

**Minutes of the River Stour Trust Council meeting  
held on Thursday 5 May 2016 at Visitor Education Centre, Great Cornard**

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

Taking Minutes: Catherine Burrows (CB, Administrator)

Observers: Mike Finch, Brenda Graham, David Kirkman, Pam Johnson, James Parkinson, John Phillips

1. **Apologies received:** Gordon Denney (GD), Mike Harrington-Spier (MHS)
2. **Confidential Business:** Appended to these minutes.

**Any Other Business:**

- a. Weedcutting
- b. FJ Stability Test

**3. Minutes of the meeting held on 14 April 2016**

**JL proposed acceptance of the Minutes, seconded by MR; approved unanimously**

It was agreed that the removal of the Confidential items was all that was required for the minutes to be published online. **Action: CB**

**4. Matters arising from those Minutes of 14 April 2016**

- Apology - It was **NOTED** that AR gave apologies to SC for not introducing at the start of previous Council meeting. He had mistakenly assumed that she knew everyone else because her husband is a long time member and volunteer.
- Sudbury-Cornard Riverside Footpath Link – AR understood that the funds for this project have been transferred to a late night bus service instead. It was confirmed that the funds have to be used for transport related purposes and the new proposal was still in the planning stages.
- Bakers Mill Project – Council was made aware that Suffolk County Council will not support a waterbus because they believe it to be tourism based rather than a public service.
- RSUG – LRG are happy to put forward a representative for these meetings. **ACTION: CB to send information to LRG about RSUG.**

**5. Treasurer's Report & Draft Accounts**

SC explained that she can access the RST Sage account and a Prior Year Report was circulated. Different reports would follow once SC has become accustomed to the business set up and ascertained what the Council would like to see.

Mike Finch still needs to be removed from the bank accounts and SC to be set up as a signatory. AR said that SC needs to visit the bank with two forms of identification. Mike Finch interjected that this is only useful after the mandate form is completed and signed by at least two current signatories. **ACTION: CB to download and print the form for AR and JL to sign tonight as they will be away next week.**

AGM Draft Accounts

The Trustee's Report had not been prepared so Council was unable to comment on this. **ACTION: AR to rite and circulate the report.**

Required Amendments/Queries

- Add JM and BF to the list of Trustees
- Delete Structure, Governance & Management heading and sentence on page 2.
- The high boat operations expenditure figure of £26,000 was queried. It was suggested that this included repairs to Cornard Lock and some members felt that it should be included under that category.
- It was pointed out Stratford St Mary finances were also mistakenly not evident throughout the document.

There was some discussion about Restricted Income Funds and Irrecoverable VAT. Mike Finch explained that the latter relates to last year's VAT Audit. This had resulted in RST being classified as a partly exempt business with a

difference between business and non-business activities. RST must undertake calculations to work out how much tax can be recovered. Mike Finch said over £2billion is lost to charities due to irrecoverable VAT. It was pointed out that, even though use of powered craft is limited along that stretch, RST might struggle to prove that SSM Lock is solely for RST use. The VAT Audit and the subsequent change to our VAT status came about because of the Flatford Lock renovation.

[Additional explanatory notes: VAT incurred on purchases that are used exclusively for non-business purposes is not input tax and cannot be recovered. VAT on purchases that you use partly for business purposes and partly for non-business purposes must normally be apportioned between business and non-business use before dealing with partial exemption. More information can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/vat-notice-706-partial-exemption/vat-notice-706-partial-exemption>]

The difficulty interpreting and understanding the information set out in the accounts was shared by those present. Council was informed that accountants must refer to the rules of the Statement of Recommended Practice and this determines the format of the accounts.

**ACTION: AR and SC to visit Carol Green (Peyton Tyler Mears) within the next couple of weeks to discuss the accounts and queries.**

## 6. Recent and Forthcoming Events

SBOC 2016 Special Events – CB was unable to verify the status of these events. AS has stepped down from the role of SBO Publicity as he is unable to meet the requirements of the role alongside his increased workload and personal commitments. It was understood that MHS has taken over the role. **ACTION: MHS.**

## 7. AGM

This is due to take place on Wednesday 22 June, 7pm for 7.30pm, at The Granary. The Advance Notice must be received by all RST members no later than Wednesday 11 May and CB expressed concern about the deadline as it was short notice and had not been factored into her working week. The paperwork had not yet been provided and would need to be outsourced for printing. The mailing would also be time consuming due to the franking machine not having an automatic feeder. It was decided to finalise the paperwork during a break in the meeting.

