

River Stour Trust

Meeting of Council on Thursday 4 June 2015

Those present: Andrew Richardson (AR) in the chair, Mike Finch, Jim Lunn, Gareth Cole, Sue Brown, Mick Rogers, John Baxter, Roger Brown. Jane Rogers (Administrator) taking notes.

Gordon Denny (observing)

Apologies for absence: Emrhys Barrell

Identification of confidential business – none

AOB topics were noted and added to the agenda

Minutes of the meeting held on 22 April 2015

There were no amendments to these Minutes. Acceptance was proposed by MF, seconded by GC. Approval was unanimous. No items were found for redaction before publication of the minutes on the website.

Matters arising from the Minutes, not covered by the current agenda

- The footpath at Flatford had been repaired by the Environment Agency (EA).
- Quay Lane Car Park had been relined. The proposed barrier to the car park was not now going to be installed.
- Canoe storage – after research, it was agreed that canoes could be stored under the VEC building. All craft would need to be secured with an adequate chain and padlock, and there must be no blockages to the access to the area under the building.

Treasurer's Report (GC)

The Treasurer's Report had been circulated prior to the meeting. GC reported that financially the Trust was doing reasonably well. At present there was some £21,000 in the current account, showing that our policy of harbouring funds was paying off. Repairs at Cornard Lock were estimated to cost £5,000.

SB asked about the Maintenance Fund and was told that this was no longer run.

GC reported that £4,000 of recovered Gift Aid had been paid into the Small Projects Account.

A further sum of £21,000 was currently in the Lock account.

The Versadock had been ordered and paid for; after discussion it was agreed that this would qualify for 100% VAT reclaim. The Versadock would be delivered to RB for storage. The need for a fork lift to unload the material was queried. SB would ask Jeff Burroughs about handrails for the dock. RB queried whether we could manufacture our own handrails rather than buying any, as they were quite expensive. It was thought that this might be possible.

The Administrator was asked to liaise with Jam Tartz over outstanding payments.

The Chamber Music concert, although poorly attended, was excellent. Martin Childs had paid the musicians, and the event made a profit of £100, plus some donations in kind. Mr Childs would like to make this an annual event, which may be linked in with another series of concerts.

In partnership with the Environment Agency, a new map of the River Stour has been produced. The EA had contributed £5,000 towards the costs, and had given the Trust 1500 free copies (which would be enough for S2C free copies for approximately five years). The Trust has been appointed sole agent for the sale of the maps, retaining £1.00 of the £3.00 cost for direct sales. River Stour Boating could buy from the Trust at £2.50 and sell on at £3.00. The Tourist Offices would be other potential outlets. A charge of £1.00 for post and packing could be made for mail order sales

Stratford St Mary Lock - A new pumping station has been planned for the land adjoining the lock. GC suggested that Section 106 money could be built into the planning permission for funds to restore the lock. JB would investigate progress on the matter at a meeting he had scheduled with Lee Neil of Essex and Suffolk Water on 5 June, while GD would try to establish the time line for the proposed works.

The proposed filter house would extend across the site where the Trust caravan and container are currently located.

It was noted that the Water Company had originally paid for both Stratford St Mary and Dedham Locks, as well as the sea lock at Cattawade, in the 1930s.

Historically the Trust has enjoyed good relations with Essex and Suffolk Water.

GC then reported that Section 106 money held by Babergh District Council from the development of the Baker's Mill site was unlikely to come to the Trust. One of the Trust members (John Phillips) had reported this to the press because a proposed circular minibus route, linked to a potential waterbus service would be affected by this situation. Local politicians had become involved, and JB agreed to contact Simon Barratt, a local town councillor to try and get him involved as well.

Following an initial charter for the new restaurant at Ballingdon, it was agreed that no more trips would be undertaken in the immediate future, in part because of operational difficulties in that part of the river.

GC finally reported that the new franking machine had now been installed and was being used. The Administrator expressed her gratitude.

Flatford Lock Re-opening

This had gone well, and had generated much media interest, due to the presence of Griff Rhys Jones. The reception at the Field Study Centre in Flatford Mill was well received, and the quality of the buffet praised.

Annual General Meeting – 24 June

The Report and Accounts were still in draft form, in a format governed by the Charity Commission.

Nominations for membership of Council were awaited. AR, MF and RB retire by rotation and had offered themselves for re-election. JB, MR and SB, having been co-opted during the year, were also offering themselves for election.

It was agreed that the Trustees would receive the draft report by email, and would send any comments, and approval to MF.

