

RIVER STOUR TRUST

Meeting of Council held on Thursday, 19 January 2017, at the VEC, Great Cornard

Those present: Sue Brown (in the chair, SB), Emrhys Barrell (EB), Paul Brewerton (PB), Roger Brown (RB), Gordon Denney (GD), Bob Foster (BF), Pam Johnson (PJ), David Kirkman (DK), Mick Rogers (MR), Graham Simmons (Treasurer, GS), Catherine Burrows (Trust Administrator), Jane Rogers (Company Secretary, taking notes, JR)

Observing: Brian Cornell (BC), Alan Thomas (AT)

1. Apologies for absence: Jim Lunn, John Morris, John Phillips
2. Minutes of the meeting held on 8 December 2016.
Confidential items were identified.
DK proposed acceptance of the Minutes, seconded by MR. Unanimously approved.
3. Dates and times of future meetings
Following problems with changing the time of the meetings to afternoon sessions, when neither the VEC or the Granary were available on the afternoon of the second Thursday in the month, JR circulated a form to gather information about trustees' availability, to try and find a common time.

4. Matters arising from those Minutes:

Identified actions:

PB reported he was still working through the Memorandum and Articles of Association. SB suggested that he involve GS in this process, to which GS agreed.

EB reported that he had forwarded information about the byelaw relating to the use of electric boats on the River Stour to Will Akast (EA).

CB reported that a meeting is to be arranged shortly to discuss the Granary Bar with Jam Tartz, the current franchisees.

5. Appointment of Boat Operations Manager

Two Trust members had put forward their names for the soon to be vacant position of Boat Operations Manager, James Parkinson and Alan Thomas.

Both presented their credentials and backgrounds for fulfilling this role to the meeting, and were then asked to leave while discussions took place.

It was agreed by the remainder of the Council that the preferred option would be for Alan Thomas to be appointed as BOM, with James Parkinson as his assistant, and this suggestion would be put to the two candidates.

The two were then asked to return to the meeting and were given this suggestion, to which they both agreed.

Alan Thomas was then asked if he wished to join Council, to which he agreed.

6. Wormingford and Wiston River Alterations

GD reported that he had received a call from the EA on 4 January 2017, to state that the EA would be removing the materials placed in the river at Wiston, and also on the Stratford-Langham stretch. GD requested this information in writing, but at the date of this meeting had had no reply.

A request was made by the EA for a meeting to discuss and negotiate river depths. **Action: GD** to chase confirmation.

EB said he had attended a meeting in his private capacity with Peter Evans, a canoeist, and Gareth Bates, owner of Rushbanks Campsite. At the meeting were Will Akast and Andrew Raine, EA, Simon Amstutz, Dedham Vale AONB, and Nick Collinson, Suffolk County Council.

Concern was expressed about the danger to canoeists posed by the works, and possible damage or injury to people hiring rowing boats from Rushbanks, and who would be legally liable if this occurred. Following the meeting, the EA said their legal department considered the EA would probably be liable, and that they would investigate modifying the works to reduce this risk.

GD reported further that the EA had verbally stated that they would waive the £1500 abstraction licence fee for Stratford St Mary Lock. Again confirmation was awaited. BF mentioned that the Norfolk Broads had an agreed river profile and wondered if this would be appropriate on the River Stour. EB stated that this was covered by the 1977 Act.

7. Meeting with representatives of the Canal and River Trust

Initially, the CRT had been approached by the Trust for help with the situation at Wormingford and Wiston, and a meeting had been arranged.

Peter Walker (National Infrastructure Services Manager of the Canal and River Trust) visited the River Stour Trust on Monday 9 January. He was taken on a tour of Trust Assets, including a trip on John Constable from Cornard to Sudbury, and shared lunch with some of the Trustees, and boat crew. As part of his role he was assessing all waterways where the EA was Navigation Authority, prior to the CRT taking them over. The River Stour is one of the waterways which will, in time, be handed over to the CRT. It was noted that the RST owned more assets along the river than the EA. Information was passed to Mr Walker about the aging balance beam weirs along the river, which were now beginning to cause problems. It was also noted that there was a possibility that in the transfer process the CRT may abolish byelaws affecting the River Stour, although this would not happen in the immediate future.

8. Financial Report

GS set out his plans for managing the Trust's finances, to give a clearer picture at any point of the financial position and cash flow. He identified an urgent need to identify all committed projects, with associated costs, and potential new schemes. It was his intention to develop a 12 month cash flow document to show how the Trust's money works. He also intended to review authorisations, and create checks and balances in the current system.

