

RIVER STOUR TRUST

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF COUNCIL

Held on Thursday 9 November 2017, at the VEC, Great Cornard

Those Present: John Morris (JM, in the chair), Emrhys Barrell (EB, by telephone link), Paul Brewerton (PB), Roger Brown (RB), Sue Brown (SB), Bob Foster (BF), David Kirkman (DK), Jim Lunn (JL), James Parkinson (JP), Alan Thomas (AT), Jane Rogers (JR, Company Secretary, taking notes)

1. Apologies were received from Gordon Denney, Pam Johnson, Graham Simmons

Also present: Norman Ryan, observing

2. Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 12 October 2017

Subject to amendments

Item 14.3 to read 'DK said that Tim Smith was unhappy with EB's comments and would most likely walk away from the Trust once this course of action was made known. Those present hoped that this would not be the case but any queries and concerns must be addressed.'

Item 12.1 should read Suffolk Walking Festival.

The Minutes were approved.

3. Matters arising from those Minutes

(a) No confidential items were identified.

(b) Follow up on Action Points

- 3.1 Dredging of channel at SSM portage point. RB noted that the decking should be widened at this point, to reach into deeper water, that the portage point belonged to the EA and their permission would be needed. It was agreed that RB should ask GD to approach the EA on this matter. **ACTION: RB and GD**
- 3.4 Transfer of responsibility for Roger Brown Lock from Working Party to DVBOC – AT reported that this was in hand, with training and operating plans being drawn up. Still needed was a telephone contact in case of emergency. A sign was needed for the Gordon Denney Bridge, together with a sign beside the Roger Brown Lock to show credits for Donors; it was noted that Mike Finch was creating this sign from timbers saved from the old lock gates. AT to take back actions to the next DVBOC meeting, including discussion on fees to using the lock, and how this was to be managed so that members of the public could use the lock. Also to be set up was a protocol for water testing as required by Essex & Suffolk Water. **ACTION: AT, RB, MF**
- Item 8 Opening of Roger Brown Lock: It was noted that GRJ was unable to commit to a date in 2018. It was felt that the Trust should go ahead and fix a date to make it easier to locate someone to perform this ceremony; it was agreed to hold the ceremony on 12 May 2018. **ACTION: JM** to follow up on Barbara Windsor.

- Item 10 – use of drone footage material. JL proposed a donation of £5.50 for material supplied on CD, and £5.00 if clients provided their own memory stick/CD, with the Trust retaining ownership of the material. Material supplied for research or education would be free of charge. This was approved.
- Fire Safety – there had been no response yet from Colin Daines or John Phillips – **ACTION: CB** to follow up
- Item 12 – JL reported that up to 24 people could take part at any one time in the proposed walks, using both JC and Edwardian Lady. Plans were ongoing, and dates were awaited from the Suffolk Walking Festival to ensure no clashes of events occurred. **ACTION: JL**
- Item 14.2- DK reported that this action was still outstanding; EB added that he was still awaiting a reply from WRG.
- Item 14.3 – refurbishment of FJ. The working group had been in email contact with information being circulated. There was disagreement about some of the proposals made. DK clarified that he had not asked a naval architect to draw up plans for the work to be carried out; he himself had drawn the diagrams, and a naval architect had commented on them, without any charge to the Trust. Some calculations had been made based on DK's drawings.
- DK left the meeting.
- SB asked to re-visit the plan submitted at the Council's September meeting and to look at problems raised by this, i.e. the slipperiness of the deck and the stability of the boat. It was noted that the work planned had gone a long way to reducing the weight of the boat, and to improve stability with the seating being replaced by a lighter version, moved more into the centre of the boat. SB suggested the use of smooth aluminium, with a commercial vinyl non-slip sheet overlaid, which PB stated would be more expensive than using Checkerplate. JM reminded Trustees that in matters of Health and Safety, cost should not take precedence over the most appropriate solution to a problem. JL noted that moving the seating would ease the stability problem and that an earlier meeting had agreed that non-slip vinyl would be a solution to the decking issue. To save costs, it might be possible for the engineering company to fit the aluminium sheeting, and for volunteers to apply the vinyl sheet. EB commented that aluminium racing yachts (using smooth aluminium) had used non-slip paint as a standard, and it would be simple to recoat the paint when wear and tear required. He noted that he had earlier suggested that the heavy wooden deck sides be replaced with canvas dodgers, thus reducing further the weight of the topsides. He also noted that the fully laden draft of the vessel should be a line no more than halfway up the pontoons, whereas currently FJ's draft without passengers was at about this level. RB queried that the current installation of seating was supporting the canopy, but PB noted that SBOC had a solution for this. It was agreed that PB should go back to the engineers to ask about fitting flat sheet aluminium. This could provide a way forward to the refurbishment of the craft ready for the 2018 season. SB proposed that the SBOC basis design be accepted, with a smooth deck, treated with an appropriate non-slip coating, instead of installing Checkerplate. Motion seconded by JP and approved unanimously by all those present. **ACTION: PB**

