

Minutes of the meeting of the Council of The River Stour Trust

Held on Thursday 13 October 2016, at the VEC, Great Cornard

Those present: John Morris (JM, in the chair), Paul Brewerton (PB), Roger Brown (RB), Susan Brown (SB), Gordon Denney (GD), Robert Foster (RF), Pam Johnson (PJ), David Kirkman (DK), James Lunn (JL), James Parkinson (JP), John Phillips (JPh), Malcolm Rogers (MR). Jane Rogers (JR, Co Secretary, taking notes), Catherine Burrows (CB, Administrator).

Peter Evans, Trust Member attended the first part of the meeting.

Apologies from: Michael Finch (Trading Company Project), Andrew Sheldon (Granary Project), Graham Simmons

It was not possible, on this occasion, to connect Skype for Emrhys Barrell to attend the meeting.

Peter Evans was invited to address the meeting about issues concerning work carried out on the River by the EA and Dedham Vale AONB, which would have a deleterious effect on the flow of the river at Wissington/Wormingford. Mr Evans described his plans as a private individual to campaign for this work to be removed, and the river to be restored to its position as at 3 October 2016. He supplied photographic images on CD, for the Trust to use in its own actions regarding this work. He offered his help in any campaign which the Trust set up, and suggested that it would be more effective if the Trust and he worked alongside each other.

JM thanked Mr Evans for his work thus far.

Minutes of the meeting held on 8 September 2016

The Minutes were agreed as a correct record of the meeting.

It was agreed to redact the items listed for redaction from the previous meeting. The Minutes could then be posted on the Trust website, as usual.

Matters arising from those Minutes

Closure of gates at Cattawade Picnic Site. New arrangements would have to be made as the local resident involved was not now willing to act on the Trust's behalf. **Action: JM**

Pension for Administrator: It was confirmed that the pension plan would be in place in time for the October payday. **Action: JR**

Water Framework Directive: This led to the works at Wiston/Wormingford which had caused upset. GD has agreed to liaise with the EA on this subject on behalf of the Trust. JM had received an apology from the DVAONB that the Trust had not been consulted about the works, and the fact that the Trust had not received the appropriate documentation until five days before the work commenced. **Action: GD**

Item 14a: Payment had been received from the insurers in respect of the loss of Laurie B. It was noted that no-one had yet come forward to manage S2C 2017.

Item 14f: It had not yet been possible for Alan Thomas to attend an SBOC meeting. It was noted that he had not yet been appointed, and not yet invited to attend a Council meeting.

Item 14g: No progress on land at SSM Swan.

Item 14h: There had been no response to the request for suggestions for celebrations for the Trust's 50th anniversary.

Treasurer's Report

JM had produced a spreadsheet illustrating the Trust's current income and planned expenditure, which showed that the Trust would be in deficit in 2017. He pointed out that he had revised the staff wages figure to allow for a part-time Assistant Administrator, based on 20 hours per week. JM then referred to a list of issues/challenges which the Trust had, and led a discussion on prioritising these, in terms of financial outlay and importance to the running of the Trust.

Granary Refurbishment – GD reported that it had not yet been possible to find grant funding for the structural work, although he was about to submit a bid to a last possible fund. Funding was in place for the electrical equipment required. Problems in securing funding had arisen because the Trust was not spending a sufficient percentage of income raised on funding our mission of restoration and conservation of the River Stour.

Stratford St Mary Lock – GD reported that our bids for funding for lock gates, etc. from Corey and Veolia had reached Stage 2, but we would not know the outcome from Corey until January, and from Veolia until February 2017. The bridge associated with the lock project had received a grant of £500.00 from Essex and Suffolk Water.

Various opinions on funding were offered, including borrowing either to fund a project, or to borrow as needed, or fund raising through the Trading Company. Concern was expressed that the Trust would be in difficulty if all the money we had in reserve was spent. Doubt was also expressed concerning the Trust's abilities to borrow money.

JM pointed out that this discussion highlighted the need for a Treasurer, who could manage our funding, and provide an overview of financial matters. RF offered, in the interim, to look at pulling together figures for the end of the current financial year, and it was agreed that a review of how our income and expenditure were recorded should be carried out.