GS suggested the provision of budgets for the various departments, with the possibility of a 'wish list' being submitted in September, to set the budget for the following year.

GS also said he would be researching other accounting packages as SAGE was not, in his opinion, the most flexible package, and it would not be easy to obtain some of the reports he felt would be helpful to the Trust.

CB and JR were asked to discuss with the Trust's bank, provision of a company debit card, the use of BACS for payments and the use of remote card terminals for boat and tearoom operations. **Action: CB and JR**

GS also expressed concern that the Memorandum and Articles of Association should reflect more accurately the Trust's operations; amendments might improve our ability to obtain funding for projects in future. GS had already agreed to work on this with PB. It was suggested that the IWA be asked for assistance on this, as they had experience in this area. GS also mentioned updating the Trust's Asset Register.

GD suggested that GS talk to Mike Finch (previous Company Secretary) about VAT issues with the payment for the new lock gates for Stratford St Mary in 2017, to see how this was dealt with in relation to the Flatford Project and grant income.

With regard to the possibility of establishing a Trading Company for the Trust, GS said that this would be a way of separating out the Trust's commercial activities. The Trust needed to determine what its ongoing functions should be; this should be looked at in conjunction with the review of the Memorandum and Articles which was currently being undertaken.

Current financial position: over the three bank accounts the Trust had £94520.00 as at 17 January.

9. Stratford St Mary Lock

GD reported that the outcome of our application to Cory for funds would be known on 24 January. The EA had verbally agreed to waive the Abstraction Licence fee; ESW were holding up the issue of the licence. There was a need to agree an Operation Plan for the lock once it was repaired. ESW had approved this, and GD hoped to sign off on it very soon.

It was also noted that the recent drop in value of the £ sterling would affect the overall cost of the lock, but there was a contingency clause in our grant applications. Hargreaves had been approved as our contractor for this work and they would be notified as soon as funding had been approved. Their first task would be to remove the old gates (with the appropriate ancillary work), take them away and obtain measurements for the new gates to be manufactured. All being well the new gates would be installed in the late summer.

Bridge at Stratford St Mary – BF reported that he had to submit a new planning application for the bridge since the plans had been modified. A copy of the revised plan was circulated, along with the costs. A recent EA grant of £9000, had a surplus of £1500, which together with a grant from ESW of £500 would be put towards the cost of building the bridge. BF was to approach John Mills to ask him about building the flight of steps needed. **Action: BF**

It was noted that the bridge was needed to facilitate access for LRG trips upriver and for access to the lock, both for operation and for emergency access.

GD said that ESW had asked that river levels be measured every time the lock was operated.

EB proposed acceptance of the project, seconded by RB. Unanimously approved.

BF then proposed that the Trust purchase a strip of land (shown on the circulated paper) in order to guarantee access to land already owned by the Trust. After discussion it was agreed that BF research possible cost of this purchase; again it was suggested that the IWA's legal department could be helpful. GD also suggested that if someone else purchased the land, the Trust would be able to obtain an Easement allowing access across the land.

Flatford and Dedham Locks

The EA has notified the Trust of its intention to take out of action the tilting gate at Flatford Lock on 30 September 2017. The Trust was again asked if it wanted to retain the gate and pay for its maintenance and operation. Sometime ago the Council of the Trust decided that the estimated cost of £10,000 was too expensive and declined to take on the operation. During discussion it was noted by SB that if the lock gates at Flatford were left open over the winter with the tilting gate in operation, the gates would deteriorate as they would dry out. This had already happened to a certain extent. It was agreed that JM's view be sought, and this item would be further discussed at the next meeting.

(POST MEETING NOTE – it was noted that a decision was needed before the next meeting, so correspondence was on-going.)

Discussion also took place on the future of the tilting gate at Dedham. It was felt that Dedham Mill Management Committee would want to retain the tilting gate, as part of flood control. It was noted that JM was liaising with the EA over a common approach to DMMC over the future of the lock, tilting gates and lock island.

10. Boat Operations – SBOC

Materials had been purchased for the refurbishment of the jetty at Henny Swan. DK had inspected the SBOC fleet in storage and provided a list of chandlery he needed for the winter overhaul. A total of £300 was approved, plus £175 for servicing FJ's outboard engine.

Following a serious accident at The Granary Jetty, it was noted that the condition of the jetty was slippery, and it was agreed that non-slip surfaces would be needed.

