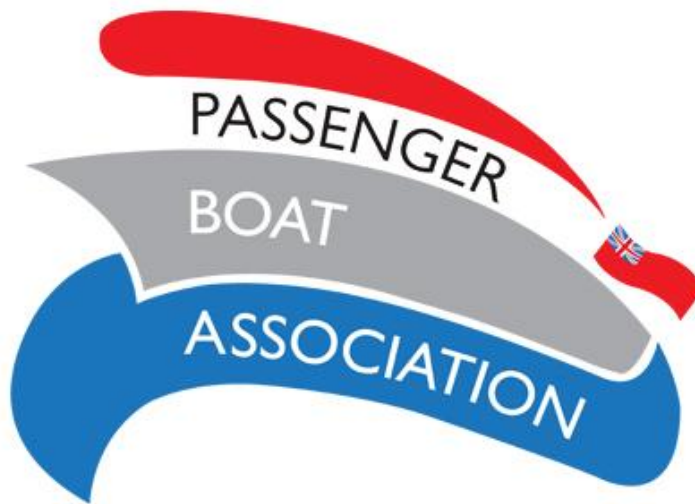


# Passenger Boat Association



## Guidance for Control of Charter Cruise Noise on the Tidal River Thames

FINAL DRAFT

ISSUE 1 – May 2014

Prepared by the River Noise Control Stakeholders

## Version Control

Version	Date	Change Details	Author(s)
1	19 Oct 2013	Initial DRAFT Document	Roger Flitter
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## Distribution

Organisation
London Port Health Authority
Port of London Authority
TfL London River Services
London Borough of Lambeth
London Borough of Westminster
London Borough of Southwark
London Borough of Greenwich
London Borough of Tower Hamlets
London Borough of Richmond
Maritime and Coastguard Agency
MP Marine Policing Unit
PBA London Operators
British Marine Federation

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## **1. Introduction and Background**

During the summer of 2013 a number of ad hoc complaints were made to the City of London Port Health Authority, Riparian Authorities and MPs regarding alleged excessive noise emitting from passenger vessels undertaking charters.

Despite meetings and enquiries it has proved difficult to attribute and quantify the problem to any particular operator and/or vessel. Complaints received could not be quantified but were indicative of a problem.

The document serves as a vehicle for providing awareness to waterfront residents of the scope of a variety of navigational activities on the River Thames emanating from many sources. Nevertheless, on the assumption that there is a problem to one degree or another, the stakeholders, including the passenger vessel industry, have agreed to produce, as a constructive alternative to formal action, guidance to operators aimed at self imposed control of noise levels on party boats.

Mindful of the commitment to produce this Guidance Document, it must also be recognised that the River Thames is a major UK tourist attraction for many millions of visitors and the businesses meeting the demands directly and indirectly employ many people and contribute to London's status in the world. It has always been a major highway for London, used for both commercial and leisure purposes.

## **2. Stakeholders**

The following organisations are identified as stakeholders in addressing the problem and seeking a solution:

London Port Health Authority  
Port of London Authority  
Metropolitan Police Marine Policing Unit  
TfL London River Services  
London Borough of Lambeth  
London Borough of Westminster  
London Borough of Southwark  
London Borough of Greenwich  
London Borough of Tower Hamlets  
London Borough of Richmond  
Maritime and Coastguard Agency  
The Passenger Boat Association

### **3. Circumstances When Noise Complaints are Prevalent**

Noise emitting from vessels on the river are most likely to occur in the following circumstances

- Warm/hot summer evenings
- Direction and strength from prevailing wind
- Prevailing tide state, high or low
- Design and layout of the vessel
- Music type and volume level, particularly bass settings
- General passenger chatter
- Design of buildings and infrastructure (i.e. bridges and/or 'canyons' between buildings)

Because many of the above factors are variable, there no fixed measurable circumstances in which noise levels may be considered either excessive or un-acceptable. Furthermore, such judgement is subjective.

### **4. Localities Where Noise Complaints are Prevalent**

The complaints received tend to occur in the area from Southwark to Greenwich. Over the years this stretch of river has seen many old established buildings converted into riverside flats with balconies. Further many more new properties with similar river outlooks are emerging, many with connecting piers, encouraging the use of water activities. This development is set to increase in the future because of further residential property developments.

