

**ST PANCRAS CRUISING CLUB**  
**NARROW BOATS AND SEAPLANES**

**Context**

You may have noticed that there are plans for Seaplanes to return to the Tidal Thames – see for example a recent article in the Times (enclosed below, pages 5-6). This memorandum considers the implications for our narrowboat convoy in May to the River Medway.

**Proposed new seaplane zone**

I understand that the Port of London Authority (PLA) and the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) have agreed to conduct a trial of possible new arrangements for seaplanes to land in the Thames Estuary, on the weekend of 14-15 May 2016. This is unfortunately the same weekend as St Pancras Cruising Club are planning a convoy of eleven narrowboats, transiting from Bow Locks to the River Medway (for further details see the separate website <https://nbsg.wordpress.com/medway/>).

It is proposed by those in authority to create a **temporary seaplane landing zone** for that period, in Sea Reach (ie roughly opposite Southend). The zone will be bounded by the following coordinates, which will be clearly marked by yellow buoys:

Point	Latitude	Longitude
A (North West)	51° 29'.869 N	000° 40'.762 E
B (North East)	51° 29'.398 N	000° 42'.964 E
C (South East)	51° 29'.152 N	000° 42'.825 E
D (South West)	51° 29'.645 N	000° 40'.645 E

This zone is marked on the chartlet on page 4 (the green hatched area). It comprises an area approx. 1.46nm x 0.27nm, which should be adequate for all competent pilots for landing and take-off purposes (the Cessna 208, for example, needs 3,280 feet for take-off). This arrangement will permit landings on a bearing of 110 degrees (Runway 11 in flying jargon) or 290 degrees (Runway 29), depending on the prevailing wind.

As can be seen from the chart, this zone lies quite close to our proposed course along the north edge of Yantlet Flats. While flying operations are underway, narrow boats (and of course any Tupperware that is afloat that day) are **discouraged** from entering the seaplane landing zone. The PLA will be issuing a Notice to Mariners in due course to reinforce this message. I would expect that a Harbour Service Launch will also be in attendance, displaying flashing blue lights as appropriate; and that the Southend and Sheerness Lifeboats will be on standby.

**Relevant regulations**

Colregs (Convention on the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea, 1972, as amended) includes the following provisions, which might possibly be of interest:

Rule 3(a) The word “vessel” includes every description of water craft, including non-displacement craft, WIG craft and seaplanes, used or capable of being used as a means of transportation on water

Rule 3(e) The word “seaplane” includes any aircraft designed to manoeuvre on the water.

Rule 18(e) “A seaplane on the water shall, in general, keep well clear of all vessels and avoid impeding their navigation. In circumstances, however, where risk of collision exists, she shall comply with the Rules of this Part.”

Rule 31: “Where it is impracticable for a seaplane or a WIG craft to exhibit lights and shapes of the characteristics or in the positions prescribed in the Rules of this Part she shall exhibit lights and shapes as closely similar in characteristics and position as is possible.”

### **Implications for the narrow boat convoy**

I am grateful for technical advice from Kathryn Doddington, owner of narrow boat LEO NO 2, drawing on her many years of experience working in the airline industry. Based on that advice, I would suggest the following modifications to our plans for the convoy:

- a) Air Traffic Control at Southend Airport (callsign **SNE**) will be liaising with London VTS, using Marine VHF channel 42. We should designate one vessel to listen to this channel for any relevant messages. Any volunteers?
- b) As Andrew Phasey has reminded us in numerous safety briefings, we need to keep a good lookout to the front, behind, and to the sides. We now also need to keep a good lookout up in the air. Please instruct your competent crews accordingly.
- c) If Runway 29 is in use, then the lead narrow boat should take responsibility for alerting the rest of the convoy to incoming aircraft, which will be approaching from the East, at approximately 65 knots (three times faster than a Thames Clipper). I suggest broadcasting this message: “Attention St Pancras Narrowboats: Bandits at 12 O’clock”. In this scenario light aircraft are likely to be quite low, to keep clear of heavy aircraft inbound to London City (**LCY**) and London Heathrow (**LHR**) airports.
- d) Conversely, if Runway 11 is in use, the tail-end charlie narrowboat should take responsibility for alerting the convoy to incoming aircraft, which will be approaching from the West. I suggest broadcasting “Attention St Pancras Narrowboats: Bandits at 6 O’clock”. Heavy aircraft bound for LHR will be approaching over Windsor, and so should not be a cause of concern.
- e) Kathryn advises that seaplanes are likely to use piston engines, and so are likely to be quite noisy (as one of the comments on the Times article says: “*These sea planes are noisy as hell*”). However if they make a noise like a Bolinder engine they may be about to land outside the designated landing zone.
- f) Any visiting crew who find the bit of river around Gravesend a bit boring may like to join the convoy *en route* by seaplane. They should request their pilot, once on the water, to taxi near to point D. They should then (after donning their lifejacket) launch an inflatable dinghy and paddle across to the WEST NORE SAND buoy. We expect to arrive there at about 1300 hours on Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> May. If you are late, we won’t wait.
- g) Further to Andy’s recent note about preparing for the trip, you may wish to check with your insurers that your insurance policy covers collisions between a narrow boat and a seaplane, as that could be quite expensive.