It was noted that a quorum of three was needed, and that the bar had been booked for the event.

Lighter Inspection

The insurers had insisted that personnel with the appropriate qualifications and experience be employed to lift JC out. Martin Childs had agreed to take on the task but was not happy with the plans submitted by the original company. It was agreed to defer the task until Martin Childs had produced a plan. It was agreed that the project would go ahead in September. No JC charters would be booked for September.

Boat Operations Manager

Council discussed the position of Boat Operation Manager and queried whether the Trust needed such a role.

JL stated that he would be happy to represent SBOC on Council, and LRG already had two representatives on Council (JB and MR). He also questioned whether, as the number of boat operations had increased, two BOMs were needed, one at each end of the river. SB suggested that having one person in the role would lead to greater consistency.

MF suggested that Roger Squires of the IWA be approached to establish the correct position and, if necessary, obtain a job description, including required qualifications.

JR requested clarification of the position of BC, and was told that at the present time, he was still the person named as BOM. MF agreed to speak to BC.

A decision on the appointment of a BOM was deferred to the next meeting of Council.

Cotswold Canal Incident

Following an incident on the Cotswold Canal, the IWA asked if it was possible for the Trust to supply someone to go to the West Country, to help with training. JL had volunteered but was still awaiting a response.

Cornard Lock Repair

JL had inspected the lock gates from his boat, and stated that a piece of timber had become jammed in the mechanism, causing the gate not to fit into its guides. It also appeared that the seal on the guide had failed, and that the mechanism was of an unusual design. The top paddles were working well, but one of the bottom paddles was not functioning correctly. The EA has been informed of the problem.

In order to determine the extent of the problem it would be necessary to drain down the lock. Martin Childs had been asked to provide a quotation.

The EA will be notified of the lock closure as soon as it has been agreed. Because of the Treasurer's good stewardship, money is available for the repairs to be carried out.

Dedham Lock

One paddle at Dedham Lock has stuck in a part open position, causing leakage. This may create problems later in the season. The EA are monitoring the situation as are the Lower River Group.

No further discussions had taken place with Dedham Mill Management Committee.

The EA intend to stop using the tilting gate during 2015, and it is currently in a lowered position. There is no information available as to what might happen in flood conditions.

Flatford Lock

There is no further news about the flashes on top of the sluices at Dedham Mill. There are still problems operating one of the paddles on the new gates, and exercising the paddle does not seem to be helping. It was agreed to ask Martin Childs to investigate this.

The Lower River Group also reported that they still only had one lock winding handle and requested that a further two be supplied. It was noted that the person who manufactured the winding handles had been away from work following an accident, but was now back and the job was in hand.

The river bank just above Flatford Bridge has been reported as bulging and collapsing already, following a temporary repair prior to the lock opening ceremony. The responsibility for a permanent repair lies with the landowners (understood to be the National Trust) and is not the responsibility of the River Stour Trust.

Stratford St Mary Lock

RB noted that he preferred not to use the steel pontoons which had been suggested, to transport materials across to the lock site, as they could become stuck into the banks, and were expensive to use. He thinks that our Versadock is suitable for the task, when fitted with a deck of plywood to give it stiffness, and would be adequate to take the weights needed.

AR said that no-one was to be on the raft when it was being used to transport machinery, and that a risk assessment and method statement were imperative. RB and GD agreed to undertake this. The paperwork would then be submitted to the insurance company. After discussion it was the consensus of the meeting that the Versadock method be used.

RB reported that they had asked the Army for manpower, but had been told that no outside projects had been undertaken for the past two years, and none were planned for the immediate future.

Training for dumper truck driving had been acquired at no cost to the Trust; MF and GD had volunteered to be trained.

It was noted that new PPE hard hats were needed and that the old ones could not be recycled.

Permission had been granted by the EA for spoil removed from the lock basin to be spread over the site to cover rocks. As it was indigenous material there should be no problems. Samples of spoil had been tested.

Work would be undertaken with a full lock chamber and full channel.

Pipes that were still on site would be removed to RB's premises to be sold on, clearing a space for spoil to be stacked to dry as it came out of the lock basin. A work party had been booked for 20 July.

Fire Extinguishers on boats

Following an incident on Rosette when one extinguisher was set off accidentally, it was queried whether we had the right type of extinguisher on the boats.

Andrew Sheldon had mentioned extinguishers with a special foam which can deal with all types of fire, which would be maintenance free.

AR agreed to follow this up, obtain prices and further information about these extinguishers, and tamper proof covers for them.

Minutes of Other Meetings

SBOC

Minutes had been circulated.

