

River Stour Trust
Council Meeting
15 October 2015

Those present:

Andrew Richardson (AR) in the chair, Mike Finch (MF), Jim Lunn (JL), Gordon Denney (GD), Mick Rogers (MR), Mike Harrington-Spier (MHS), Emrhys Barrell (EB) via Skype. Jane Rogers taking notes.

Apologies:

Roger Brown, Sue Brown.

Gordon Denney mentioned that he had received a letter from Companies House on being appointed a director of the Trust. It was explained that this was normal procedure when someone was first appointed a director of a limited company.

Confidential items – none were identified.

Minutes of the meeting held on 10 September 2015

Mick Rogers' name was added to those present and one minor amendment was noted.

GD proposed acceptance, seconded by MR – approved unanimously.

Redacted version – One paragraph was marked for redaction before publication on the website
MHS proposed acceptance, seconded by JL – approved unanimously.

Discussion followed on the redacted item.

Matters arising from those Minutes

Administration Support – MHS reported on information he had gained about internships at the Theatre Royal, Bury St Edmunds. Their scheme was organised by a department of Suffolk County Council, working with the arts, and would not be available to the Trust. It was agreed that further investigation was needed, including looking at the Job Centre, as it was important to find the right person. Discussion would be continued at a strategy meeting to be held early in 2016.

Sudbury to the Sea – AR commented that it was a brilliant event and expressed his thanks to everyone who contributed to the work needed. It was noted that the event would need a new organiser(s) for 2016. GD said that he would think about taking on the role. JR agreed that she was prepared to help with the administration for the event. Date for 2016 would be 10-11 September. SB had mentioned that she would draw up a brief for her successor(s),

Treasurer's Report

MF reported that the Trust currently has £64,500 spread over its three accounts. It was noted that the Trust's income drops away over the winter whilst outgoings were still high. A big insurance bill was due at the end of January. A look at the old Treasurer's reports showed a spend of £17k over the last winter quarter, with an income of £5k.

The need for a third signatory on the bank accounts was discussed and JL agreed to take this on until a new Treasurer was appointed. MF agreed to complete the necessary paperwork. Action: MF

Appointment of New Treasurer

A letter to members had been drafted, inviting nominations for the post of Treasurer and it was agreed that this should be sent out to all members as soon as possible. Action: CB

Granary Refurbishment

It was noted that the funds for this project would have to be found from the Trust's reserves as shown in the Treasurer's Report.

Brian Cornell (a former Trustee) had offered his help on this project.

It was agreed that the project would need a manager and that the plans should go out to tender as soon as possible.

JR noted that the Administrator (CB) had a copy of the latest plan and it was agreed that this should be circulated as soon as possible. MF agreed to contact the architect to confirm how far the design process had reached, and what the next steps should be. Action: MF and CB

Discussion followed, when it was agreed that the Trust should take a 'whole package' approach to the task, where the appointed contractor would supply all the necessary skills to complete the task. Members were asked to suggest any builders they might know, and CB was asked also to contact local contractors.

The plans should also be shown to Jam Tartz, our bar managers, who also catered in the Granary on a regular basis. Action: CB

MF agreed to act as the Trust's liaison point for the project, whilst Council retained control of the spending of monies.

River Stour User Group meeting – 7 October

GD reported that Jeff Burroughs (JB, Blue Green Marine Ltd) had offered the services of his company to the EA to help with maintaining the Navigation, including clearing trees from the channel. He had approached GD to help in this task, using his chain saw skills.

Following discussion, AR said that there was no problem in GD working with JB, but that GD should ensure that he was covered by Blue Green Marine's insurance, and was using their equipment. MF agreed to talk with JB about insurance cover when Trust volunteers were working with Blue Green Marine on weed cutting, etc.

MF reported on lack of progress with the National Trust on the matter of removing the extensions from the sluices at Flatford Mill. He had received no response from a letter to the National Trust, but the EA representatives at the RSUG meeting stated that they had the matter in hand. The EA were also aware of the potential risk to the lock gates at Flatford, if they were left open over the winter with the tilting gate in operation, and were concerned as they also had paid towards the new lock gates.

Stratford St Mary Lock

GD reported that the matter of stakes on the western bank had been looked at by the EA, who would be able to lower the water level when the Trust was ready to cut them off at bed level. He further reported that he had sown tussock grass where needed.

SBOC

MHS (Chairman of SBOC) reported that plans had been made for the boats to be taken out of the water on 4 November. Council agreed to buy new batteries for EL, so the old batteries would be removed at The Granary, and sold to the scrap merchant when EL came out of the water, along with other old batteries. EL would be stored at the VEC over the winter and new batteries installed in the spring. EB stated that Thames Electric would work on EL's throttle in the spring to allow better speed control. This work would be done in conjunction with the installation of the new batteries.