After discussion, it was agreed that:

- The Granary Project would go ahead, as planned. Proposed by JPh and unanimously accepted
- Stratford St Mary Lock would only go ahead if funding was received, but that work would continue so that everything was ready for the gates to be installed as soon as funding was available
- The Bridge at Stratford St Mary would be built, because this would improve access to the lock site, and facilitate the transport of brides to the Talbooth as part of the LRG activities. It was also noted that Essex and Suffolk Water were in favour of this work. Access to the bridge would be restricted, and supervised by RTS personnel
- A part-time administrator, initially on 16 hours per week, with a fixed six-month contract, would be appointed, to start work early in 2017. CB was thanked for all the work she does for the Trust. DK proposed and it was accepted with one abstention.

Notes from the discussions:

JPh suggested making more use of the Granary, to increase income. JM pointed out that it would be good to have someone promoting the building and its facilities.

Andrew Sheldon had noted that he was awaiting quotes for electrical equipment for the Granary kitchen. GD expressed concern that if the Trust didn't move on this, funding might be withdrawn.

Action: GD to liaise with AS

Various options of funding were discussed.

Legal costs: GD warned Council that it might be necessary to ask for legal advice in connection with the Wiston/Wormingford problem, and that this would incur expenditure.

SB reported that she had been in touch with the IWA about issue and had been referred to John Pomphret of the IWA. She would be in contact with him imminently. He is an environmental consultant who helps the IWA. It was agreed that she keep GD informed.

Stratford St Mary, Dedham and Flatford Locks

SSM Lock – GD reported that all the planning permission applications were in, as well as applications for EA permits. Essex and Suffolk Water had lodged a complaint, concerning the amount of water which would be used. This was not unexpected and should not cause a problem. The EA had already granted permission for the proposed bridge. Work was currently in progress moving soil around and also digging out the silt from the lock chamber, now that the water had been pumped out. The final applications would need copies of the accounts, plus articles of association, and would be submitted in November 2016. GD and MF would be meeting with Corey and Veolia early in 2017 to discuss funding. Thanks were expressed to all those who had laboured on the project so far.

Dedham and Flatford Locks – nothing to report

Boat Operations:

SBOC – Minutes of their last meeting had been circulated. It was noted that Paul Brewerton had been appointed Chairman of SBOC.

DK raised the question of a reward for boat crews, in the light of the tearoom ladies' outing. It was agreed that table drinks would be supplied for the SBOC laying up lunch in January. JPh stated that it was very important to recognise and value the work done by our volunteers.

PJ and JP mentioned the BBQ they were planning to hold at the VEC on 29 October for SBOC and LRG, and the lack of response so far. It was agreed that the invitation be recirculated. **ACTION: CB** Winter storage for boats – the owner had not yet repaired the barn doors. It was agreed that SBOC would undertake this work, and PB was authorised to organise the operation. Although JP pointed out that we should have three quotes for the work, it was agreed that, in view of the shortness of time before the boats would be taken out of the water, in this instance it would not be needed. In preparation for the lifting out of the boats, all the trailers had been overhauled and were now ready for use. JP requested permission to use FJ's trailer to move the Versadock back to the VEC, which was agreed.

DK reported that the pontoons on FJ would be tested this winter, to ascertain their condition. It was agreed that this should be done, so that we knew whether it was worth rebuilding the superstructure in the winter of 2017-18. Should the pontoons fail the testing, further thought would have to be given to the future of FJ.

LRG – Minutes of their last meeting had been circulated. A query was raised about Trusty's policy of using a central mooring line. It was agreed that the BOM and LRG would meet to discuss this.

Operating Manuals – it was agreed that JL would arrange a meeting with both SBOC and LRG to discuss the current Manuals.

Problems with water ingress on Kathleen had been noted and would be resolved during winter maintenance.

Dedham Portage – after much discussion on repairs to this, it was agreed that RST would take no further action, as the EA were going to install steps and had built up the banking. No bridges would be picked up at Dedham in future, as the site at Stratford was more appropriate, and would be even better when the bridge had been built.

Dedham Lock – the EA had suggested a joint meeting to plan future works on this structure.