4. Governance of the Trust

JR was thanked for the notes covering the meeting of Council held on 25 October to discuss the governance of the Trust in the future.

JM had drawn up a possible structure for the Trust, which was circulated prior to the meeting. Various comments were made, including one from PB who would like to see a smaller board of Trustees, with a Management Board below that, with various sub-groups reporting to the Management Board. The smaller Trustee Board would be responsible for the overall governance of the Trust and its finances, including the setting of budgets. This was supported by other members. It was felt that both SBOC and DVBOC should have direct access to the Management Board, as the BOM's overall responsibilities were great. SB queried a Work Party Organiser.

JM explained that he foresaw the River Stour Management Company running the Granary and the Tearoom, as well as weed cutting as part of this restructure plan. The VEC would remain within the remit of the River Stour Trust. It was agreed that the notes from the meeting to discuss Governance would form a major part of the Council's December meeting.

5. Financial Report – already circulated – no further comments were made.

6. River Stour Navigation Company

It was noted that the Company had been acquired some years ago, to protect the name, should the Trust have need of it.

Under the aegis of a former Council Chairman, RSNC was set up with the RST Chairman of Council, the Treasurer and the Company Secretary as Trustees; this explained how the current directors, MF and AR, had been appointed. These directors were no longer members of the Trust's Council. MF was happy to continue as a director.

JM noted that the Trust should seek to change and strengthen the RSNC as it progressed and outlined a means of amending the current directorship. This was felt not to be an appropriate way forward at this time. PB asked if new directors could be appointed at any time, and was assured that this was possible. After a query from AT, it was confirmed that the current shareholders were the corporate body of the River Stour Trust. SB queried whether the Council, on behalf of the Trust, could now appoint new directors. JP asked if a director was no longer an officer of the Trust's Council, could he or she remain as a Director of RSNC; it was confirmed that it was not necessary to a director to stand down for this reason.

JM then proposed that additional directors and a company secretary be appointed to RSNC and nominated James Parkinson and Catherine Burrows as directors of RSNC, with Sandra O'Sullivan as Company Secretary. It was also proposed that the position of AR be re-considered at the February meeting of the Council. **ACTION: JR**

This proposal was approved.

It was noted that MF was working on the Memorandum and Articles of Association of both the River Stour Trust and the River Stour Trust Navigation Company.

7. Locks

(a) Roger Brown Lock – some minor landscaping work still remained and would be completed in the next few weeks.

(b) Dedham Lock – JM had circulated a confidential report on the current state of play with plans for Dedham Lock. He would report further at the next meeting if progress had been made.

(c) Flatford Lock – JP would be meeting with the EA in a few days' time, to discuss the removal of the tilting gate, and the erection of a storage shed on the lock island. The meeting would discuss the entire removal of the tilting gate, rather than decommissioning and leaving the mechanism on the lock chamber floor. It was noted that it might be possible to retain any suitable parts for future use at Dedham, where it was planned to leave the tilting gate in operation. JP was asked to request that any works be completed at Flatford before Good Friday (30 March 2018).

