

RST Council

Minutes of meeting held on Thursday 14 January 2016 at The VEC, Great Cornard, at 7.00 pm

Those present: Emrhys Barrell (EB, via Skype), Roger Brown (RB), Susan Brown (SB), Gordon Denney (GD), Mike Finch (MF), Jim Lunn (JL), Andrew Richardson (AR, Chair), Mick Rogers (MR); Catherine Burrows (CB, Administrator, taking minutes), Bob Foster(BF).

Apologies for absence: Mike Harrington-Spier (MHS), John Morris (JM)

Identification of Confidential Business & Notification of AOB topics - None

Minutes of meeting held on 10 December 2015

Proposed MF, seconded MR, approved unanimously that 'the Minutes of 10.12.15 are accepted as a correct record of the meeting.'

It was agreed that these Minutes could be posted on the website, as recorded.

Matters arising from those Minutes, not covered by the agenda for this meeting

Honorary Life Memberships – Alan Davison and Ian Rutter both sent a letters of thanks. Alan Davison would like his existing annual payment to now be an ongoing donation.

John Mills had initially gratefully accepted but later rescinded because he felt it unnecessary when there are others just as deserving for their efforts. It was suggested that John Mills might prefer to continue with his annual payment but it could be considered a donation instead.

New Trustees

MF introduced Bob Foster and explained what a benefit his RST involvement has been since joining; not least in terms of establishing working/social relationships with people/groups the RST need to be on good terms with e.g. lower river landowners.

John Morris was unable to attend tonight's meeting but Council was informed that he is enthusiastic (having been on Council in the past), has recently become Lower River Group Chairman and is also involved as a volunteer with National Trust at Flatford.

Proposed MF, seconded JL, Approved Unanimously 'to co-opt Bob Foster onto Council.'

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Treasurer's Report – MF

All three bank balances remained healthy with overall total of approximately £56,000, but this does not show outstanding creditors and debtors. RST Insurances had been paid and the majority of certificates received for display at our venues, operational bases and on the boats.

Another appeal to the membership for someone to take on the role of Treasurer has been emailed (postal version to be sent imminently). As yet, no one has come forward and the role has been vacant for 4 months. Council discussed how best to proceed and AR suggested employing a Treasurer to also oversee day to day bookkeeping. ACTION: MF and CB to speak with our bookkeeper about this possibility.

It was noted that although our constitution does not make the role of Treasurer (or indeed Chairman) compulsory it is vital to have someone take a strategic approach to RST finances. It was suggested that Council as a whole

could undertake the role of Treasurer in terms of strategy and decision. The day to day accounting would carry on as normal and required information reports can be generated on Sage.

It was unknown whether there was further Veolia funding set aside for Dedham lock (project currently at a standstill) that could potentially be transferred to Stratford St Mary lock; as indicated by previous Treasurer, Gareth Cole. BF said that he would try and find out more as he had a link to someone affiliated with Veolia. EB said that he had emailed over sources of funding to Gareth Cole and agreed to retrieve these emails to send on to all Council. SB suggested that an appeal for a dedicated Fundraiser be sent to members.

Recent & Forthcoming Events

- S2C, 24-25 September – A couple of volunteers got in touch via S2C Facebook page to offer to undertake the role of sweeper for this year's event. CB has thanked them and confirmed their availability. ACTION: AR to follow up (has access to S2C page).

BF suggested that S2Cers would pay more for taking part and a 'free' t-shirt could be part of the fee. After taking part for 5 years a gold t-shirt could be presented. AR confirmed that the S2C logo is copyright free. ACTION: AR to provide quotes for t-shirts.

- SBOC Lunch, 30 January – 64 people are booked in for this. It was NOTED that the current owners of The Henny Swan are planning to review the financial position of the pub in the summer and might choose to close down.
- SBOC Talks, 5 & 26 February – Evening gatherings at The Granary. Bar will be open (staffed free of charge by Jam Tartz). Further details to follow.
- RST Open Evening, Dedham Assembly Rooms, 18 February, 7.30pm – Sharing the history of the River Stour and the activities and ethos of the River Stour Trust. Free admission, refreshments and bar.

