

River Stour Trust - Minutes of the meeting of Council held on Thursday 11 February 2016 At The Marlborough Head Hotel, Dedham

Those present: Mike Finch (MF), Jim Lunn (JL), Roger Brown (RB), Sue Brown (SB), Mick Rogers (MR), Bob Foster (BF), Jane Rogers (taking notes)
Ian Whale (IW, observing)

Apologies received from: Andrew Richardson, John Morris, Mike Harrington-Spier, Gordon Denney, Emrhys Barrell, Catherine Burrows

In the absence of Andrew Richardson, Mike Finch assumed the chair for the meeting.

Confidential Business – none identified.

Minutes of the meeting held on 14 January 2016

BF pointed out that Trusty had been tested to carry passengers with an average weight of 90kg, rather than the 75kg required.

MF proposed acceptance of the Minutes, seconded by MR; approved unanimously

It was proposed that before publication of the minutes on line, references by name to the Stratford resident allowing access to the river through her property for the purposes of transporting wedding parties to Le Talbooth, be de-personalised. This was agreed and proposed by MF, seconded by MR; approved unanimously. **Action: CB**

Matters arising from those Minutes:

MF reported that he had still to talk to the Trust's bookkeeper as discussed; work on year-end figures had made this impractical. **Action: MF**

S2C – no report had been received from AR. **Action: AR**

SSM Lock – no response had been received from Martin Childs Ltd. MF to pursue. **Action: MF**

Land adjoining SSM Lock. A meeting was due to be held, week beginning 15 February to discuss the best way of approaching the landowners involved. Previous approaches were outlined. BF agreed to speak with the secretary of the LRG, and another local resident, who knew the personalities involved. **Action: BF**

It was noted that contractors and others would need to access both sides of the lock basin to carry out the proposed replacement of the gates, and for future maintenance and this matter would need to be resolved.

Various options were discussed. MF agreed to speak to Andrew Sheldon, who had had previous conversations with the landowners involved. **Action: MF**

MF followed a line from the discussion and suggested that the Trust look at the option of offering to purchase or lease the strip of land adjacent to the lock on the eastern side. It was agreed that this would be discussed at a meeting to be held on Thursday 18 February at the home of RB and SB, at 10.30 am. Council members were invited to attend.

MF reported that the response to his letter to the National Trust was unhelpful. It was agreed that he should write to the national headquarters to pursue the matter of conditions at Flatford Mill.

Action: MF

It was noted that personnel from the Environment Agency would be visiting the River on Tuesday 16 February to inspect various areas of concern, including Dedham and Flatford.

Testing of Francis J. MF reported on US Coastguard protocols for testing pontoon boats, where limits of passenger numbers were determined using 40 mph winds pressure or movement of passengers, whichever was the greater. He further stated that it was proving very difficult to find someone in the UK who had the necessary experience to test pontoon boats. It was suggested that

the Broads Authority might be in a position to advised the Trust. It was also pointed out that the policy of the Trust was not to operate boats in high winds so the 40mph test would not be applicable.

Cattawade Picnic Site – BF reported on research into plastic picnic benches, and noted that the wooden style had a life span two thirds of that of the plastic version. It was also reported that bus shelters in the Dedham Vale were being replaced with plastic models, so there should be no adverse reaction to plastic benches. It was agreed that the Trust would use plastic benches on the picnic site.

Gate at Cattawade –RB had been commissioned to design a gate for the car park at the picnic site, which had been done. It was agreed to go ahead with the gate, which needed to be in place before S2C in September. **Action: RB**

Volunteer Harbour Master - no action had been taken yet. **Action: CB**

Financial Report

MF circulated the latest position on the bank accounts, but reminded Council that this did not reflect the true position of Trust finances, as it included deposits for future events, and did not include uncleared cheques. It was noted that the position was very little different from that reported in January. A sum of £750.00 in unreturned deposit was showing in the accounts; it was noted that CB was investigating this. **Action: CB**

EB had done some work on boat income and expenditure from 2014. It was noted that Trusty was the biggest earner; it was further noted that the Granary created the greatest income.

IW noted that it was intended to run Trusty on four days a week in the 2016 season. If any skippers or crew from SBOC wanted to volunteer their time, familiarisation training would be given.

The costs of running JC were estimated at £2200 per annum approx, based on the costs of insurance and the triennial lift out for maintenance. SBOC had set up a programme of events using JC to promote use of the vessel. After discussion it was agreed to ask SBOC to look at the possibility of fitting a collapsible canopy.

Payroll Software – the bookkeeper had reported that the contract on the current payroll software was due to expire within the next two months, and requested that the Trust change the software it used. It was agreed that research be carried out to source another package, including the costs of changing. **Action: MF and CB**

Insurance – it was noted that boat insurances on the fleet, with the exception of JC, would fall due in March.