8. Boat Operations

(a) BOM report – nothing to report

(b) SBOC – minutes of their meeting on 6 November were circulated prior to the meeting.

It was noted that contact had been made by Babergh Council concerning the footpath from Sudbury to Great Cornard, and the use of RST land to facilitate this. It was agreed that JR would contact Babergh to arrange a site visit to confirm the requirements, and that Babergh would be financing the installation of additional fencing which would be needed for security purposes.

ACTION: JR

Vacancy for a Training Officer – in the absence of any nominations at present, AT and JL agreed to manage the training programme for the time being. (Training at DVBOC would not be affected and would continue as at present).

(c) DVBOC – had not had a meeting since the last Council meeting. BF reported that the boats had been taken out of the water into winter storage.

BF also reported on steps to define a public footpath on the lock island at Stratford St Mary, from the new footbridge to the lower lock gate, and circulated a map showing the proposed route. He noted that the next step would be to make a formal proposal to Langham Parish Council and to Essex County Council. It was agreed that BF should proceed with this. **ACTION:**

BF

(d) John Constable – it was reported that on the last occasion she was used, the boat was functioning normally, the computer system having been bypassed.

9. Chairman's Report – this was a confidential document relating to the status of negotiations with Dedham Mill Management Committee, as noted above.

10. Company Secretary's Report

Quay Lane Theatre car park drainage – a reply had been received from the Quay Theatre administrator, which did not resolve the issue, so it was agreed that JR would reply, noting that there was a soakaway in their drainage system which was, in all probability, blocked and the drainage issue might well be solved if the soakaway was cleared and reinstated. **ACTION: JR**

11. Administrator's Report

Further to the circulated report, it was noted that there would be a VAT inspection on Wednesday, 15 November in the morning. No problems were anticipated.

Action was planned to update information from those members whose subscriptions were Gift Aided.

12. Membership Report

This report had been circulated before the meeting and was approved.

SB had produced a paper for the September meeting concerning criteria for giving Honours and Awards. It had not been possible to discuss this until this meeting.

SB queried the awarding of a recent life membership and the criteria for awarding such status. She suggested that the Council should consider who should receive such status, for what or why.

JM suggested that a draft policy be drawn up for discussion at a future meeting, concerning what honours the Trust should give out, and for what reasons. JR agreed to co-ordinate suggestions from all Trustees. **ACTION: ALL**

13. 2018 Celebrations

It was noted that the Working Party needed to convene another meeting soon, and JM agreed to circulate possible dates. **ACTION: JM**

14. Correspondence

An email had been received from Phil Orford concerning work that had been carried out on the Mill Cut, thanking JP and Derek Cresswell for their assistance. Further he asked if the Trust would consider storing an aluminium canoe, used in this work, and the property of Greenscapes (the contractors employed to manage the Bakers Mill grounds), at the VEC, for no charge. It was agreed to write to Mr Orford, pointing out that the Trust took no responsibility for the safety or security of craft stored on their premises, in accordance with our normal terms and conditions for storage on both our sites, and that JP would contact him to discuss space issues and suggestions. **ACTION: JR AND JP**

15. AOB

JL announced that there would be two First Aid courses in January for those who needed an update and for anyone who did not have a current certificate. If there was sufficient demand there would be a further date in February/March, although one-on-one sessions could be arranged.

Promotion of the Trust to Riverside Communities. Norman Ryan suggested that a Trust evening, promoting the aims and motives of the Trust would be welcome in Nayland, and offered to negotiate with Nayland Village Hall for a suitable evening. JM added Bures to the list of possible venues. These sessions would follow the format of an earlier, successful, meeting in Dedham.

Best wishes for a speedy recovery were expressed to a former Trustee, Mick Rogers, who was currently unwell.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 4.00 pm.

Date and time of next meeting: THURSDAY, 14 DECEMBER 2017, AT THE VEC, AT 2.00 PM