

River Stour Trust Council

Minutes of meeting held on Thursday 2 July 2015

Those present: Andrew Richardson (AR, in the chair), Gareth Cole (GC, Treasurer), Mike Finch (MF, Company Secretary), Jim Lunn (JL), Gordon Denney (GD), Mick Rogers (MR), Roger Brown (RB), Sue Brown (SB), Jane Rogers (JR, Administrator, taking notes)

Apologies were received from Emrhys Barrell and John Baxter

AR opened the meeting and welcomed Gordon Denney to his first meeting as a Trustee of the Trust.

Identification of Confidential Business

Discussion of the contract pertaining to the Administrator was deemed confidential.

Minutes of the meeting held on 2 June 2015

As two versions of these Minutes had inadvertently been distributed, it was agreed to postpone approval of them until the next meeting, when the correct version would have been recirculated.

Election of Chairman

MF took the Chair and reminded members that following the recent AGM, it was necessary to elect a new Chairman of Council. AR was nominated and unanimously re-elected for a further year. AR resumed the Chair and the meeting continued.

Matters arising from those Minutes

John Constable – it was agreed that no bookings should be taken for this vessel during September, when she was due to be lifted out for maintenance. SB pointed out that care should be taken with bookings for other boats, because of anticipated lock closures. It was also pointed out that there could be implications for S2C.

Treasurer's Report

After accepting an amendment to the date of his report to 2 July, GC stated that the June income figures were incomplete, with additional income still to be added. He reported that the profits for May were lower due to poor weather; however he was not concerned at this point.

GC also noted that the cash in bank figure was also lower than reported as the bill for the repair of Cornard Lock had been paid. The base cost for this work was £13,200 after VAT.

SB suggested that it was necessary to obtain more than one quote for work, and was supported in this by GD. It was agreed that this would happen in future.

GC was happy with the way the AGM had run.

Corkage charges for events at The Granary. Following discussions with Jam Tartz, the bar managers for the Trust, it was proposed that corkage charges be dropped, and all drinks for events had to be purchased through the Granary Bar. This had come about because corkage was hard to police, and clients had been cheating on their declarations. It was agreed that the corkage scheme be dropped.
Action: JR to write to Jam Tartz.

JR was further tasked to remind Jam Tartz to submit their commission figures for the year to date.
Action: JR

It was noted that following the proposed refurbishment of the Granary early in 2016, hire charges would be increased.

GC also proposed that a Venues Committee be established to look after maintenance of the Trust's Properties.

Section 106 funding – relating to the building of Bakers Mill Estate

This was still being worked on and JB had made various approaches to see if anything could be resolved.

Annual General Meeting – 24 June 2015

It was agreed that this had been a good meeting, reasonably well attended.

Role of Boat Operations Manager

JL had asked Roger Squires of the IWA for a role description, which had been received, and was a low level definition. Tim Smith of the Trust was of the opinion that the role should have a much higher level of authority. MR expressed the view that Mr Smith's definition was 'over the top'. The Lower River Group had also expressed concerns.

AR said the Council needed to be pragmatic about this appointment and that Council should decide the role and its responsibilities. The IWA had a job description with minimum requirements and this should be considered.

It was agreed that Council would agree a description, which would be circulated to members of the Trust, for applicants to reply before the next meeting of Council. The IWA job description should be forwarded to JR, who would draw up the advertisement, for approval by the Chairman and would circulate the final version. Action: JR

Cornard Lock Repair

MF produced photographs showing the faults on one of the downstream paddles. Bolts holding parts in place had been stripped and corroded, causing the paddle to function poorly.

Martin Childs Ltd had inspected the other paddles which appeared to be sound.

GC reported that the repairs to the faulty paddle had made it inherently stronger. MF reported that the original design was not good as the paddles were on the wrong side of the gates, causing them to take the full force of the water without the support of the gates themselves.

The lock gates were now not leaking.

It was noted that the lock gates should be inspected every ten years and this was last done early in 2015.

SB asked about a Lock Maintenance Fund, which had been in existence. GC said that this had been absorbed into the main accounts some time ago, but he was constantly monitoring the financial situation.

MF commented that the Trust should be prepared if this situation were to occur again.

SB said it would cost £15k if it happened again, bearing in mind the costs this time.

After discussion, it was agreed that the Trust would gamble on having funds available should this situation arise again.

Flatford Lock – not on the agenda

The question of the supply of further winding handles was raised, and GC stated that these had not been forgotten, simply that MCL had been very busy elsewhere, but the task was in hand. MCL were also about to inspect the stiff paddle on Flatford Lock, and to look at the sluices at Flatford Mill.

GC requested that LRG make a point of regularly exercising the paddles on the lock.

Stratford St Mary Lock

The Versadock raft was due for delivery on 3 July, with some minor fittings to follow very shortly. Handrails had not been ordered and SB agreed to ask Jeff Burroughs if he was prepared to sell handrails to the Trust.

The Work Party will start on 20 July, doing preparation work, for a digger and dumper truck to come onto site on 3 August. MF and GD would be trained and tested to drive the dumper truck on that day. An email would be sent out to potential volunteers outlining the work schedule, and asking for help for particular tasks.