SBOC – led by David Kirkman – had produced a schedule of works for their boats over the winter and for refurbishment of Francis J. Council expressed its thanks to DK for the large amount of work that had gone into this planning.

EB queried the request for an electrical survey for all the boats. JL explained that DK had been concerned that the electrical wiring was not up to standard, but said that replacing the electrical master switches following problems earlier in the season had resolved many problems. EB reminded Council that the electrical systems on the Frolics was some 25 years old and was therefore likely to start having problems. He thought the controller on Rosette would eventually fail, and could not be repaired because of its age. MF expressed the Trust's gratitude to EB and his engineer, Ian, for their help and support in maintaining the boats over the past years. EB said new controllers for Frolics were in the region of £1200 cost price and Thames Electric could supply them. It was noted that a new motor had been installed in Trusty three years ago, complete with new controller, so replacements for her would be off the shelf. It was agreed to get a new controller for Rosette in the spring.

In considering the possible refurbishment of FJ, it was noted the cost was large, and EB suggested that the opportunity to reduce the weight of the topsides should be taken. The plan was referred back to SBOC.

It was agreed that the Annual Maintenance Checklist which had been drawn up was a good document and an excellent way to build up a database of information about maintenance of the craft. MF said that FJ's pontoons had been coated with an epoxy paint about 4 years ago and should not need replacing for a long time.

JL agreed to talk to SBOC and DK about the maintenance programme. Action: JL

John Constable – it was noted that the lift out was successful, and that the planned work had been carried out as stated in the note circulated by MF. It was agreed that, given the condition of the hull, maintenance could be carried out on a three-year schedule. MF expressed the Council's thanks to everyone who had helped with the work. JC was now back in the water and plans were in hand to repair the damage caused to the grassed area by the crane.

GD expressed concern about the costs of having JC, and requested that the costs were monitored. It was noted that part of SBOC'S brief was to maximise the earning potential of their fleet, which led to a brief discussion on expanding the use of the length of the navigation.

Lower River Group

MR reported that LRG's boats were being lifted out on 3 November and would be stored in a barn in Dedham, which was big enough to take both craft. The barn belonged to a member of LRG, Jax Horswill, who had offered this accommodation which featured a stone floor and electricity. It was agreed that the Trust would pay Ms Horswill the same rate as had been paid in previous years for Trusty's winter storage.

LRG had noted that the amount of administrative work arising from their activities had increased substantially, and asked that Council consider appointing a paid person for approximately 3 hours a week over the six season months to handle this. It was agreed that this would be considered in time for the 2016 season, and AR suggested that it could be something which fell into the role of the proposed admin assistant.

MR further reported that their current chairman, Ian Whale, would be standing down at their annual meeting in November, so they would be seeking a new chairman.

A resident by the lock at Stratford St Mary had offered a site at the bottom of their garden for the construction of a jetty, with access through their property. This was being considered.

The portage at Dedham Lock was being looked at, to see what improvements could be made, with the possibility of a culvert being constructed over the deepest dip in the path. This would require consent from the EA, who would be willing to consider the plan.

Correspondence

A letter of complaint about the management of a wedding at The Granary had been received. MF had dealt with the matter, and a compensation payment had been agreed.

A donation of £350.00 had been received from Mediterranean Shipping Company (UK) Ltd, following participation in S2C by one of their employees. MF had acknowledged its receipt and thanked the company for their generosity.

Membership Report

Reports covering September and October 2015 were tabled. Acceptance was proposed by JL, seconded by MR and approved unanimously.

Any Other Business

GD reported on the Lengthsman Scheme, explaining how it had operated in the past. He stated that the scheme had fallen into disuse and, given the problems in finding volunteers to operate it, proposed that the scheme be discontinued. It was important however, that members continued to report issues on the navigation to the EA, and if necessary, to the Trust. It was agreed that the scheme be suspended for the present. However, it might prove necessary to re-instate the scheme if the Trust was granted Navigation Authority status in the future.

Canals and River Trust Annual Public Meeting

MF had attended this meeting in September on behalf of the Trust. He had spoken to Richard Parry, Chief Executive, and had determined that the CRT was not planning to take over as Navigation Authority, and that DeFRA had no plans to re-assess the current position as no funds were available and that this strategy was not being actively pursued. He said that nothing was likely to change during the current parliament.

Lock Lintel

EB asked when Council was expecting the next edition, and agreed to look into a possible production schedule. It was agreed that publication should be as soon as was practically possible.

Date and Time of next meeting:

It was agreed that Council would endeavour to meet on the second Thursday of each month, and that the next meeting would take place on 12 November 2015, possibly at a venue in Manningtree. JR stated that she would not be at that meeting, therefore someone else would need to take notes.