Concern was raised that the ignition switch currently fitted to Rosette and Trusty was too complex for their needs. The replacement is now a four position switch as previously fitted.

FJ looks much better for her coat of paint, at a cost of less than £100.00. Thanks were expressed to the work party who carried out the work.

SBOC's new chairman was proving very good at running the meetings. JL went to the meetings as an observer, to report back to Council.

SBOC finances – it was agreed that this would be looked at. The Committee were asked to provide, at the end of the season, a report on the state of the boats in its care, together with costings for the repairs. Intermediate requests for funding should be made to the Treasurer, with details, so that money could be released when needed. This can be done at any time.

SBOC's Publicity arm had produced a Children in Need package for Council to consider. Following discussion of the project, it was not felt to be viable and AR agreed to discuss this with the relevant members.

John Constable crew training – JL agreed to encourage crews to take part in training to become crew on JC. Once qualified as competent crew, members could then progress to Skipper on JC.

It was felt that JC could be crewed by two qualified crew, plus one trainee. JL agreed to work with David Kirkman to produce a training schedule.

A replacement was being sought for Jean Sutton, who had been responsible for recruiting crews for charters and weddings for some time.

Anti-spike boxes had been fitted to engines on JC, which had now been run for a number of hours, and seemed to be performing well.

Lower River Group

Meetings were scheduled for 5 and 17 June, when issues over the increased use of Kathleen, and use of Dedham Lock basin as a dock would be discussed.

Essex Highways had agreed to a bridge being installed on Langham Bridge, and a meeting was scheduled to discuss installing a landing stage at this point.

Colchester Borough Council were keen for the Trust to establish a waterbus service between Dedham Lock and Stratford St Mary to encourage more visitors to visit that part of the valley. It was hoped that this could be resolved within a few weeks. The EA have so far raised no objection to this proposal.

The Dedham Vale Project had offered to fund half the cost of such a landing stage.

Bird watching trips had been carried out between Flatford and Cattawade, so far raising £170.00. The National Trust were keen on this project, but the RSPB were unable to supply a bird expert to accompany the trips.

Kathleen had 17 weddings booked so far this season. Le Talbooth has renewed the rubber matting on the jetty at the hotel, making it safer.

Milsoms had expressed a desire to be kept informed of developments in boat operations on this stretch of the river.

The Parish Council of Stratford St Mary were now in favour of extending our trips to the village – in particular the publicans were happy to support the proposal.

It was also pointed out that the implications on S2C of the proposed works at Stratford St Mary need to be considered.

Trusty II has completed 20 years' service this year.

Damage has been caused to Trusty's propeller and this has been taken away for repair, with the replacement propeller fitted in its place.

Granary Refurbishment

The planning application has gone in, and the subsequent inspection showed no concerns. The Architect is working closely with the Planning Inspector on this project.

GC plans to move £10,000 to the Small Projects Account to go towards the cost; a further grant of £10,000 is available as and when needed, and it is hope to raise a further £10,000 from 2015 profits.

The time frame planned for the work is January – February 2016.

Correspondence

There was no correspondence.

Administration Report

This had been circulated. Of the items mentioned, it was agreed that a budget be set aside to enable members without access to email or the website to receive information about forthcoming events. This has in part been enabled by the savings made in using the franking machine for postage. Other items were noted.

Sudbury to the Sea (S2C)

Cattawade car park will be closed for the event, with parking being located on the Essex and Suffolk Water Company space. SB is investigating the cost of installing bollards.

Membership Report

Acceptance was proposed by MF and seconded by GC. Adopted unanimously.

Any Other Business

Riverside Explorer Company – this is a new company which has located itself next to the Rare Cow restaurant in Sudbury. A leaflet was distributed, but as there are errors in it, it was agreed not to circulate this. The Administrator was asked to talk to River Stour Boating about this development.

Weedcutting – the EA were proposing the same arrangements as in 2014, with Jeff Burroughs contracting to carry out the work. Concerns were raised about Construction, Design and Management Regulation changes which had recently come into force. JB advised that Steve Brown could advise us on this subject.

Archive storage and cupboards in the VEC

AR agreed to obtain prices for this; ideally the work will be carried out over the autumn and winter.

Party in the Park

It was agreed that the Trust would put in a presence at this Sudbury event.

Windlass at Flatford

It was noted that the EA have a windlass to operate Flatford Lock.

Date and time of next meeting: Thursday 4 July at the VEC.

POST MEETING NOTE

Because of a previous booking at the VEC, the Council meeting will now take place at The Granary.