

River Stour Trust Council

Meeting held on Thursday 10 September 2015 at The Granary, Sudbury

Those present: Andrew Richardson (AR) in the chair, Mike Finch (MF), Jim Lunn (JL), Gordon Denney (GD), Roger Brown (RB), Sue Brown (SB), Mick Rogers (MR)

Apologies for absence: Emrhys Barrell

Also present: Jane Rogers (Administrator, taking notes); Mike Harrington-Spier (MHS, Chairman of SBOC); Bob Stoneham; David Kirkman; Pam Johnson; James Parkinson; Andrew Sheldon

Identification of Confidential Business – none identified

Appointment of new Trustee

Mr Michael Harrington-Spier, currently a member of the Trust, and Chairman of the Sudbury Boat Operating Committee, had put himself forward to become a Trustee. AR welcomed this move and proposed his appointment as a Trustee, seconded by MF. Unanimously approved. Action: MF to complete the necessary paperwork for Companies House.

Minutes of the meeting held on 13 August 2015

The acceptance of these minutes was proposed by MF, seconded by MR and approved unanimously.

Redacted version of Minutes of 13 August meeting

It was agreed that the paragraph on page 6 relating to Mr R Thompson and his boat should be redacted. Acceptance of the Redacted version was proposed by RB, seconded by MR and approved unanimously.

The Administrator was asked to ensure that copies of the Minutes be placed on the website as soon as possible. Action: CB

Matters Arising from those Minutes

Access Ramp at the VEC – no progress.

Section 106 funds from Babergh/Barratts – meeting due on 17 September, which AR would attend.

Lock Handles for Flatford – had now been delivered.

Pension for Administrator – would now be dealt with during the next few weeks.

Administration support – SBOC had suggested the possibility of a student intern being employed during the busiest part of the summer. MHS commented that this scheme had worked well at the Theatre Royal in Bury St Edmunds. He agreed to look into how the scheme worked. Action: MHS

Jam Tartz – the commission statement had now been received.

Boat Operations Manager – Jim Lunn was now settling into the post. He reported that the lifting out of John Constable was booked in for Friday 11 September, and that the lock lintel which needed replacing would be removed at the same time.

Granary Compound – AS asked about ownership of the batteries stored in the Granary Compound. It was thought that that some belonged to Jeff Burroughs and some to the Trust. After discussion it was agreed that the compound and shed would be tidied up at the end of the season and that SBOC members would be asked to reclaim any possessions they had left in the shed by the end of October. Ownership of the batteries would also be clarified, so that they could be disposed of safely. Action: Administrator to send email to SBOC members.

Treasurer's Report

MF presented the current bank balance figures, amounting to approximately £60,000 over the three accounts. MHS queried the non-use of deposit accounts; it was stated that this had not been viable over recent years.

AR stated that he and MF would have a meeting very soon with Gareth Cole, the former Treasurer, in order that GC could hand over information and contact details, etc. Action: AR to arrange meeting urgently.

GC had implied that the Granary refurbishment could go ahead, using funds from the special projects funds. After discussion it was agreed that the refurbishment should go ahead in the New Year, although it meant that Council would have to maintain tight control of the budget subsequently. MR suggested that a penalty clause relating to time to complete the project be put into any contracts for carrying out the work.

It was agreed that the Administrator should advise regular hirers of the proposed closure of the Granary so that alternative plans could be made in good time. Action: Administrator

Appointment of New Treasurer

The role of the Trust's Treasurer was discussed:

- He or she would need knowledge of Sage, the accounting package used by the Trust
- He or she would not need to do the everyday book-keeping as this was handled by a book-keeper (currently Mrs Dora Marchment) with support from the Administrator
- He or she would be expected to maintain an overall vision of the Trust's finances and to control the flow of spending, in consultation with the Council
- Help with fund-raising would also be an important part of the role

MF noted that the Trust's constitution allowed for the employment of a Treasurer, in which case the role might be different from that outlined above.

It would be possible for a member of the Trust with an accounting background to undertake the role of Treasurer.

It was agreed to put out an appeal to the Membership. The Administrator was asked to draft a letter for the chairman to sign. It would then be sent to all members. Action: Administrator and Chairman

Ian Bliss of the Environment Agency was mentioned as a possible adviser on sources of funding.

GD raised the possibility of employing professional fund raisers; it was noted that when this had been tried in the past, it had not been successful.

AS mentioned John Phillips, one of the members, who had had some success in raising funds for other projects in which he was involved.

Funding for Stratford St Mary Lock

It was again noted that Colchester Borough Council, Dedham Parish Council and the Dedham Vale AONB Board were all keen to spread the tourist distribution further along the Dedham Vale, and might therefore be suitable bodies to approach for contributions towards the cost of new lock gates and the associated work required.

Sudbury to the Sea (S2C)

It was reported that all the paperwork was in place, as were the teams to manage the various locations along the river.

LRG had reported very low water at Cattawade, the finishing point. SB agreed to contact Essex and Suffolk Water to see if anything could be done. An alternative finishing point at the slipway on the other side of the main road was considered, but ruled out because of safety issues in crossing that road with canoes and people.

SB pointed out that the flow of water downstream from Flatford, caused by operating the lock might also help to alleviate the problem.

