

**Minutes of the River Stour Trust Council meeting
held on Thursday 17 March 2016 at Visitor Education Centre, Great Cornard**

Those present: Emrhys Barrell (EB) – via Skype, Roger Brown (RB), Sue Brown (SB), Gordon Denney (GD), Bob Foster (BF), Jim Lunn (JL), John Morris (JM), Andrew Richardson (AR, Chairman), Mick Rogers (MR)

Taking Minutes: Catherine Burrows (CB, Administrator)

Observers: Pam Johnson, James Parkinson, Jane Rogers

1. **Apologies received from:** Mike Finch (MF), Mike Harrington-Spier (MHS)

2. **Confidential Business:** MF's paper.

Any Other Business:

- a. Flatford Lock Problem – JM (discussed under item 8)
- b. Car Park Closure – JM (discussed under item 4, Matters Arising - Gate at Cattawade)
- c. Sign at Cattawade – JM
- d. Tickets – JM
- e. Bure Portage – JM (discussed under item 8)
- f. Future of the Boat Operations Manager – JL (discussed as Confidential Item)
- g. EA information regarding Flood Drainage Consent applications – GD (discussed under item 8)

3. **Minutes of the meeting held on 11 February 2016**

Subject to a spelling correction (under item 12 'Correspondence' – should read 'Matters Arising' not 'Maters Arising')
MR proposed acceptance of the Minutes, seconded by BF; approved unanimously

It was agreed that no redactions were required for the minutes to be published online. **Action: CB**

4. **Matters arising from those Minutes of 11 February 2016**

It was **NOTED** MF's actions from the last meeting were covered in the paper he had submitted.

Cattawade Picnic Site – A supplier had been chosen but an alternative supplier was also being considered. **ACTION: JM**

Gate at Cattawade – JM said that it would be useful to have this in place before 1 July, ideally a couple of days beforehand because it was intended to close the car park with Council's approval.

Versadock – This had been ordered and payment was being posted after the meeting.

Volunteer Harbour Master – CB explained that this was lower on the list of priorities following Council's agreement at a previous meeting to switch padlocks at the VEC and therefore prohibit access to keyholders who had not paid their annual fees.

5. **New Trustee** – No longer applicable.

6. **Treasurer's Report & Appointment of New Treasurer**

The balances on the bank accounts (as at 9 March 2016 at 16:42) were circulated. Note: This does not reflect the true position of Trust finances, as it includes deposits for future events and does not include uncleared cheques. CB had investigated the sum of £750.00 in unreturned breakage deposits and confirmed all three affected customers had been contacted and their deposits refunded.

MF has spoken to our bookkeeper and it was apparent that she cannot take on any more duties - to assist the Treasurer's job - than she does at present. SB had tried to entice someone into taking on the role of Treasurer but unfortunately our activities and finances were on a larger scale than they felt comfortable handling. AR said he had been told that someone else aligned to the RST had expressed an interest but he had no further information. SB had been in touch with Colchester and Suffolk Volunteer Bureaus. It was agreed that RST needed to recruit both a Treasurer and a Fundraiser. EB suggested contacting Probus clubs too. **ACTION: SB**

Payroll Software – CB confirmed that our licence had been renewed for a year with 12Pay at a cost of £132.00; and this included the Automatic Enrolment add-on for the pension scheme. Other software had proved to be far more expensive and not justifiable for 2 members of staff.

Pension Auto-Enrolment – MF had prepared some notes about this and it was noted that 12Pay payroll software had limited pension providers: NEST, AVIVA, NOW, Scottish Widows, Standard Life, People's Pensions, Friend's Life. It was felt that more research was required on the pros and cons of each provider. It was **NOTED** that MF advised getting this set up before the staging deadline of October. **ACTION: EB to seek advice on the aforementioned pension providers.**

EA Partnership Agreement – MF had signed the partnership agreement relating to Dedham and SSM works (SSM lock and a culvert at Dedham, which would improve access to the canoe portage point by Dedham lock) as it could mean £9500 for the RST. CB confirmed that she has issued the EA an invoice for this figure following a purchase order confirmation from Ian Bliss.

Veolia – GD reminded Council that Gareth Cole had said Veolia had funds set aside for Dedham but this had not been followed up since his resignation in August and no relevant paperwork had been given to RST. **ACTION: GD**

7. Recent and Forthcoming Events

LRG Open Meeting, Dedham on 18 February – This had been a great success and enjoyed by those that attended. Bar sales had paid for the venue and to date RST had received £74.48 in donations as well as a new member. CB said it would be good to have similar events at various points along the river where RST does not have as much visibility.

Walk 'n' Water, Sudbury on 12 April – A walking and boating event between Sudbury and Great Henny. A similar event is intended for the lower river in the summer months. JM said to consider the Suffolk side from Flatford for the walking element as being more interesting than walking the Lawford side.

