

Fines for captain and owner of party boat which collided with police dock and vessel

Daniel Wakefield, 38, of Wellington Road, Tilbury, pleaded guilty to a charge of conduct endangering ships, structures or individuals under section 58 of the Merchant Shipping Act 1995.

He was handed a fine of £1,120 and ordered to pay costs of £1,200 on 24 January 2020 when he appeared before Southwark crown court.

Mr Wakefield was skipper of the Jewel of London on 13 December 2018. That night, the catamaran had been booked to host a private party for 135 passengers on the Thames.

After the party goers had disembarked at Canary Wharf shortly before 11pm, the Jewel of London began to travel back towards its mooring at Festival Pier on the South Bank.

Six bar staff were on board, along with Mr Wakefield and the mate Jason Foster.

At 11.05pm the boat hit the Metropolitan Police service marine unit workshop pontoon, causing considerable damage to the dock and to the vessel itself.

It then reversed out of the pier, hitting a moored police vessel with two officers on board.

The incident was caught on police CCTV.

Mr Wakefield later admitted to having fallen asleep.

The court heard that the owner of the boat, London Party Boats, had failed to ensure there was a dedicated lookout, something required by the Passenger Safety Certificate of the Jewel of London.

The company was charged under section 100 of the Merchant Shipping Act 1995 for being liable for the unsafe operation of a ship and was this morning ordered to pay a fine of £5,000 and will pay costs of £15,225.

The collision caused such considerable damage to the pontoon that the lift that hoists boats in and out of the water is now unsafe to use. More than a year after the incident it's still inoperable and it's estimated that the total cost for investigations, repairs and replacements needed after the damage will be between £1.25million and £1.6million.

Police vessels, responsible for policing 47 miles of the River Thames and providing an around-the-clock response to marine incidents, have been unable to use the lift. As the pontoon was also used to maintain and repair other

vessels, the RNLI, London fire brigade and London city airport have also been greatly affected.

In passing sentence, Judge Philip Bartle QC said: "Fortunately no one was injured although two police officers were on board the police launch and the crew were on board the Jewel. Had passengers been on board the Jewel it is highly likely that some would have been injured, possibly seriously."

Maritime investigations manager at the Maritime & Coastguard Agency Paula Evans said: "This was an entirely avoidable incident which has had very serious consequences which could have been even more severe. It is lucky that nobody was hurt in the collision.

"Keeping people safe is at the heart of what we do and we are committed to working with our partner agencies to protect those on the water by stopping dangerous practices and vessels, and to hold accountable those responsible."