

CPO Talk 8th June 2023

Hello

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

My name is Mark Montgomery-Smith

I first came to Eel Pie Island with Helen, now my wife, in 1986 to the Boatyard with a 24ft wooden sailing yacht, to restore her and take her sailing.

In those days there was Howlett's Slipways, Toughs as well.

I became great friends with the manager of the Eel Pie Marine Centre as it was then and returned in 1992 to start a riparian engineering business, piling and building gangways and pontoons.

In 1997 my wife and I took over the running of Eel Pie Boatyard Ltd.

There has been a boatyard on the site since 1892. The same year the Embankment Road was incorporated.

The reason for the continued survival of different incarnations of boatyards here is the wonderful combination of water and land infrastructure.

Twickenham is fantastic. It has an infrastructure that enables boat repair. It has two really good tool shops, a paint shop, a welding shop, a timberyard, it is close to specialist marine engineering workshops.

When we go into any of those places, and if there is a new staff member they will ask for the postcode for the receipt, when you say TW1 3DY their jaw will drop and they will say wow there are three pages of that post code. Largely because of all the boatbuilders and other craftspeople using the boatyard facilities on the island.

We rent spaces to artists and craftspeople in multiple workshops. We rent space for boats both on land and in the water for DIY work. We carry out repairs and engineering works to boats both on site and off site up and down the Thames. We build and repair gangways and pontoons. We have built several mooring facilities in other locations on the Thames. We do a lot of emergency call out work. Sometimes by boat. Sometimes with our Transit Van. Sometimes by public transport.

I personally load or unload materials from delivery trucks. It is the norm, not the exception, that during the process, there will be a requirement that multiple vehicles interact with each other, taking turns making the corner at Water Lane. It is very hard to see how it will go smoothly with two way traffic.

Last week, there were two fire engines, testing fire pumps for use on Eel Pie Island. And an ambulance. And because of the layout, room for normal deliveries to carry on.

Yesterday, I had a phone call telling me to expect a delivery of 3 tonnes of wood between 5 and 6pm. Without prior notice. In the end, rather to my relief because of this today, it didn't happen because of an accident in Dartford. That delivery is now scheduled for next week, sometime!

That is very much the norm. I order materials and am grateful that it comes – insisting that it came early morning is not going to wash. Maybe its different for supermarket chains.

We use a transit van. I've had 2 emergency call outs this week. One for a sinking barge. We loaded a wheelbarrow with pumps and tools and wheeled it over the bridge loaded the transit and saved a lot of unpleasantness for a lot of people. We will still theoretically be able to do that with the new scheme, but probably lose half an hour fetching the van from wherever it will be parked. The other one was for a similar situation involving a waste water tank and a broken pump. Let me tell you about Tuesday and the large sheet of polystyrene

We were again in time to save a lot of mess. The new scheme if it goes ahead will absolutely definitely have a negative impact on our business.

Because of being involved in this planning and CPO process, I have started taking photographs of the water levels in this area and comparing them to the Richmond Tide Gauge, which is available live on an app.

Because of this I am able to tell you historically how many days a year various water levels occur:

Significant levels.

4.5 CD level with the edge by the ice cream van

2020, 2021, 2022

386 373 347 AV 370+= 185 DAYS

4.9 CD just covering the river wall and 1 and 1/2 ice cream van widths covered. About 2/3 of the road under water lane.

2020, 2021, 2022

180 180 165 AV 175= 88 DAYS

5.0 CD 2/3 of the embankment covered and level with the bottom of the new proposed loading bays

2020, 2021, 2022

129 128 128 AV 128 = 64 DAYS

5.1 CD The new proposed loading bays completely wet. Touching the bottom of the existing loading bays.

2020, 2021, 2022

96 85 75 AV 86=43 DAYS

5.2 CD The existing loading bays completely wet, difficult to turn the corner unless you know it.

2020, 2021, 2022

62 47 43AV=51= 25 DAYS

Last March was the wettest month since records began in Oxford. The turning circle was obscured for over half the time, not just for a short period at the top of the tide.

Safety Audits I have to write safety management schemes for work boat and if I compare it to the independent safety audit not mentioning the junctions I find it incredible.....

Mark Montgomery-Smith