

River Stour Trust
Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 22 April 2015
At the Visitor and Education Centre, Great Cornard

Those present: Emrhys Barrell (via Skype) (EB), John Baxter (JB), Roger Brown (RB), Susan Brown (SB), Gareth Cole (GC), Mike Finch (MF), Jim Lunn (JL), Mick Rogers (MR); Jane Rogers (Administrator, taking notes) (JR)

1. Apologies: Andrew Richardson

In the absence of Andrew Richardson, Mike Finch took the chair.

2. Identification of Confidential Business – None
3. Minutes of the meeting held on 16 March 2015
Minor corrections were made before acceptance was proposed by MR and seconded by GC.
Approved unanimously.
Redactions were agreed –
Paragraph 7a – delete from ‘having removed’ to ‘business’
Paragraph 14 – deleted from ‘response’ to ‘season;’
Approval of redactions proposed by GC, seconded by MR; approved unanimously.
4. Matters arising from those Minutes
Footpath at Flatford – it had been observed that the Environment Agency were carrying out water quality surveys (believed to be the EA’s Fisheries Department) using vehicles along our pathway. It was agreed that Mike Finch would write to the EA about this. **Action: MF**
Discussion followed about whether the Trust had the right to install bollards at the top of the footpath to prevent vehicular access under normal circumstances, as there were alternative routes to reach 56 Gates where the surveys were being carried out.
It was agreed that the letter should include mention of a plan to install bollards to protect the pathway, and to suggest that this would be done if the EA were unwilling or unable to provide funds to repair the damage their vehicles were causing. EB pointed out that lockable bollards set into the ground were available. It was thought that this action might require planning permission.
Annual General Meeting – the Administrator reported that she was ready to work on the necessary paperwork.
Quay Lane Car Park – this would be closed for four days from Monday 27 April for maintenance work and re-marking the lines.
Rubber fendering on jetty at The Granary – had been carried out.
Jetty at Henny Swan – work was still to be done; the new owners had offered financial support. It was agreed the jetty should be surveyed to see what was entailed. If it was possible to repair the jetty, it should be done in wood. GC suggested that if a total rebuild was required, it should be done in plastic material, as was considered for the jetty at The Granary.
Granary Refurbishment – the Architect was being asked to apply for planning permission for the proposed replacement of the toilets and kitchen facilities, working on the plan including amendments suggested to the original scheme. The plan will need listed building consent. It was noted that the Granary would be closed for a period of four weeks for the work to be carried out. No costs had been obtained yet; these would be obtained once planning permission had been obtained. This was to be treated as a priority project.

Disabled access ramp at the VEC – GC has been unable to find the original site plan for the VEC that shows the ramp and car parking spaces. SB recalled a plan with parking spaces outside the compound gates; this was thought to be in the outline planning ideas. The Administrator agreed to look through the old files to see if the site plan could be found. JL also agreed to look. **Action: JR and JL**

It was noted that, for a fee, Babergh DC would be able to provide a copy of the plan; it was agreed that this would be done if all else failed.

Canoe racks – RB still to act. MF said that, having looked, he did not think the extended jetty at The Granary would be wide enough to erect more canoe storage along one edge. MR suggested a raft with canoe racks. MF agreed to do some more research. **Action: MF**

Windermere Skiff – the Administrator was asked to write to the owner again, using recorded delivery mail, to request that the vessel be removed. EB suggested that the Traditional Boat Society might be interested in the boat as a project. **Action: JR**

Derelict Canoe – this had been rejected by the local Scouts; if the Boys Brigade didn't want it, it was to be destroyed.

The Environment Agency, through Irven Forbes, had given permission for the Trust to run Kathleen on the river between Dedham and Stratford St Mary for a further season.

Sudbury Canoe Club had accepted the offer of use of toilet facilities at the VEC.

Versadoc – problems had arisen with the order for this item. The company had produced a much higher revised quotation. Various options were discussed, including using a different product (Jetfloat). RB expressed reluctance to use another product. It was agreed that EB should go back to Versadoc and continue to negotiate in very strong terms. The rafting is urgently needed for work at Stratford St Mary in July and August. **Action: EB**

Refurbishment of Francis J – the original suggestion of using foamex board to cover the superstructure had been discarded.

