

RIVER STOUR TRUST

MEETING OF COUNCIL

14 DECEMBER 2017 at the VEC, Great Cornard

Those present: John Morris (JM, in the chair), Emrhys Barrell (EB, via Skype), Paul Brewerton (PB), Bob Foster (BF), Graham Simmons (GS). Jane Rogers (JR, Company Secretary, taking notes), Catherine Burrows (CB, Trust Administrator, observing), Kevin Taylor (KT, member, observing)

Apologies were received from: Roger Brown, Sue Brown, Pam Johnson, Jim Lunn, James Parkinson, Alan Thomas

Resignations:

Resignations from the post of Trustee had been received from David Kirkman (with effect from 15 November 2017) and Gordon Denney (with effect from 11 December 2017). JR was asked to write to both Trustees to thank them for the work they had done whilst members of Council.

ACTION: JR and JM

It was agreed that, in view of the proposed changes to the structure of the Trust's governance, these posts be left vacant at present.

2. Minutes of the meeting held on 9 November 2017

There being no amendments, acceptance was proposed by PB, seconded by GS and agreed unanimously.

3. Matters arising from those Minutes

(a) No confidential items were identified.

(b) Action Points

3.1 Dredging of channel at SSM – no progress

3.4 Roger Brown Lock – DVB has taken over operation of the lock and training is ongoing.

Item 8 – opening of Lock – JM had not yet been able to contact Barbara Windsor.

ACTION: JM

Fire Safety: a meeting was proposed for early January for Colin Daines to come to the VEC to discuss this matter.

ACTION: JR and CD

Item 12 – Suffolk Walking Festival – on-going. CB mentioned the possibility of RST holding similar events between Stratford, Dedham, Flatford and Cattawade. BF agreed to discuss this with DVB.

ACTION: BF

Item 14.3 – PB reported that FJ had been lifted out of the water, stripped down and painted ready for the new decking etc. The work would be carried out by Philips Engineering. As that company was experiencing delays in completing work in their schedule ahead of the refit of FJ, it had been agreed that FJ would go to them early in January. Because of changes to the works specified, extra costs had been incurred, which had been approved by the Chairman and Treasurer. PB also notified Council that new rubbing strakes would be needed as the new decking would be physically thinner and the old strakes would no longer fit. It was noted, however, that these strakes could be recycled as jetty edging. PB expressed his thanks to all the volunteers who had helped carry out the work on FJ.

Item 6 – following approval of the Minutes of 9 November, JR was now tasked with carrying out the paperwork necessary for the appointment of directors and company secretary to the River Stour Navigation Company.

ACTION: JR

GS stated that it would now be necessary to define in clear terms the relationship between RST and RNSC, to ensure easy and correct operating between the two in future.

ACTION: GS to contact MF to discuss the protocols.

Item 8(c) – BF reported that the Trust could not meet criteria for the creation of a public footpath leading to Roger Brown Lock, mainly because there was no registered owner of the land involved. It was agreed that access to the lock would be established by usage; appropriate signage should be set up.

ACTION: DVB

Item 10 – Quay Theatre Car Park – JR reported on a conversation held with RB, who suggested that the neighbourly solution would be for RST to carry out further investigations and provide a solution to the problem.

ACTION: RB

Item 13 – 2018 celebrations – JM reported that a meeting of relevant people had been called for Thursday 11 January 2018.

Item 14 – Canoe storage – following discussion between the owners and RST, it was agreed that the canoe be retrieved by Greenscapes to more secure storage.

4. Financial Report – previously circulated

GS spoke to his report, stating that the upgrade to the accounting system would be in place in January, and in accordance with the supplier's requirements would be on a subscription service in future. CB and SO'S would be setting up new nominal and department codes over the next few weeks, ready to start operating with effect from 1 January 2018, the start of the next financial year.

The upgraded system would give much more detailed and timely figures, with many more reports possible. GS demonstrated a sample Cash Flow/Forecast report which would give a much clearer view of the Trust's finances at any given time.

It was also noted that the Trust was currently operating at a surplus in cash flow terms.

In the proposed new governance structure, it was suggested that the Trust be operated on two tiers – the upper tier being Trustees responsible for policy decisions, financial management (including the allocation of annual budgets and contingency funds) and responsibility for the charitable status of the Trust; the second tier would be a management board, responsible for the day to day operating of the Trust, such as boat trips, maintenance, etc. with team leaders as members of the board managing budgets, reporting to the Trustees as needed.