In some cases where the river tends to be narrower and residential properties occur, 'canyons' can be created thereby tending to contain and amplify sounds from the river.

### **5. Process For Reporting Excessive Noise to PHA**

See ANNEX 'A'

## 6. Current Noise Control Regulations

### 6.1 MCA Regulation For Noise Levels In Vessel Wheelhouses

Maritime and Coastguard regulations require that noise in a vessel wheelhouse is limited to 75 decibels in order that the Master and crew of the vessel can clearly hear and communicate on the vessel VHF Radio.

### 6.2 2003 Licensing Act

Vessels where the selling of alcohol occurs are required to comply with the 2003 Licensing Act. The Act is quite comprehensive in many respects and it does stipulate that noise control measures must be put in place through the use of noise limiting equipment.

### 6.3 Environmental Protection Act 1990

Environmental Protection Act 1990 which gives Local Authorities their Statutory Nuisance powers and is the legislation under which investigation of party boat noise would be conducted.

### 6.4 LRS NOISE LIMITING REQUIREMENTS (Extract from LRS Pier Licence Conditions)

6.4.1 Boat operators shall take all necessary steps to ensure that the Master's attention is not distracted by excessive noise on the vessel. Any noise emitted from the vessel shall not exceed the requirements laid down by the Port Health Authority. Where necessary, operators shall fit suitable noise limitation devices and equipment required by the MCA.

6.4.2 Noise monitoring equipment, where fitted, must be tested at least annually and certificated as serviceable by a qualified acoustic engineer.

6.4.3 All boat operators wishing to hold entertainment after 0100 hours must ensure that any noise is contained within the boat and does not cause a nuisance to or annoy or disturb members of the public living nearby in houseboats or property adjacent to the river.

6.4.4 No entertainment shall take place within 100 metres of any terminal or en-route stopping Pier Facility. Quiet background music is permissible via the public address or entertainment systems within enclosed areas.

6.4.5 All boats must be equipped with a public address system which must be in working order and audible throughout. Loud hailers, loud speakers or other amplifying apparatus should not be used at or in the vicinity of Pier Facilities except for the purpose of communicating safety information.

6.4.6

## **7. Recommended Cruise Noise Control Measures**

In order to counteract the potential for noise to become intrusive to other river users and residents the following recommendations are made for which Masters of vessels together with party organisers should consider and implement prior to departure.

### **7.1 Potential Technical Solutions**

Employ simple technical noise limiting technology within the sound system in use. This may be a full cut out or a device which reduces and/or neutralises high volume and limits bass frequencies.

### **7.2 Windows, Doors and Speaker Positioning**

Speakers should be contained indoors or in such a position and location that noise is contained within the vessel, not broadcast externally.

### **7.3 Briefing DJs, Organisers and Passengers**

Consider noise level control as part of party booking contract terms and conditions Brief party organisers and DJs that there is a potential noise problem on the river and seek assistance and cooperation in vulnerable locations of the passage. Consider 23.00 as a suitable time to reduce noise to a minimum.

### **7.4 Transiting Residential Areas**

Plan to transit residential areas at a reasonable pace without loitering.

### **7.5 Embarking and Disembarking of Passengers**

Music should be turned off during these activities.

## **8. Other Sources of Noise on the River Thames**

There are other potential sources of noise on the river. These include:

Cruise Ships

Private vessel parties

River works activities (e.g. Thames Tideway Tunnel Project)

Commercial vessels

Moorings

Fretting of moored facilities on chains and piles e.g. piers, buoys etc

## **9. Periodic Review of Complaints**

The London Port Health Authority will be responsible for conducting a review of noise complaints twice per year. An appropriate attendance of stakeholders should be invited to attend this event.

This would not preclude the convening of a specific noise meeting should exceptional circumstances dictate the need.

## ANNEX 'A' Public Information For Lodging Noise Complaints

### Extract from London Boroughs Web Sites Message

#### Noise on the Tidal Thames

Issues regarding noise on London's navigable waterways include the powering of vessels; tourist and party boats, piers and moorings; wharves and boatyards. The scale and nature of issues and solutions can vary widely. Competing uses, such as leisure (tourism and party boats) and recreation, heritage, freight transport, infrastructure projects and regeneration, all need to be considered and balanced.