**ACTION: AR, JL (and any other willing volunteers) to arrange meeting at the VEC on Saturday in order to complete the mailing.**

It was necessary to know whether there were any nominations for Council in order to send ballot papers to members 2 weeks before the meeting. Nomination and proxy forms would also be needed for the membership.

AR named the Trustees due to stand down at the AGM with the option to stand for re-election as:

- AR (choosing to stand down)
- JL (standing for re-election) and;
- RB (standing for re-election)

AR reminded Council that the role of Company Secretary must be filled because it is a legal requirement.

**[Meeting adjourned for CB to locate previous versions of AGM paperwork and print off Bank Mandate Form]**

At this point AR stated that he wished to resign from Council effective immediately. This left Council without a Chairman, so the following day, Friday 6 May, the rest of the Trustees held an email ballot and unanimously elected JM to be the interim Chairman until the first Council Meeting after the AGM on 22 June 2016. At that meeting the new Council will formally elect a new Chairman.

It was **NOTED** that the Council wish to put on record their appreciation to Andrew for his time as Chairman, and his continuing support as a member of the Trust.

Following AR's decision there was discussion about which Trustees would now need to stand down at the AGM.

**ACTION: JM to notify CB at the end of the meeting about the changes required for this year's Advance Notice in order to enable its printing and mailing to be undertaken the next day and/or Saturday.**

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

Stratford St Mary Lock – RB reported that GD might have been slightly misled in regards to the new flood defence application process being simpler. GD is seeking funding for the project and is also struggling to obtain three quotes for the work to satisfy the funders' requirements. One of the contractors is also quoting only for

steel gates but it was thought the use of this material as opposed to wood would be challenged by organisations seeking to retain the traditional and historical appearance of the area.

Dedham Lock – No further progress to report

Flatford Lock – It was reported that the field is now flooded again. There is also an unconfirmed rumour that the flashers are to be removed by the EA possibly as soon as next week. It was pointed out the water level would need to be lowered for this to happen.

## 9. Boat Operations

**Sudbury Boat Operations** – SB reported that breakaway cables had been purchased and fitted to the Sudbury boat trailers because not doing so could have incurred 3 points on the license of the driver/s towing the trailer/s. Council were informed that there would be no boats for short trips this Sunday because 3 boats were being used for a large group booking for the Henny Swan Lunch Cruise. It had been planned to use JC for half hour trips at The Granary but this had been shelved since it was still out of action. However, during yesterday's charter, JL and some SBOC members discussed the possibility of operating JC with just one working motor because all JC crew are trained to handle the boat with poles in the event of motor failure. Concerns were expressed about operating the boat effectively alongside other river users JL said that one working motor was powerful enough to stop the boat if needed. A test run would take place from the VEC to The Granary and its use would be subject to weather condition. A minimum of three crew were required and it looked unlikely that this would be achieved. Discussion ensued about the fault with the motor and when it would be possible to bring JC back into service. EB explained he and his colleague, Ian Rutter, were not prepared to undertake further work on the boats until it had been established that their work and motives were fully in the RST's favour. This decision followed an SBOC member finding fault in Council passing the work to EB's company because he is a RST member, Trustee and Vice President; and the RST has a policy to obtain three contractor quotes. There should have been a swift response to this because the RST has always had preferred suppliers when it is known they offer the best deal. But there was no follow up response and this had resulted in an unpleasant atmosphere and snide comments when EB visited to assist with the FJ stability assessment. EB had asked more than once for the Chairman to respond and CB was keen to point out that alternative suppliers cannot match the prices or skills provided by EB and IR (items charged at cost price, no charge for labour, travel and overnight stays). EB stated that he could not undertake further work until it was proven why his company as a preferred supplier on the basis of competitive quotes.