The possibility of using the caravan chassis to create a trailer for the Versadock sections was discussed, and will be investigated.

The container currently on site would be scrapped. Existing wheelbarrow boards were still usable and would be retained.

It was agreed that necessary turf could be purchased.

Lawrie B – workboat – would be moved from Flatford to Stratford to help with the work.

The current schedule of works needed to be completed before S2C on 12-13 September.

Lock restoration needed to be complete by the end of 2016, because of Essex and Suffolk Water's plans for the site in 2017.

GD agreed to talk with ESW about these plans. Action: GD

GC wants to talk to ESW about the possibility of including Section 106 funds in their planning.

It was suggested that for S2C, portaloos could be installed on the site.

MF said that he had been approached by Ian Bliss of the Environment Agency with a request that we display signs warning about underwater obstructions at Stratford St Mary portage, but he had replied this was not our land.

MF was asked to obtain details, and RB, SB and GD agreed to survey this part of the river the following week. Action: MF, RB, SB, GD.

Sudbury Boat Operations

No report, as JL had missed their last meeting.

However, it was known that the Committee was planning a winter maintenance programme. A request about electrical matters had been made and would be looked at when more details were available. Currently there was no news of a new volunteer to take on the role of finding crews for charters.

Lower River Group

MR reported that there were several candidates ready for assessment as skippers in July.

A request for a raffle prize had been made by a local committee organising a fund raising event at Le Talbooth for CRUC. This was referred to Council to clarify the Trust's position on donating to other charities.

GC was not in favour of donating to other charities, as this might put us in a difficult position with the Charity Commissioners.

MF, after discussion, pointed out that the benefits of this donation might outweigh the costs as good publicity for the Trust.

It was agreed to donate a voucher for one-off charter, at the discretion of LRG, between Le Talbooth and Stratford St Mary.

JL asked about the condition of the life jackets used by LRG and MR agreed to inspect them. Action: MR

Condition of the footpath alongside the river at Flatford. MR agreed to survey this. Concern was expressed about damage caused by EA trucks driving along the footpath. It was agreed to raise the matter at the forthcoming River Stour Users' Group meeting. Action: MR and MF

Granary Refurbishment

Listed Building Consent had been obtained, and the architect was now working on the next stage, leading to Building Consent.

VEC Car Park

Flood Drainage Consent had been granted to remove the disabled access ramp in the VEC grounds, to extend the area of the car park. Disabled access would be managed by the installation of a lift onto the verandah. A planning application was due to be submitted following this meeting.

Correspondence – already dealt with under Treasurers report.

Administrator's Report

After discussion, it was agreed to send out an appeal to members for volunteer help in the office. It was further agreed that the Trust would pay mileage expenses for any help given.

The Administrator raised the possibility of a Maintenance Group, who could undertake minor repairs to the Trust's buildings, such as repairing broken toilet seats, painting outside doors, etc. It was agreed that MF would approach John Mills about leading this group. Action: MF

The Administrator mentioned the need for some paintwork to be repaired on the VEC building. GC pointed out that the building was due for repainting the exterior in 2017, and was scheduled into the five-year plan.

Weed in the Granary Cut had been causing problems when boats came in and out during trips. John Mills and John Morton had been working on removing it, and reported at the AGM that they had removed some three tons, and still had more to remove.

It was agreed to purchase Barley Straw bales to put into the Cut to release enzymes which would deter the growth of blanket weed. Action: RB

Any Other Business

Baker's Mill Residents' Committee had written expressing concern about the water flow in the Mill Cut, and asked that the Trust put a screen on our side of the bridge. This had been looked into before and as before, it was not deemed appropriate. Action: AR to reply to BMCA

Windermere Skiff, owned by a member and stored at the VEC. It was agreed that the administrator approach the owner again to pursue its removal due to its deterioration in condition. It was further suggested that the Trust would be able to sell the vessel, to recover unpaid storage fees. Action: JR to check financial status and contact owner

Quay Lane Trust

The QLT had submitted an invoice for £300.00, ostensibly for overdue membership fees. This money would be put towards the cost of installing a barrier, with combination lock, to help prevent unauthorised use of the car park. The Quay Theatre cleaner had volunteered to close the car park early in the morning and re-open it at 9.30 am. The garage opposite the car park would be informed that it could not be allowed to continue to park vehicles on the car park, as there was concern over the current rating of the area, which would change if vehicle sales were conducted from the car park. It was noted that although the Tennis Club had re-done the white lining in the car park, they were going to add a second coat of paint. The yellow cross hatching leading to the slipway was also going to be renewed. Parking was not permitted on this cross hatching, and the RST would put a note to this effect into the information given to hirers of the Granary. Action: JR

Dedham Lock

It was reported that there was a jammed paddle on Dedham Lock gate. There seemed to be a flow through the bottom gate, and the question was raised, would this drain the pond. MR stated that there seemed to be no problem with this, but that LRG would monitor the situation. RB and GD agreed to look at the lock gates before the RSUG meeting, where any concerns could be raised.

Action: RB and GD

Date of next meeting: 13 August 2015, at the VEC, at 7.00 pm