Social Evenings/Events – CB said these were well attended and Jam Tartz had been running the bar without charging RST. These activities did increase CB's workload and while certain tasks needed to be completed by CB there were certainly tasks that did not. CB requested that organisers take an active role in the organising of events. **ACTION: AR to relay this message to AS.**

8. Stratford St Mary, Dedham & Flatford Locks & Portages

Stratford St Mary Lock – GD explained that a new system was in place from 6 April 2016 and FDC was being replaced by a permit system. He was pleased to report that the work at SSM might well be exempt (clearing lock chamber and dredging) but this could only be known by contacting the National Customer Centre. The work would either be judged as exempt or a bespoke consent would be required at a cost of £170 + £40 per activity. Therefore, the lock gates would certainly incur a cost but hopefully this would not apply to the dredging and stop logs. It was hoped to start work on the site from mid-July following the approval of the EA.

Dedham Lock – The EA does not know who is opening the sluices but paddlers have been observed shooting through. BF said residents were being incorrectly advised that the river authority (EA) is responsible and the management company has no liability. JM said that he intends to keep in contact with Stephen Bunting who is now a resident at Dedham Mill and is keen for the lock to be restored.

Flatford Lock – JM said that a loose baulk of timber on the offside upper gate side was potentially an accident waiting to happen. It was not an issue when the gate was open but someone could fall in when it is closed. **ACTION: RB** MF and Ian Whale had attended another site meeting and there was no further progress to report. MF's paper said it appeared to be a case of determining who was legally responsible as no party wanted to take action in case it amounts to an admission of liability.

Stratford St Mary Portage – It was reported that the EA were considering closing this portage as unsafe.

Dedham Portage – BF had sent the required information to the EA and suggested that RST offer to undertake the work because the costs will be far lower. **ACTION: BF**

Bures Portage – BF and RB had met with Nick Temple, the landowner, following an EA request for RST to liaise regarding this issue. A simpler version for the portage re-design was proposed and it was suggested that RST volunteers could carry out the work whilst the EA pay for the materials. There was some concern that liability would transfer to RST if our design was implemented. BF said a certified engineer could be engaged for circa £100 as had been the case with Dedham portage. GD commented that the EA had a forthcoming meeting with Nick Temple so it was decided that RST would wait until EA had concluded its negotiations. RST would then need to establish whether EA retains ongoing liability for the portage should our design be accepted by all relevant parties.

9. Boat Operations

MF was in the process of arranging BSS renewal inspections for Edwardian Lady and Kathleen. **ACTION: MF**

EB had informed MF that some of the boats need extra restraints so the batteries cannot move in extreme conditions. **ACTION: MF**

Sudbury Boat Operations – JL informed the Council that the minutes did not record that he was asked to leave the meeting even though he had pointed this out when an initial draft was circulated. JL was under the impression that SBOC members had a private discussion about the abolition of his role as RST Boat Operations Manager. The main consensus was that this was unacceptable and could not be condoned. The worsening situation between SBOC and

the Council (particularly aimed at two Trustees) needed to be resolved. This was discussed further as a Confidential item.

Lower River Group – A social event on 1 July was being planned and Council **AGREED** to the closure of Cattawade Picnic Site a few days beforehand (hopefully using the new gate yet to be constructed by RB). Further details would be circulated nearer the time.

It is planned to return Kathleen to the water before the Grand National. Council was pleased to learn that this year Le Talbooth is permitting charters from their jetty even if they are not to receive any custom from the charter passengers. Dedham Boathouse is keen to offer midweek wedding charters using Stour Trusty II.

Emma Black (Dedham Vale AONB & Stour Valley Project) will support grants toward the restoration of the channel alongside Cattawade Picnic Site. **ACTION: JM to contact Essex & Suffolk Water.**

It was **NOTED** that JM congratulated RB on the work undertaken to the overflow car park which now meant that the area would only need a trim before S2C this year.

10. Granary Refurbishment

CB circulated the most recent plan that did require a couple of minor tweaks but was otherwise the final design. The discussion with the architect, Barry Whymark, was outlined and this included his recommendation to use a main contractor to oversee all aspects of the renovation, rather than sub-contracting the work ourselves. He can suggest contractors and we should be able to specify our chosen electrician. He did not think that the building would need to be completely closed during the renovation as work could be restricted during certain times and portable toilets could be temporarily installed; meaning the income from our weekly hirers would be retained. It was **NOTED** that MR stressed the importance of a penalty clause in the contract should the work not being completed within a specified timeframe.

SB proposed acceptance of the architect's fees to date (£900 plus VAT); and also to appoint his services as Project Manager for the renovation at a cost of 4% of the contractor's final account plus VAT, seconded by JL; approved unanimously.

11. Administrator's Report *(Some items discussed under other items so not replicated here)*

Mooring & Storage – the majority of people using this facility had now paid but there were still long overdue payees. Council **AGREED** that the VEC keyed padlock should be replaced with a combination padlock. This would mean that a code for accessing either venue would be needed and codes can be changed as required without additional cost. **ACTION: CB to look into suitable replacement padlock.** EB suggested checking with RST solicitor that the current policy/terms & conditions were watertight, especially as these included retention and potential sale of craft for non-payment.