The tidal Thames must be regarded as a working, commercial river first and foremost. Over 8.5 million people travel on the Thames each year and the Mayor's River Action Plan seeks to ensure that we all make better use of the River Thames and other navigable waterways for freight as well as passengers. The River Thames is also a vital transport artery carrying freight to and from the city. The amount of freight moved on the Thames through the capital has trebled in the last four years. In 2013 over 11 million tonnes of cargo was moved by barge and boat - taking about 900,000 lorry movements off London's roads each year.

The Mayor also has a duty under the Greater London Authority Act of *"promoting and encouraging the use of the River Thames safely, in particular for the provision of passenger transport services and for the transportation of freight"* (section 41(5)(d)).

#### Regulating Noise on the Thames

The Maritime and Coastguard Agency requires the fitting of noise limiters for navigational safety purposes, notably to prevent interference with on-board communication. The London Port Health Authority undertakes launch-based patrols and works jointly with riparian local boroughs, the Passenger Boat Association, London River Services, the Port of London Authority and the Metropolitan Police to deal with noise on the tidal Thames. The London Port Health Authority has general powers to investigate complaints about excessive noise on the river. However, it is often difficult to establish a specific case of noise nuisance related to a boat moving on the river.

Due to the nature of marine operations, and the hours of work often relating to the tidal cycle, noise cannot be eliminated entirely from operations on the water, but there are a number of codes of practice available to operators and these should be followed to minimise noise as far as practicable. However should there be a persistent repeat noise nuisance, it is advisable to contact the local Council Environmental Health Department and copy the London Port Health Authority into that email. Below is a list of all the boroughs contact details, along with those of the London Port Health Authority.



When lodging a complaint it is important the following details are included:

- Name of vessel
- Date
- Exact Time
- Your exact location (include postcode to assist) and approximate location of vessel at time of noise complaint
- Description of vessel (e.g. colour, number of decks, position of wheelhouse, and if possible; description of staff/passengers)
- Description and approximate duration of the noise

Port Health Authority – [stuart.smith@cityoflondon.gov.uk](mailto:stuart.smith@cityoflondon.gov.uk)

London Borough of Havering	<a href="mailto:environmental.health@havering.gov.uk">environmental.health@havering.gov.uk</a>
London Borough of Bexley	
London Borough of Barking & Dagenham	<a href="mailto:3000direct@lbbd.gov.uk">3000direct@lbbd.gov.uk</a>
London Borough of Greenwich	<a href="mailto:noise.team@royalgreenwich.gov.uk">noise.team@royalgreenwich.gov.uk</a>
London Borough of Newham	<a href="mailto:Corporate.Complaints@newham.gov.uk">Corporate.Complaints@newham.gov.uk</a>
London Borough of Lewisham	<a href="mailto:noiseandnuisance@lewisham.gov.uk">noiseandnuisance@lewisham.gov.uk</a>
London Borough of Tower Hamlets	<a href="mailto:environmentalhealth@towerhamlets.gov.uk">environmentalhealth@towerhamlets.gov.uk</a>
London Borough of Southwark	<a href="mailto:noiseandnuisance@southwark.gov.uk">noiseandnuisance@southwark.gov.uk</a>
City of London	<a href="mailto:publicprotection@cityoflondon.gov.uk">publicprotection@cityoflondon.gov.uk</a>
London Borough of Westminster	
London Borough of Lambeth	<a href="mailto:noise@lambeth.gov.uk">noise@lambeth.gov.uk</a>
London Borough of Kensington & Chelsea	<a href="mailto:environmentalhealth@rbkc.gov.uk">environmentalhealth@rbkc.gov.uk</a>
London Borough of Wandsworth	<a href="mailto:esd@wandsworth.gov.uk">esd@wandsworth.gov.uk</a>
London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham	
London Borough of Richmond upon Thames	
London Borough of Hounslow	<a href="mailto:pollution@hounslow.gov.uk">pollution@hounslow.gov.uk</a>