

Open statement from MARK EDWARDS MBE , boatbuilder , Bridge Boathouses , Riverside , Richmond , TW9 1TH relating to :

APP/L5810/C/23/3333609 Turk's Pontoon , Richmond TW9 1THPublic Inquiry 13 -15th January 2026

PAST

My first association with the "Shore " at Richmond begun back in 1972 when I was employed in the letting of boats and their repair . I went on to set up my own boatbuilding business at Hampton in 1980 . In 1992 Michael Turk who had acquired 3 of the 4 Bridge Boathouses invited me to rent them and run the boat letting business . He had in around 1989 gained permission to establish the present pontoon on a mooring below the bridge for boat letting . In around 1994 permission was further granted to moor the historic Jesus College, Oxford Barge as a restaurant alongside the pontoon sharing the access brow and providing an area of the pontoon for 2 /3 tables . In the ensuing years I bought from Turk's the boathouses ashore and was issued in 2003 a new 15 year lease for the remaining ¾ of the pontoon for boat related use . After the sinking of the pontoon and the removal of the barge Richard Turk kindly allowed me to use the whole of the pontoon until it was removed for its re-fit .

PRESENT

On the return of both barge and pontoon I negotiated the use of the outboard landing , the up and downstream ends and an enclosed storage area (c 10 sq. m) for £6000+VAT per annum . This allowed me to let the store to the 14th Richmond Scout Boating Centre for £1500 pa . I then let similar charities providing fixed seat rowing experience to use the extensive landing and its access to moorings downstream , the Jubilant Trust , Skerries 4 Schools and London Cornish Pilot Gig Club and other clubs , Richmond Bridge Boat Club , Bench Blisters (magistrates boat club) , Thames Wherry Trust and some 12 other rowing boats all used on a regular basis . This facility is of very great value to the whole boating community and I am very appreciative of Turk's offer to continue to allow us all to use the facility if they can .

FUTURE

All the users are in one way or another customers of mine and I believe would really value the continuation of this facility . We are very aware that if permission for the present arrangement can not be agreed that the whole pontoon will need

to go. This will be particularly devastating for the main charities who boat young and less able bodied people who really value the provision . The main areas of complaint was with canopies and side screens that has been addressed and no longer cause a problem .

Specifically the removal of the canopies and side screens at the upper end which obscured views of the river from the boat clubs and my boat hire has proved perfectly acceptable . The use of the upper deck, without parasols or canopies, by customers is not generally a problem and its complete removal would mean the loss of the charities store-room . There has always been a raised store at this end of the pontoon used for boat use so we strongly oppose this loss . I would on this point and the continued use of the pontoon by the unpowered boating community direct the Inquiry and Council planners to their own policies to help retain precisely this , (L.B.RuT Local Plan , 21/100 et al) . I along river users are very aware that such good facilities on a tidal part of the river are expensive to construct and fees have to be paid to the Port of London and the Crown Estate who own the bed of the river here .

I have personally invested much time and money in the fitting out of the store area , the decking of the 1 m wide landing area and the structures at both ends giving access to moorings downstream and providing a mooring for the scout service launch and the boat hire safety boat upstream . Some of these structures are subject to enforcement orders for their removal and therefore I request our boating use is regarded as mitigation of this infringement .

Richard Turk has kindly undertaken to issue a benevolent lease for the areas I presently rent as long as he is able to do so . This would be very valued by all present users . I undertake to set up a separate limited company for the management of this facility for the whole river community in unpowered craft . I do stress this is for unpowered boating which has increased massively over the past 30 years on Richmond's very special shoreline . In 1992 only my traditional boat hire and the 14th Richmond Scout Boating Centre were active and it is in a large part due to Turk's pontoon facility that there is now so much activity in recreational boats .

Mark Edwards 16/12/2025