## Further information

Some relevant further background information can be found on these websites:

<http://www.seaplaneassociation.org.uk/>

<http://airplanegroundschools.com/Seaplane-Skiplane-Float-Airplanes/seaplane%20rules-regulations-and-aids-for-navigation.html> (NB this is for the US, so may have only limited application).

<http://www.lochlomondseaplanes.com/> (the operator that is mentioned in the Times article). They also have a twitter feed <https://twitter.com/LomondSeaplanes>

[https://www.caa.co.uk/uploadedFiles/CAA/Content/Standard\\_Content/Commercial\\_industry/Aircraft/Airworthiness/Files/002\\_CFS%20002\\_Appendix%203%20issue%201.pdf](https://www.caa.co.uk/uploadedFiles/CAA/Content/Standard_Content/Commercial_industry/Aircraft/Airworthiness/Files/002_CFS%20002_Appendix%203%20issue%201.pdf) (From the CAA: NB the required rudder tests – in case of collision you should ask to see this form).

<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/2/1b0a4840-e094-11e5-9217-6ae3733a2cd1.html> - recent article in the Financial Times.

## Other issues

Loch Lomond Seaplanes (see above) will be taking part in the trial. They have sought my advice on refuelling points *en route*, and consequently plan to stop on Tixall wide, near Stafford (photo of my last trip [here](#)), which should be adequate for bunkering purposes. The Canal and River Trust should be publishing an emergency stoppage notice shortly. I am also in discussion with the fuel boat HALSALL (<https://twitter.com/fuelboathalsall>), to see if they can provide a sufficient supply of 100/130 Avgas - which I gather has a green dye in it.