Stratford St Mary Lock

Council discussed how best to proceed with the project this year. It was agreed that Martin Childs should be asked to visit the site for his method should he have the contract. AR commented that Peter Mimpriss might like to visit the site too.

There was some discussion about land ownership at Stratford St Mary as there were some queries about certain areas. The negotiations between RST and the Tolhurst family had made no progress and approaches via social connections had not made any progress either. GD said a formal approach should now be adopted and suggested emailing Mrs Tolhurst's son, Julian, would be quicker and more likely to garner a response than a postal letter.

ACTION: MF to email Martin Childs and arrange site visit as soon as feasible to help RST set out its plans for the site. MF can then email Julian Tolhurst to informing about RST plans for the project.

Flatford Lock

The National Trust has still not responded to RST concerns about the flooding problems at Flatford. It has been nearly 4 months since a letter was sent to the Regional Office and a month since a letter was sent to the Regional Director. ACTION: MF to write to escalate our complaint to the National Trust.

Dedham Lock – no progress to report.

SBOC Report (11.01.16 draft minutes circulated)

MF had attended the recent SBOC meeting and expressed concern regarding communication between Council and SBOC. SBOC members said they unaware that their Maintenance Schedule had been accepted (with the exception of the refurbishment of Francis J's topsides, and the painting of her hull) by Council at its December 2015 meeting. Also that Council had agreed that two items be added to the Maintenance Schedule: the

replacement of the outboard mounting board on FJ, which had deteriorated badly over the last season, and the replacement of the cutlass bearing on Rosette (to be done while she was out of the water over the winter).

MF had explained to SBOC that an open budget system without recourse to Council was not possible. Claims for expenditure above £50 needed prior approval with receipts to be submitted as soon as possible. However, regular maintenance, emergency repairs and safety expenses could exceed that figure and would be accepted by Council, often retrospectively. SBOC seemed to be confused about what constitutes maintenance for the boats and still regarded Francis J's proposed refurbishment as a maintenance item.

The issue of David Kirkman's email response to Council, following its decision to defer his proposal of partial rebuilding FJ, was raised. There was strong disagreement amongst members on how to deal with this, with some members wanting a formal denial - or else Council would be deemed to have accepted erroneous criticism. However, it was pointed out that Council's subsequent actions have shown due diligence.

EB queried the suggestion at the last meeting, and in SBOC minutes, to test all the boats at the start of the 2016 season as they were all currently tested to appropriate Inland Waters Small Passenger Boat Code guidelines or better (75kg/12 stone per passenger) except for FJ. [It was later reported that Stour Trusty II had been tested to carry passengers with an average weight of 90kg]. The additional 10kg margin per passenger is used by the hire boat code because they do not have a fully trained and qualified skipper to oversee boat loads. It was suggested that testing all the boats at 85kg/13½ stone per person would be good practice for the future and the consideration of a load line for the boats could be a beneficial addition for the skippers. It was decided to abide by the IWSPBC method which the Frolic boats have been tested to. However, since there was no British method for testing pontoon boats it was decided to adopt the US Coastguard simplified pontoon stability test (85kg per person) for FJ.

Proposed GD, Seconded SB, Approved Unanimously to 'withdraw Francis J from service until tests were completed using the US Coastguard test at 85kg per person'

ACTION: MF and JL to put together a document that outlines how to deal with passengers boat loads.

Lower River Group (17.10.15 draft minutes circulated)

It was NOTED that the LRG Minutes should be amended to show claims of no more than £50 ideally requiring prior approval.

An Open Evening at Dedham is taking place on 18.02.16 to offer information, promote the river and share RST activities and ethos. It was pointed out that queries regarding the number of powered craft permitted to operate on the lower stretch might arise. It was clarified that the EA, as Navigation Authority, grant permission for the RST to operate a second boat.