Budget for advertising – SBOC had requested a budget for advertising aimed at promoting the boats operating from Sudbury. A sum of c£500 was proposed, for a series of advertisements in various local publications. After discussion this expenditure was approved, with the proviso that SBOC analyse the returns per trip and per vessel. **Action: JL and MHS**

Discussion was also held on the possibility of placing articles in parish magazines, throughout the Dedham Vale. It was suggested that a common article was used.

Vacancy for Treasurer - there was still no response to searches for a Treasurer. BF suggested that a letter was sent to local newspapers appealing for a volunteer.

Temporary Jetty at Stratford St Mary – IW reported that LRG had revisited the variety of module to be used for the jetty, and stated that they had agreed to use Versadoc instead of the alternative they had originally proposed, as this would be compatible with the Versadoc already owned by the Trust. The cost of 9 units with fixings would be £785.00. It was agreed to go ahead and order the modules. **Action: IW to send details to the administrator for her to place the order.**

Because of issues with delivery of the units purchased in 2015, it was agreed that IW should make further enquiries about delivery costs. **Action: IW**

Recent and Forthcoming Events

SBOC Annual Lunch – it was noted that this event, held at the end of January was well attended and successful.

Granary Social Events - thanks were expressed to SB for her talk on the history of the canal system in England on 12 February, which raised a small amount of money for Trust funds. The next event, on 26 February would be a talk by Robert Baker on Cornard Mill and its industries. A fish and chip supper would also be served.

Sudbury to the Sea 2016 – it was agreed that JR would approach Andrew Sheldon to see if he would be interested in taking on this role for 2016. **Action: JR**

LRG Open Meeting - to be held in Dedham on 18 February, to talk about the Trust's activities on the lower river.

Stratford St Mary Lock

RB had produced an estimate for the costs involved in clearing the lock channel and chamber - ready for the installation of new gates - at £7000.00. MF reported that the EA had some partnership funding which would be available if the Trust put it a formal application. The amount available would be up to 50% of the costs; the balance could be made up of cash plus volunteer hours. It was agreed that the Trust should apply for funding for both SSM lock and a culvert at Dedham, which would improve access to the canoe portage point by Dedham lock. **Action: MF and BF to talk to EA**

Flatford Lock

MF and Ian Whale were scheduled to attend a meeting with the AONB, Essex and Suffolk County Councils, the EA, the NT, the Field Study Centre and concerned parish councils to discuss the position and try to resolve the current statement. **Action: MF**

Sudbury Boat Operations

The next meeting would take place during the week beginning 22 February, and boat maintenance had started.

It was noted that Edwardian Lady and Kathleen needed new Boat Safety Certificates; it was agreed that this be scheduled for immediately after their re-launch. John Constable's renewal would be due in 2017.

The jetty at Henny Swan which is used for turning JC, had been damaged by a falling tree and was in need of repair before JC could go to Henny again.

It was reported that contractors installing a drain in the Quay Theatre's car park had installed an open-ended pipe which terminated immediately behind our fence, draining dirty water over our jetty into the river. This was deemed to be unacceptable and probably illegal. It was agreed that AR, who was a trustee of the Quay Theatre, be asked to deal with this matter, including the removal of the drain pipe. **Action: AR**

Lower River Group

It was reported that members of the committee had met with Mr Paul Milsom of Le Talbooth, for a productive meeting. Mr Milsom was reported to be happy with plans to offer wedding parties a trip from Stratford St Mary to Le Talbooth, as an alternative to the trip from Dedham, which was currently not viable. The cost of the trip was to be increased. It was also agreed that short trips on Sunday afternoons would start at 2.00 pm during the 2016 season. The possibility of also offering short trips on Monday evenings when Le Talbooth was running its BBQ season.

JL said that the ruling on children wearing life jackets was that children of 12 and under, not children under 12, should be supplied with life jackets, and this would be implemented in future.

The programme of winter maintenance was going well. IW was asked to check that a query regarding a 'motor spider' being broken had been repaired. **Action: IW**

Granary Refurbishment

JR reported that she and CB had arranged a meeting with Barry Whymark, the architect who was working on the plans for the refurbishment, which would take place on 17 February. A report would be made to the next meeting. **Action: JR and CB**

It was also noted that we were still awaiting a quotation for repair of the doors on the upper floor of the Granary. **Action: JR to chase**

Administrator's Report

It was noted that there was no report this month.

However MF reported that the provision of a pension for the Administrator was ongoing, with most schemes being an 8% of salary contribution, with 4% from the employee, 3% from the employer, and 1% from the government. This had to be in place before October 2016.

Discussion had been had between MF and CB about changing the number on the Granary compound padlock, which would be done by the end of February, and issued to those who had paid for boat storage, or who needed official access to the compound.

Correspondence

Already discussed under Matters Arising.

Membership report

This was tabled, with no new members to be elected.

Any Other Business

MR suggested, and RB agreed, that Jane Rogers should be re-appointed as a Trustee of the Trust.

Date of next meeting:

Thursday 17 March 2016, at the VEC at 7.00 pm.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 9.25 pm