DK had obtained prices for a black rubber matting which he felt would solve the problem – first estimate was £1750.00 + VAT for the Granary.

It was agreed that prices would be needed for the jetties at the Granary, Dedham and Henny.

GS proposed a sum of £3000 be set aside to carry out the work on the three jetties. Work on the jetties at Great Cornard would be carried out later.

(POST MEETING NOTE - LRG felt that black matting would not meet with planning restraints at Dedham and were carrying out further research.)

DK also provided information obtained from the RNLI for flotation aids to facilitate man-overboard rescues.

At an earlier meeting DK had agreed to draw up plans for a waterproof shelter for passengers on JC, and these were now available. He was in the process of obtaining quotations from suppliers, and would report back to Council. **Action: DK**

It was planned to launch the fleet on or about 23 March, ready for pre-season training.

Boat Operations – LRG

The LRG Annual Meeting would take place at the Boathouse Restaurant, Dedham on 20 January.

Boat maintenance on Trusty II was complete. Further repairs were needed on Kathleen; solutions were being sought to seal a long-standing leak.

JM and Kevin Taylor (KT) were now acting as liaison with the residents of Dedham Mill.

KT was leading the training programme.

11. Granary Refurbishment

Following a meeting between Andrew Sheldon, GS, CB and JR, it was recommended that initially the toilets be refurbished, with paintwork, tiles, new hand-driers, and new flooring, plus a new urinal trough.

This would allow time for alternative plans for the kitchen restructuring to be formulated and costed.

A sum of £3000 was requested for the initial plans. This was proposed by PB, seconded by DK and GD. Approved unanimously.

12. Company Secretary's Report

This was circulated before the meeting and discussed.

Part-time office assistant – a job description was circulated. JR reported that this would be posted on the Trust's website as soon as possible, and also placed with Sudbury Job Centre.

Health & Safety Officer – a name was suggested. **Action: JR to follow up**

Business Rates – Babergh DC had approved continuance of rate relief for the Trust.

13. Administrator's Report

This was circulated before the meeting and discussed.

CB was authorised to finalise the entry for Waterways Annual 2017.

CB proposed amendments to charges for the Bakers Mill Community Association to use the VEC, and these were approved. **Action: CB to notify BMCA**

Forthcoming events to promote the Trust – four events were listed and volunteers were sought to man the various events. Further volunteers to contact CB. **Action: ALL**

Advertising – a block advertisement in the March edition of A Suffolk Ceremony was approved. It was also suggested that articles advertising the River Stour Trust and its activities be placed in as many local parish/church magazines as possible.

14. Membership Report

This was tabled.

The death of David Rayner, a vice-president and long-time member of the Trust was reported. An obituary would be published in the next edition of Lock Lintel.

Two new members were approved, together with the reinstatement of two lapsed memberships.

15. Trading Company – this was dealt with earlier in the meeting with other relevant items.

16. Recent and Forthcoming Events

SBOC Lunch – fully booked

LRG Lunch – see above

17. Any Other Business

JP suggested that the Trust should be planning ahead for a new project, once SSM lock was completed. If Dedham Lock refurbishment was not possible, then the Trust could consider Henny Lock, and the weir at Lamarsh, which would then open navigation as far as Daws Hall at Pitmire.

It was agreed that the Council needed a Strategy Group to discuss options and possibly carry out a feasibility study. Trustees were asked to discuss this among themselves and report back to the next meeting. **Action: ALL**

BF reported that Tesco Bags of Help had agreed to fund picnic benches at Cattawade; as there was a minimum spend condition, 6 normal and two multi access benches had been purchased; some of these would be installed at the VEC, and one would be placed on our land adjoining the Quay Theatre in Sudbury.

First Aid Courses – Jim Lunn proposed holding courses in February/March. Names to be submitted to him as soon as possible. **Action: SBOC, LRG, Tearoom Manager, Members**

JR mentioned that some emergency contact details held at the VEC. She proposed taking action to update this information. **Action: JR**

It was pointed out that the landing stage at the Rare Cow was no longer suitable to use as a landing point for the SBOC fleet.

MR tendered his resignation as a Trustee. SB thanked him for his quiet, background services as a Trustee and said she was sad to see him go; he would be missed.

18. Date and time of next meeting

It was agreed to cancel the planned February meeting, and to meet on Thursday 9 March, at 1.30pm, at The Grove, Grove Hill, Dedham, CO7 6DT.

Meeting closed at 5.00 pm