## Conclusion

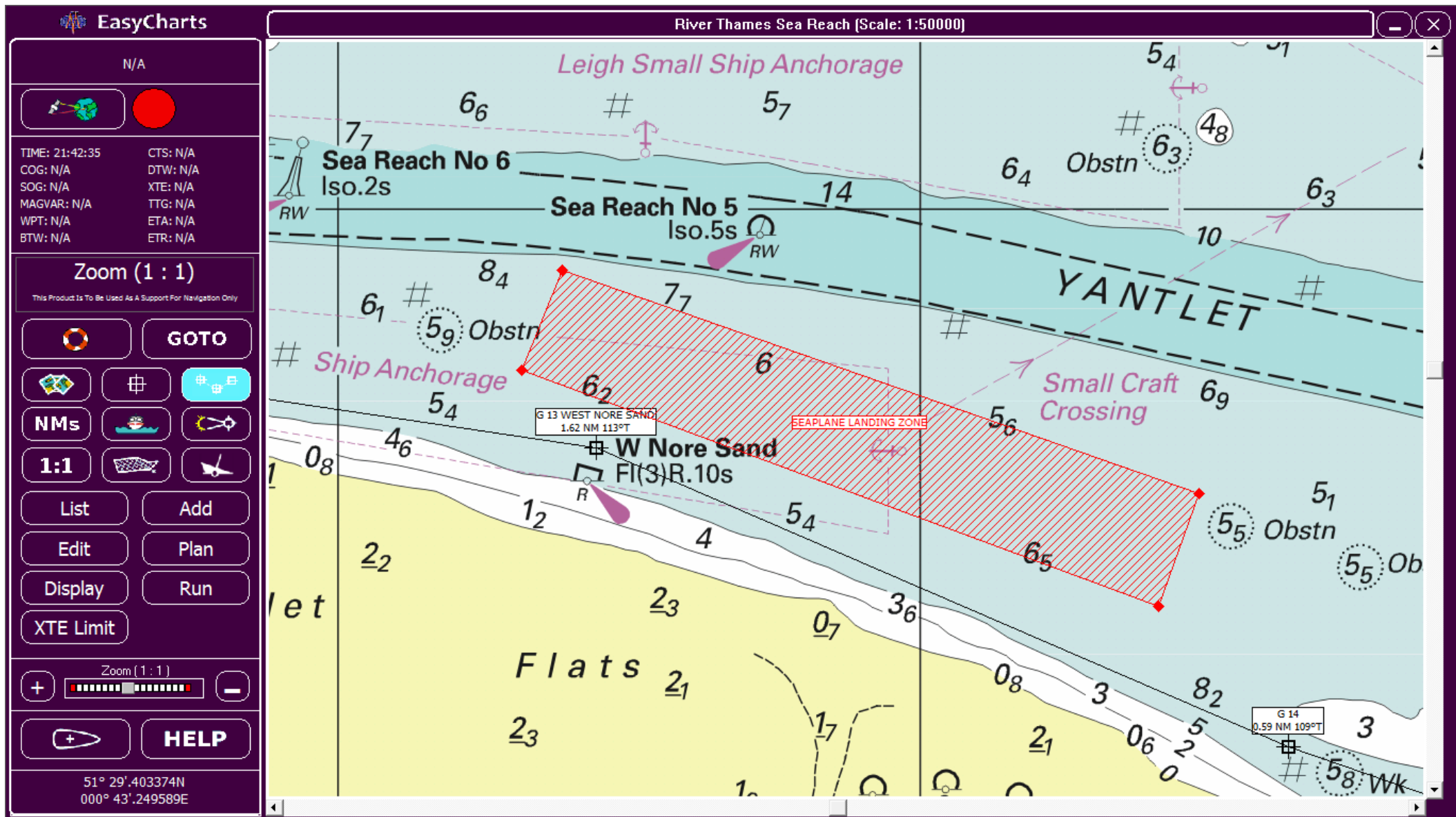
I think I have got all the bases covered. Please let me know as soon as possible if I have missed anything out, or if anything is unclear.

A number of us will have heard London VTS describe themselves, on various occasions, as providing air traffic control for ships. We will now see if they can manage to do the same equally well for aeroplanes.

Please note that the other airport in the area (callsign **BOR**) will not be operating on the relevant weekend .....

Thank you for reading this far. Sensible comments only please.

Simon Judge  
Narrow Boat Scholar Gypsy  
1<sup>st</sup> April 2016



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## Return of the seaplane lets stylish flyers make a splash

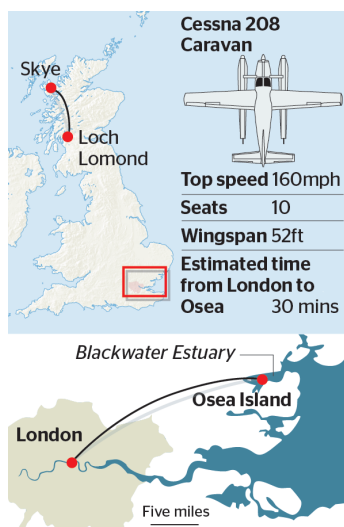
Graeme Paton Transport Correspondent

Last updated at 12:01AM, March 14 2016

They are a throwback to the golden age of air travel, long before passport control queues and boozy stag parties raised our collective blood pressure.

Traditional seaplanes are preparing to make a return to England's skies and shores with ambitious plans for the first dedicated passenger service in at least 60 years.

An amphibious aircraft, capable of landing on water and conventional runways, is to be put to work on a regular route between airports in London and an island resort 20 minutes away off Essex.



Its backers hope that the venture, being launched later this year, will be a precursor to new direct services from the Thames itself to destinations throughout the UK.

The plan is being led by David West, managing director and chief pilot of Loch Lomond Seaplanes, which has run flights across the west coast of Scotland for the past decade.

He said that demand for seaplane travel was high among passengers tired of the factory-style approach to aviation taken by most airlines. They can also satisfy the modern traveller's desire to reach destinations off the beaten track, it was claimed.

This has led to recent new seaplane services in countries including Croatia, Turkey, Sri Lanka, India and Vietnam.