A potential permanent mooring at Stratford St Mary was on offer following discussions with a resident who has provisionally agreed to allow brides to board Kathleen from her garden using her floating jetty. MF said that Jax Horswill had been extremely helpful in regards to contacts and storage of RST boats.

Cattawade Picnic Site

Item 1- Gate: ACTION: Two quotes to be submitted by LRG.

Item 2- Picnic Benches: ACTION: Comparative costs for wheelchair friendly picnic benches made of both plastic and compressed wood to be submitted by LRG.

Item 3- AONB Orchard: Council were informed that an LRG member will be trained by AONB in how to prune the fruit trees.

Item 4- General Maintenance: An open budget is not possible.

Item 5- Signage: A promotional RST sign had been intended for design in conjunction with a new RST leaflet. Council agreed a new sign in principle and AR suggested arranging a site visit with CB.

Granary Refurbishment

The Tea Room volunteers are to view the plans on 17 January 2016 to offer their suggestions and comments.

CB will seek to clarify wedding licence requirements in regards to what exactly constitutes a separate, private area away from the marriage room for wedding related discussions.

It was suggested that a kitchen cupboard could be designated as a locked unit for a safe and a drop off chute accessible from the corridor installed for boat/tea room takings.

Administration Report

- Wedding Package Prices – The 2017 Wedding Packages prices are to be increased in light of the planned renovation and no increase for a couple of years. The top package (ceremony, reception and boat trips) is currently £875 (includes £100 bar fee) and the new price will not exceed £1000. AGREED.
- End of Year Accounts and AGM 2016 – Our bookkeeper was still working on 2015 and had asked that all 2015 claims be submitted ASAP. Once ready the paperwork would need to be delivered to our Accountants. Council confirmed the AGM date as Wednesday 22 June, at 7pm, at The Granary. No bar required but volunteers will be needed to assist with refreshments.
- Mooring/Storage Late/Non-Payers – There are three outstanding payments from 2015 including lapsed memberships (required for this facility). Our terms state that RST can terminate agreement with 21 days notice after which the owner forfeits ownership of their craft. However, CB queried how to enforce this and wanted someone to oversee this facility. ACTION: CB to create appeal for a volunteer Harbour Master.
- A Suffolk Ceremony Magazine – The magazine is available twice a year, March and September, with around 10,000 copies distributed per edition. The Granary had a venue listing in both editions (cheapest advert style and include photo). ACTION: CB to book venue listing in September issue only.

Correspondence

- John Mills, Alan Davison and Ian Rutter had all sent letters regarding honorary membership (as discussed earlier in the meeting).
- MF had written to his MP regarding the Canal & River Trust becoming the Navigation Authority, and had a response that lack of finance was the stumbling block. It would be good to get more people doing the same but the closing date for responses was soon.
- There had been no response from the National Trust (NT) following our second letter about the flooding issue at Flatford. ACTION: MF to send a third letter but to the next level up within the NT. BF to do some land registry searches for the area although it was unlikely to reveal anything if the land is leased.
- Our insurances (employers' liability, public & products liability, trustee indemnity) have been renewed and the certificates received. The boat insurance will be renewed in March 2016.

Membership Report - This had also been circulated before the meeting and no discussion was required.

Any Other Business

Lifejackets – It was NOTED that some of the Sudbury adult lifejackets are still missing although Granary shed is fully stocked for the new season. All gas bottles are fine but six firing mechanisms are close to their expiry date and six adult lifejackets are required. It was suggested that the lifejackets should be more obviously RST branded. It was suggested that the RST fabric badges (remaining stock before the clothing re-style) could be utilised and sewn onto the lifejackets.

ACTION: EB to order six firing cartridge and six adult Baltic lifejackets. JL to arrange RST branding of the lifejackets using the RST fabric badges.

Date and Time of next meeting

Thursday 11 February 2016, at 7.00 pm, at Dedham (venue to be confirmed),

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 10.05pm