CB referred to one of the craft mooring owners, Dennis Watts, and his recent conversations with Jo Parkinson (at the EA). He had been in touch regarding the river levels and water quality between the Quay Theatre and Sudbury Rowing Club. Dennis Watts was under the impression that the EA would work in cooperation with the RST to remedy the issues and an emphasis on the distinction between silt removal and dredging was highlighted because the EA is more likely to get involved with the former and not the latter. It was understood that Jo Parkinson will contact RST to arrange a visit in the warmer months to assess and discuss ways to improve the situation.

Granary Renovation – Further to information relayed under item 10, CB suggested that the membership should be informed about the project. This would explain that the venue has outgrown its facilities and as one of the RST's primary income streams it really needed reinvestment. We could ask whether there was anyone with contacts/skills to assist.

Wedding Packages Update – Following the fee increase, the actual inclusion of our boats for these functions was also to be changed. Instead of 1 boat for 4 hours or 2 boats for 2 hours, we shall offer a crewed 8 passenger boat for 2 consecutive hours. Additional boats, larger capacity boat or additional charter time would incur an extra charge.

Granary Fire Exit Doors – There were two quotes for this: Chilton Joinery quote of £3766.37 (inc. VAT) included fitting and utilised existing ironmongery; whilst Middleton Joinery quote of £4320 (inc. VAT) excluded fitting. The Middleton Joinery quote was missing the expected details of a fitter and CB apologised for belatedly noticing that the Chilton Joinery quote was for only one door. **ACTION: CB to follow up.**

S2C 2016 – Gordon Hardy (Outdoor Hire Centre) has offered to donate use of either 14 sit on top kayaks (1 person) or 6 canoes (2 adults, 2 children). He has said that RST can sub-let them to customers and retain the income it generates. Customers will need to agree to his usual hire terms and collect from The Boathouse at Ballingdon but he will oversee collection of the craft from Cattawade. This could be in addition to the craft hire service offered by Whoosh Explore and River Stour Boating CIC.

Sales – Adrian Walters has a second book that we can add to our sales range (£3.70 per copy to be sold at £5.00). Also a DVD called 'A Journey Through Constable Country' has been produced by David Webb and was partially filmed on our boats. RST is mentioned and thanked in the credits so should we like to add this to our sales range then we can retain £5.00 from each sale (retails at £14.99). The producer, David Webb, is also happy to cover the postage and

packaging costs of any online sales we process. Council **AGREED** to re-stock and add to the RST sales range with a small order of both the Adrian Walters books and the DVD. **ACTION: CB**

Quay Lane Trust (QLT) – CB said the QLT secretary, Tim Regester, was not responding to email requests for copies of the minutes from past meetings and also for the RST Administrator to be added to the circulation list. This was simply to assist with management of The Granary since hirers use the Quay Lane car park. **ACTION: AR to follow up.**

Section 106 Meeting – Either 19 or 26 April was to be the date of the next meeting at the VEC. CB asked whether anyone could attend on behalf of RST. **ACTION: CB to circulate details.**

12. Correspondence

Email from the EA (already circulated) – This is referred to in MF's paper. The email is about a working party to look again at the transfer of EA navigations to Canal & River Trust (CRT) and will hopefully lead to progress in the handover. It was **NOTED** that MF has asked the EA to pass on a request from RST to talk to this working party and to stress the world-wide importance of the Stour when it gets established.

MF's resignation as Secretary and Trustee – Discussed as a Confidential item.

13. Membership report

JL proposed acceptance of the new members, seconded by SB; approved unanimously.

14. Any Other Business

a) Stability Test for Kathleen – JM – not discussed?

b) Flatford Lock Problem – discussed under item 8.

c) Car Park Closure – discussed under item 4, Matters Arising - Gate at Cattawade.

d) Sign at Cattawade – This referred to the large empty display board that was long overdue being filled with information about RST for visitors to see. **ACTION: LRG**

e) Tickets – This refers to tickets issued to boat trip customers who prepay for their boat trip and need to present this as proof to the bankside/boat volunteers. BF has found a supplier who can provide 1000 personalised tickets (with RST logo and text) for a total of £60.00. Council **AGREED** to this expenditure. **ACTION: BF.**

f) Bure Portage – discussed under item 8.

g) Future of the Boat Operations Manager – Discussed as a Confidential item.

h) EA information regarding Flood Drainage Consent applications – discussed under item 8.

i) Drones – JM informed Council that he was in touch with an aerial photographer who was keen to take images along the River Stour. Permissions were being sought in order to take off from certain points and there would be no charge to RST.

15. Date of next meeting:

Thursday 14 April 2016, at Dedham, venue TBC

16. Confidential Items – The three observers left the meeting before the discussion began.

There being no further business (after the Confidential discussion), the meeting closed at 22.40pm