"It's about taking people back to the romantic days of flying," Mr West said. "You can turn up 15 minutes before your flight, park your car by the side of the water and get on board. This is the simplicity of it. The beauty of seaplanes is the lack of infrastructure that they need to operate. There's none of the demands you find in a big airport that makes flying so unpleasant for a great many people. It is this wonderful experience rather than something you have to endure."

Loch Lomond Seaplanes bills itself as Europe's longest-running sea airline. It operates sightseeing tours on the west coast of Scotland and from next month will start scheduled services from Loch Lomond to Skye.

Now it is also about to launch its first flights in England, in what is thought to be the first dedicated service south of the border since seaplanes largely died out in the mid-50s.

The new route will carry passengers between London and Osea, a private island in the Blackwater estuary that has become an exclusive resort and party and wedding venue. From the summer, two aircraft a day will land in the waters surrounding the 400-acre island. It is owned by the music producer Nigel Frieda and has attracted celebrities such as the actress Sienna Miller, the musician Johnny Borrell and Poppy Delevingne, the model.

Mr West, 58, a former Cathay Pacific captain, insisted that flights would not be reserved for the super-rich and tickets will be available to the public at around £89 each. They will link the resort to small airports in London and the home counties, including Biggin Hill, Farnborough, Denham and Wycombe.

It coincides with the company's pending delivery of its second \$3 million (£2 million) American-built Cessna 208 Caravan aircraft, capable of carrying ten people at up to 160mph.

Mr West said that the ultimate aim was to obtain permission from the Civil Aviation Authority and Port of London to run direct flights from the Thames to its Loch Lomond headquarters.


He said that seaplanes largely died out after the Second World War but added: "They're coming back. The beauty of seaplanes is that you don't need infrastructure. New technologies such as GPS mean that flights can be easily tracked using smartphone apps. This has brought seaplanes and flying boat operations in to the modern age as a viable mode of transport."

Making a splash

On March 28, 1910, the Hydravion was the first powered seaplane to take off and land successfully. Flown by Henri Fabre, its inventor, the aircraft travelled 1650ft over water near Marseilles. Nine years later, a US army seaplane became the first to fly the Atlantic. In 1923, the Channel Islands became home to the first successful flying-boat service, and the popularity of seaplanes soared during the 1930 and 40s. "Empire Boats" from Imperial Airways would cross the globe, complete with libraries and cocktail bars. Seaplanes were put to use in the Second World War but the increasing number of airports, and the range and speed of other aircraft, meant that their popularity declined rapidly. Seaplanes returned to the UK in 2004 when Loch Lomond Seaplanes began flying.


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7 comments



Mr Simon Judge

12 people listening



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Tommy Abdy Collins

8 hours ago

I'm delighted if the CAA are now relaxing their landing requirements. The West Coast of Scotland has been 'asking' for a seaplane service to connect all the small holiday settlements to Glasgow. Not only should landing be allowed ad hoc at homes and small hotels but also to connect villages such as Tayvallich, Crinnan, Loghgilphead, Melfort, Oban and so on. The Cessna 208 is an ideal aircraft - rugged and reliable yet can be sophisticated and comfortable inside and not too noisy. I was lucky enough to fly one in the bush in south Sudan for 6 yrs.

Recommend Reply

Iain Sanders

9 hours ago

When these began they were almost rhe only aerial noise nuisance; now they add their racket to a million others'. On, or rather over Skye, low-flying helicopters, RAF jets (very low often), motorbikes by the dozen at once^ juggernauts & a tempest of other road-borne contraptions roaring across a once serene Isle! Ban 'em. pretty on a video or not. They don't just come straight in & land - they circle, & circle & circle..

Recommend Reply

C J Delmege

8 hours ago

@Iain Sanders I'm with you on the helicopters; more annoying than just about anything else here in the S.E.

Recommend Reply

Kalwant Singh

18 hours ago

Great idea but I think people can leave the 'romantic' notion of these to the past, when flying could only be afforded by the rich. These sea planes are noisy as hell and there's not much romance in the pilots handing out foam ear plugs to everyone!

2  Recommend Reply

Gordon544

20 hours ago

seems like a very good idea to me. good luck to them.

2  Recommend Reply

Chris Miller

20 hours ago

Slightly unfortunate that the closing credits on the video refer to Loch Lomand Seaplanes.

Recommend Reply

Peter nuttall

9 hours ago

@Chris Miller Why?That's the name of the company that wants to run this new service.

Recommend Reply

Livefyre