[John Phillips left]

RB expressed concern that SBOC were suggesting that an electrical contractor without specific knowledge on boats would be suitable to work on the boats. He reminded Council that Trusty's charger was damaged when it was worked on by an automotive electrician. David Kirkman explained that it had been suggested to engage a competent electrician last year but the boat electrics were removed without notice to be worked on by EN and IR. However, there is no issue with the quality of the work and all the boats are working very well. However, this did not detract from the claim that Council were wrong to engage EB's company and EB was getting a financial benefit from his RST position. JM and CB had started the process of obtaining competitive quotes but further information was required to carry on. **ACTION: JM/CB to follow up with Seamark Nunn and Barden UK with EB providing further details, as required.**

**Lower River Group** – The floating pontoon will be built tomorrow and the first wedding charter is on Saturday week.

## 10. Granary Refurbishment

The revised Listed Building Application has been submitted and hasn't been formally registered yet. The architect said he would be sending out the work schedules to the builders giving 3 weeks to submit prices (expected by 27th May) which should still be 4 weeks or so before Listed Building Consent is expected.

## 11. Administrator's Report

Granary Fire Exit Doors - Mike Finch and James Parkinson have sourced replacement hinges to be fitted within the next week or so. It is hoped this will make a significant difference to the usability of the doors. This will also enable time to plan a redesign of the doors that would make replacements less expensive i.e. adding side panels to the arched shape and squaring off the door. AR can advise on the health and safety aspects to meet safety regulations.

Magazine coverage – CB circulated hard copies of two glossy magazine featuring promotional articles and photos about the RST that had been prepared by EB.

- Waterways World is available for sale/by subscription and included a 3 page article in its March 2016 edition.
- Bury & West Suffolk current edition features a 2 page article. It is free to people visiting Waitrose (Bury, Newmarket and Sudbury) Bury and Newmarket's Marks and Spencer, Debenhams, Boots, Sainsbury's and the Apex. In addition copies have been distributed to The Apex, shops, cafes, restaurants, farm shops and car showrooms plus copies are being hand delivered to select homes in West Suffolk.

**12. Correspondence** – None to report.

### **13. Membership report**

It was **NOTED** that the Membership Secretary had not been informed the meeting was brought forward a week.

### **14. Any Other Business**

- a) Weedcutting – Green Blue Marine (GBM) are ceasing this service and are offering RST first refusal on the wedding cutting equipment. Should RST like to consider taking over this activity then James Parkinson has volunteered and it was hoped that Jeff Burroughs would be able to oversee training. It was pointed out the Sudbury Rowing Club (SRC) Regatta would not go ahead if weedcutting was not carried out. SRC did contribute toward the costs of the weedcutting and had also provided volunteers to assist. The cost of other contractors was much higher than GBM largely due to travel and transportation costs. The issue of disposal of the weed was also another factor as this was reliant on good relations with landowners. It was pointed out that the EA could cease with its weedcutting operation on the lower river unless there was a flooding risk to homes. It was felt that RST needed more information about the processes, regulations, etc before being able to commit to purchasing any of the equipment. **ACTION: RB to speak with JB**
- b) Francis J stability test – JL explained that Steve Moffatt undertakes the inspections for our Boat Safety Certificates and has recently offered his services for testing FJ's stability. Apparently he carries our testing for the MCA. He has tested pontoon boats in the past and suggests that the 7 degree test would apply to FJ. The main consensus was that it would be desirable to have an independent surveyor put forward their recommendation for the capacity of the boat and get it officially certified. David Kirkman mentioned that he had chatted to a professional marine surveyor (in Holland) who had claimed that he could work remotely on the survey from measurements and photographs sent to him. He had also suggested that moving the centreline would help with FJ's stability. Once a stability test was completed then it would be possible to establish what could be achieved with a redesign. There were some queries as to how the data was collected i.e. where people were placed on the boat including consideration of the cut outs and foredeck areas as well as how the freeboard is measured on a circular pontoon. There was also the interpretation of the Small Passenger Boat Code and its bearing on the testing.  
**BF proposed that RST contract Steve Moffatt, subject to his method being acceptable to RST, seconded by JL; approved unanimously**  
**ACTION: MR to speak to Steve Moffatt about the queries raised and his interpretation of Small Passenger Boat Code.**
- c) Company Secretary – Since AR's resignation during the meeting, the RST no longer had a Company Secretary. MR suggested that Jane Rogers might be willing to take on this role. AR said he could forward on the information that Mike Finch had prepared to assist with JR's decision. **ACTION: JM to follow up.**

### **15. Date of next meeting:**

Thursday 16 June 2016, at The Grove, Grove Hill, Dedham

NB: BF kindly offered use of his personal residence to ensure good mobile and internet reception to enable EB's participation via Skype.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 22.30pm