Stratford St Mary Lock

It was reported that all the work scheduled for the summer of 2015 had been completed and had gone well. Thanks were expressed to all those who had helped with the project. The plug at the end of the lock had been reinforced and work on the level of the shoal had been carried out. The dams had been removed at the request of the EA. Negotiations were ongoing to not cut stakes to river bed level and an answer was expected shortly.

It was noted that the next work to be done was the installation of wooden facing on the stone gabions, for which it was thought the Trust already had enough timber.

After that, it would be the installation of new gates and the re-opening of a working lock.

SBOC Report

The sign at the Henny Swan relating to who had priority for mooring at the jetty had been approved and would be installed.

SBOC would like to purchase boards and banners to publicise forthcoming events and £150 was granted for this purpose. Action: AS

Concern was expressed that the batteries on Edwardian Lady were not holding up over a full day. Discussion ensued about the correct way to deal with this issue. It was noted that new battery isolation switches had been fitted to Rosette and Trusty II, while Kathleen had already been fitted

with a similar switch. This action had improved the performance of the boats, following problems earlier in the season. It was suggested that Emrhys Barrell be consulted about further inspections to the boats. Action: MF to contact EB

David Kirkman was producing a list of works needed on the Sudbury based boats, with prices, which would be presented to the next Council meeting.

AR stated that he wanted to see operational control of the Sudbury based boats, including John Constable, to be vested in SBOC.

SBOC also requested a statement showing what their boats had earned, at the end of the season. Action: Administrator.

During the discussion, AR reminded everyone that overall financial control of the budget remained with Council.

RB pointed out that in 1997 the Trust was running one boat, it now ran six trip boats, plus two work boats.

SBOC requested that the excellent work now being done by Paul Brewerton in finding crews for Charters be minuted.

GD noted that while the Trust was growing, care should be taken that the fund raising machine didn't absorb all the money being raised. It would not be possible to fund raise for our ambitions from the day to day income; specific fund raising would be needed for each project.

Maintenance on John Constable – the vessel would be lifted out on 11 September and set on supports alongside the lock at Great Cornard. The lower lock lintel and its supports would be lifted out, using the same crane. JL noted that he would be running a ferry from the Granary that day, to save parking space at Cornard. Brian Kennell, who was heavily involved in the original restoration, would be present to inspect the condition of the boat, and to advise on a work schedule.

Lower River Group

MR reported on activity at Flatford and Dedham. Both boats had been busy with regular trips and charters.

The LRG committee had asked about the possibility of some form of credit card facility at Flatford and Dedham. A new form of machine was being advertised, though this would be dependent on a wireless signal. AS operated a similar type of machine and offered to test the signal strength next time he was in the appropriate areas. Action: AS

Problems were arising about river levels, with the National Trust asking the RST boat crews to operate Flatford Lock to ease the pressure on their sluices and to lower the river level. Similar requests had also been received from Mr G Lennox, the farmer working the land on the opposite side of the river. It was noted that the EA had requested that the NT remove the flashes on the top of their sluices, which was causing the problem. The NT had not taken this action, because it would affect the working of their Archimedes Screw, which generated electricity for the Mill. It was known that the Archimedes Screw had been installed incorrectly, and would not operate correctly.

LRG have been instructed not to operate the lock paddles for this purpose.

Flatford Lock had been inspected on the morning of 10 September, and it was found that the bottom gates were no longer leaking.

It was reported that Trusty had experienced problems with the propeller touching bottom in places, and that the river level could change appreciably within a two hour time span.

It was further reported that a stray dinghy appeared to have been abandoned on the jetty at The Boathouse.

Granary Refurbishment

It was agreed that the Trust would seek quotations for the work to be carried out, as soon as the plans were received.

Administrator's Report

It was noted that the Administrator (CB) was still awaiting her revised contract.

Emergency Contacts – following a power failure at The Granary during a wedding reception recently, when the bar staff were unable to access the appropriate fuse box, the Administrator proposed the setting up of a phone tree to alert the appropriate people, so that problems could be resolved. It was proposed that this should encompass keyholders, the bar contractor, suppliers such as an electrician, a plumber, the alarm company). It was agreed that the Administrator should put this in place.

Keyholder Knowledge – it had been discovered during the above incident, that some keyholders did not have sufficient knowledge to operate systems at The Granary. The Administrator proposed holding training sessions as appropriate to rectify this situation. Action: Administrator

Staff Holiday – CB requested holiday for the period 4 – 11 December 2015, plus a further 14 days which had to be taken before the end of December. JR had agreed to cover the 6 day period in December, by attending the office for a four hour period each day, claiming mileage expenses to do this.

Also noted were the functions which were already booked into the Granary during the period in question, plus the cover for these events which had been arranged.

Sage Training – it had previously been noted that the Administrator had agreed to undertake further training in the use of Sage. Research had been carried out on courses available, and after discussion it was agreed that the Trust would finance attendance at trainings offered by Sage Solutions Ltd in Ipswich. AR offered help with transport to Ipswich if required. Action: Administrator.

Membership Report

This was tabled. Acceptance was proposed by JL, seconded by GD, and approved unanimously.

Any Other Business

Replacement Fire Extinguishers – following quotes received from SAS and online suppliers, it was agreed to purchase extinguishers from SAS, but that AR would install them. Action: Administrator and AR

Date and Time of Next meeting

Thursday 15 October 2015 19:00 at the Visitor & Education Centre.