Administrator's Report

The Rateable Value on both buildings had been reviewed, following the Valuation Office Agency's revaluation. There would be no change to the VEC payments, but it was agreed to query the figure for the Granary, as the specification had been changed, and there was a large increase in rateable value. **ACTION: CB AND JR**

EA commission: in the year to August, we had earned £200 commission on the sale of EA licences and maps, plus £51 on posting out of maps.

Fishing in Granary Cut – the Trust are the riparian owners of the river bed, and the associated fishing rights. It had been noted that people had been fishing without permission and had been abusive when challenged. It was suggested that we erect signs on the edges of the Granary deck to announce Private, and No Fishing. It was agreed that JR would write to Eden Rose Coppice Trust and Sudbury and Long Melford Angling Associations to tell them about the status of the water. It might be possible to suggest to Eden Rose, who would like to buy a small piece of land at the head of the cut, that we exchange land on the edge of the river. Further investigations needed. **ACTION: JL**
Rosette Wedding Package – this has been amended to include only Rosette, and two consecutive hours, instead of four hours, which could be split.

Membership Report

Three new members were proposed and accepted. The whole report was then accepted.

Trading Company

No progress

Company Secretary's Report

S2C – overall went very well, with an estimated profit of £5,500. A de-brief meeting was held on 5 October, the result of which will be incorporated into a 'How to Run s2c' manual. This will be available before Christmas.

Security – the previous company supplying and servicing our security system and fire protection has gone into liquidation. Research is on-going to find a replacement.

Insurance – JC's insurance has been renewed. The IWA has been asked for a full list of the policies we hold, and their renewal dates, so we can budget accordingly.

Incident Report Forms – currently there are no copies. It was agreed that the form would be reviewed by JL, then more copies would be produced, as soon as possible.

Holiday Cover for the Administrator - the office will be manned on a part-time basis while the Administrator is on holiday from 17 October, for one week.

Administrator's Pension – this will take effect from payday on 27 October 2016.

Correspondence – none received.

Recent and Forthcoming Events

JM reported on a talk he had given at the London Canal Museum, which was well received.

Katherine's Quay – Simon Pearson had been unable to assemble his family to name the quay this year, so had booked two boats for Easter Sunday, 16 April 2017.

Sky Arts programme – Sky Arts came to the Dedham Vale to film, for a programme based around Constable's work 'Scene on a Navigable River', recently. Richard E Grant was filmed rowing on the river with Trusty II in the background, and JM led the film crew on a ramble between Flatford, East Bergholt and Dedham. A donation of £400 has been promised.

Any Other Business

John Constable – DK reported that the boat would be up and running in 2017; he asked about the possibility of a cover, which could be used only if it rained, and not left up all the time. JM suggested that he obtain prices for such a cover. **ACTION: DK**

Stability tests on Trusty II – the report was now in but was to be challenged. Work was to be carried out and the craft re-tested.

Henny Swan Jetty – this is owned by the pub, although it had been built some years ago by the Trust. John Mills had drawn up a plan and made a model, to show repairs and improvements; he had also supplied costings. It was agreed that DK and PB would visit the Swan to show them the plans, and to ask for a financial contribution towards the plan. **ACTION: DK and PB**

Wissington/Wormingford - GD and MF had arranged to meet with Will Akast of the EA Environmental team to discuss the work at Wissington/Wormingford, with a reasoned and reasonable approach. Following this meeting, they proposed a further meeting with the Environmental team, the Navigation team and their lawyers. If this approach failed, then the Trust would be seeking legal advice. The Trust would be looking for restoration to the status of the river as on 3 October 2016. **ACTION: GD and MF**

Transfer from EA to CRT Navigation Responsibility – PB queried whether the CRT would be more likely to be supportive of our approaches re Wissington/Wormingford. GD reminded the meeting that CRT was a charity, and would also be unlikely to get involved in anything they could not support financially. JM has a contact in the CRT and will make initial approaches. **ACTION: JM**

A donation of £100.00 had been received from 1st Bures Scout Group, in gratitude for help given by John Mills on the repair of their jetty.

Lock Lintel – A further appeal was issued for a new editor. **ACTION: ALL**

Date and time of next meeting: Thursday 10 November, 7.00 pm at the VEC.