly.
 A safety briefing will be conducted before boarding.
 ISO Lifejackets will be provided and worn before embarkation.
 Assistance to passengers should be provided as necessary.
 Passengers should step onto the tube and thereafter into the RIB.
 The same procedure in reverse should be adopted for disembarkation.
 Skippers should be aware of approaching vessels and wash and notify the passengers when safe to board and leave the boat.

Man overboard rescue plan

An established and drilled MOB recovery plan is in place with 2 options for casualty recovery (over the side of the boat or via the stern recovery steps). Skippers will be mindful of the effects of shock, cold water shock and it's effects on people.

First Aid

The first aid equipment is located both within the vessel and ashore. Mobile phones will be available for contacting the emergency services in the event of an accident.

Emergency Procedures

In the event of an incident on the water the coastguard will be contacted in line with the mayday procedure on channel 16 on the onboard VHF radio.

In the event of a medical emergency, the skipper will contact the emergency services on 999.

In the event of a minor injury, First Aid will be tendered locally.

Accidents and near misses will be reported to the Peel Ports and investigated according to Peel Ports and applicant's Safety Procedures.

Vessel Particulars

7.8 Metre MCA Coded RHIB, 150HP Outboard Engine, Throwing line and 2 Lifebuoys, SOLAS Life Raft Category C First Aid Kit, Fire Extinguisher, Main and secondary anchor, Chart Plotter and VHF Radio

Proposed operating area for the RIB experience trips.





A full RAMS for the proposed activity has been submitted and additional consents and approvals will also be sought from local authorities and regulatory bodies if required.

Further information may be obtained from the Medway Marine Operations Team on the e-mail address above or by phoning 01795 596596

**Marine Operations Department
Peel Ports London Medway**

30th November 2022