Car stickers – these had arrived; it was thought that these might be distributed with papers for the AGM.

Boat trip leaflets – these were being widely distributed by members of the Lower River Group. Any left over leaflets should be returned to the VEC. **Action JB**

5. Treasurer's Report – this had been circulated prior to the meeting. GC reported that the Trust had broken even in April, with a profit of £11,000. £5,000 of this money was allocated to pay for the new River Stour maps being produced in partnership with the EA. Granary bookings were doing well. Gift Aid – two years' worth of claims had been processed, producing a reward of £1800, with a further two years still to be claimed. This money was being allocated to the Granary Refurbishment fund.

The graph showed a positive trend line, which was taken as a good sign.

Advice was being sought on the Trust's responsibility for a staff pension scheme.

The Council was reminded that the work load of the administrative staff needed to be reviewed, with a view to increasing the number of hours needed to cover the current workload. Careful recruitment would be needed to take on a part-time member of staff early in 2016.

Franking machine – various options were being considered; two suppliers were being looked at. It was noted that there would be savings in actual postage costs, and greater efficiency in handling posting. A second hand machine would not be a viable option, because of known changes in the operation of national mail services. It was agreed that GC should go ahead with provision of a machine.

Chain saw – It was reported that Gordon Denney had passed his course on chain saw operation. Quotations had been obtained from Ernest Doe and Stanton Hope for the provision of a chain saw and ancillary equipment, which were within £7.00 of each other. It was agreed to authorise Mr Denney to buy from Ernest Doe, who have a branch in Sudbury,

as well as other outlets nearby. Also it was possible that Doe would give the Trust a discount, based on previous trading with the company.

6. Future of Environment Agency Navigations

EB had circulated information via email, indicating that the Trust position was as good as possible at present. The Canals and River Trust's Asset Manager had stated that action was already taking place, in advance of the new government being elected; he also expressed the wish to come to Suffolk to see for himself the work the Trust was doing. It was agreed that work on the new brochure should continue.

It was agreed that the CRT should be apprised of the River Stour Trust's assets, and what has been achieved since the Trust was formed. It was also noted that the Constable and Flatford/Dedham importance should be stressed to the CRT. EB noted that the CRT were now well aware of our presence.

EB was thanked for his work on establishing the Trust's position with CRT.

It was also noted that during a meeting of the River Stour Users' Group, the EA representatives seemed to know very little of the role of the CRT.

7. Flatford Lock Opening – Plans for the day were discussed, and a timetable for catering, etc. was agreed. AR and Griff Rhys Jones were to speak, and a PA system to facilitate this had been booked. EB stressed the importance of creating as many photo opportunities in general and with GRJ in particular. LRG were providing lock crew, and a crew for Trusty II to bring GRJ and party to the lock. Catering was being provided by the Field Study Centre at Flatford Mill.

It was reported that when Trusty was brought through the lock at the end of March there were problems with one of the gates, which had not been resolved by using the gates. GC agreed to ask Martin Childs to investigate the problem. **Action: GC**

8. Lighter Inspection – It was agreed to book a crane for the week beginning 18 May, to lift John Constable out for inspection and repainting. It was noted that, because of booked charters, it would be necessary to finish the work in time to relaunch the boat during the week beginning 8 June.

Repairs to the lock lintels would be carried out in the same period, using the same crane. Brian Kennell was to be present when JC was out of the water to check paint finishes to ensure that the correct materials were used in the refurbishment. EB suggested that Witham Paints would be able to analyse samples to determine the original materials used. The exact programme of works needed would be decided once the boat was ashore.

9. Dedham Lock - no progress to report. Action is awaited from the EA and Dedham Mill Management Committee.

10. Stratford St Mary Lock – GC had contacted Essex & Suffolk Water and had obtained the name of a new contact. SB named Lee Neil as the new team leader, who has agreed that the Trust can access the lock site through the Waterworks site. SB agreed to pass on Mr Neil's contact details to GC. **Action: SB**

A provisional start date for the working party has been set at 20 July.

It was agreed that a metal pontoon should be used to take the digger and other equipment across to the site, although this would take costs over budget. It was deemed necessary from a safety point of view. EB agreed to give RB details of a local company that could supply a metal pontoon. **Action: EB**

Gordon Denney was of the opinion that the mud at the bottom of the lock could be removed. RB said that this would need to be stacked alongside the lock to dry out; an ideal

location would be where pipes were currently stacked. These pipes were to be removed and sold on to offset some of the costs of the project.

Bridge – discussion ensued about the timing of applying for planning permission.

It was recorded that Stratford St Mary is an essential part of increasing the earnings of Kathleen on this part of the river. It was apparent that the EA would grant permission for Dedham Lock basin to be used as a landing stage for Kathleen, subject to certain conditions. The owners of Lock Cottage were happy with the proposals. A further landing stage at Stratford St Mary would be needed. The EA had agreed in principle to back any planning application made by the Trust for this purpose. SB pointed out that planning permission for a bridge had been granted in 2004/5, but never acted upon. Colchester Borough Council is the planning authority for the location. A bridge was proposed to go from the end of the road bridge to the lock island, all on the Essex side of the river. This would entail cutting into the handrail of the existing bridge to affix the new bridge. Structural matters were already being considered. JB offered to conduct negotiations with Essex Footpaths, once GC had talked to Lee Neil. **Action: JB and GC**

It was reported that the EA had considered a similar bridge but had discarded the idea because of cost.

11. SBOC – A meeting had been called to invite members of the Trust to become involved in Sudbury Boat Operations. Draft terms of reference for Sudbury Boat Operations Committee (SBOC) had been circulated. A further meeting had then been called for 24 April, with the aim of forming a new committee.

A major cause for concern was finance. GC felt that all financial decisions should be passed through him as Treasurer, whereas SBOC wanted a budget, and had suggested expenditure up to a maximum of £200 was reasonable. It was pointed out that without constraints, several individual purchases could be made in a short space of time, spending a lot of money, without considering the Trust's overall financial position.

It was pointed out that the Lower River Group did not have a budget.

It was further mentioned that in the case of an emergency repair, the boat maintenance crew, or any other working party, could telephone the treasurer, chairman or company secretary to request permission to make a purchase. Where appropriate, the officers could consult and make a decision on behalf of Council.

Thanks were expressed to Jim Lunn for his work as Chairman of SBOC.

12. Lower River Group – a meeting had been held on 22 April, when it was agreed that a recruitment campaign needed to continue to maintain crew numbers, particularly in view of the increased use of the boats.

In 2016, Trusty II will have been in service for 10 years. A work party day had been scheduled for 24 April to work on Kathleen.

Cattawade Work Party – quotes were being sought for regular grass cutting; it was hoped to include other site maintenance in such a contract. It was not certain who owned the fishing jetties at Cattawade; the EA were supposed to be investigating this.

Boat Safety Certificate inspections were needed for Trusty II, Rosette and Francis J. Mike Finch would co-ordinate this, with Steve Moffatt of Moffatt Marine. **Action: MF**

13. Granary Refurbishment had been discussed under the Treasurer's Report.

14. Correspondence

Brian Cornell had tendered his resignation from Council, which had been accepted. It was agreed that Brian should be thanked for his services to Council. EB proposed that he be made a Life Member, seconded by GC and JL, passed unanimously. **Action: AR**

This started a discussion on his replacement as Boat Operations Manager. Tim Smith was currently his deputy. It was understood that the IWA had to approve the appointment. A short job description was discussed, and would include an interest in training, responsibility for the state of the boats, and the safe operation of our trip boats. It was agreed that the IWA be consulted about the job description. It was felt that the BOM should be a member of Council. **Action: MF**

SB suggested that Council look among the membership for suitable candidates.

15. Administrator's Report – this was tabled

16. Membership Report – this was tabled and its acceptance proposed by MF, seconded by JL, and carried unanimously.

17. Any Other Business

GC reported that new signs had been installed at the VEC covering information for car parking, etc.

MF reported that he had met Guy Lennox at Flatford, where a discussion was held about the recent flooding, and its causes. MF suggested to Mr Lennox that issues with the sluices at Flatford Mill had been a cause, and this was a matter for the EA and the National Trust (owners of the Mill) to resolve. Discussions between all parties were ongoing.

18. Date and time of next meeting: Thursday 28 May, at 7.00 pm, at the VEC.

Meeting closed at 10.00 pm