GS predicted that income would be down in 2018 although costs might increase. He agreed to produce more accurate figures for the February 2018 meeting.

BF acknowledged that there would be big changes in the way that the Trust's finances were managed and the need for everyone to accept this. He also recognised that there would have to be new ways of generating income for projects such as boat replacements.

JM asked GS to confirm that there were sufficient resources in place to manage the changes and was assured that this was the case.

KT observed that we would need to raise more income and queried the possible raising of boat trip and charter prices. After discussion, it was agreed that both SBOC and DVB would discuss this possibility and the feeling that maybe a ceiling had been reached in the trip boat fares, but that charter prices might be increased. Feedback would be required as soon as possible in the New Year.

GS was thanked for the work he had put in thus far to improve the financial management of the Trust.

5. RNSC – discussed earlier in the meeting.

6. Locks – Nothing to report for Roger Brown and Flatford Locks.

6b. Dedham Lock – JM reported that he and KT had been in discussion with DMMC. A paper had been circulated laying out the aims of RST with regard to the restoration of the lock and work to preserve the lock island. EB queried the wording of items 11 and 13, which JM and KT clarified.

JM suggested that as there were five Trustees missing from this meeting, a major agreement be delayed until the next meeting, but that it would be possible to tell DMMC that in principle, RST was happy for DMMC to begin legal process to make a formal agreement and lease possible. This was put to a vote and unanimously agreed.

JM further agreed that he would contact both the Environment Agency and the Canal and River Trust for their views on the terms of agreement.

ACTION: JM

It was unanimously agreed that with some minor amendments, the document be taken forward to the January 2018 meeting of Council, for acceptance.

ACTION: JM

7. Boat Operations

- (a) nothing to report from BOM
- (b) SBOC – nothing further to report
- (c) DVB – report circulated

Discussion followed about the possibility of SBOC and DVB sharing crews where possible with a view to increasing the number of trips possible. Overall it was recognised that more volunteers were needed.

DVB was also asked to clarify the operation of the waterbus in 2018 as various challenges had arisen; the possibility of running short trips from Dedham on Saturdays rather than the waterbus service was discussed, and referred back to DVB

ACTION: BF

8. Chairman's Report – this covered the position of Dedham Lock, as discussed earlier.

9. Company Secretary's Report – previously circulated.

Granary Refurbishment – two tenders had so far been received. A third tender was due to be submitted on 15 December. After consideration of the prices shown in the two tenders received, it was agreed that JR and GS be tasked with examining the documents and moving forward with the project, because of the time constraints involved.

ACTION: GS and JR

JR reported that an agreement had been reached with the EA on the weedcutting for 2017, at a cost of £5000.00. The EA purchase order was en route and the invoice would be raised as soon as this had been received.

Riverside Path between Sudbury and Great Cornard – JR reported that she and JL had met with Peter Garrett of Mid Suffolk/Babergh Council, and had reached an agreement over the route across the Trust's land at Great Cornard to link the bridge over the cut and the existing path. Mid Suffolk/Babergh will carry out the work involved in moving the boundary fence, meet those costs and all the costs in undertaking the necessary legal documents. The work should be carried out in the spring, before our boat operating season begins.

10. Administrator's Report – circulated

Designs for the 50th Anniversary logo had been circulated and the two most popular were looked at. Some amendments were agreed, and the Lintel Logo will appear with the figure 50 in gold inside the lintel diagram, with the dates 1968 – 2018 in gold inside the swirl. A second decal style logo was also agreed for use on the boats. Both logos would appear in the New Year edition of Lock Lintel. The anniversary strapline would be Preserving the Stour for You.

Thanks were expressed to Creative Design for their help in creating sample logos.

Agreement was given to the updating of the tri-fold leaflet advertising the boat operations, with a view to printing 10,000 copies as soon as possible.

ACTION: CB

11. Membership Report – tabled

Two new memberships were approved.

12. Awards Criteria – deferred to January 2018 meeting.

13. Governance of the Trust- deferred to January 2018 meeting.

14. Recent and Forthcoming events – full discussion deferred to January 2018 meeting.

PB asked that consideration be given to the re-shoaling of the river bed in Gasworks Cut in preparation for the proposed Trail Boat rally in 2018. A budget proposal would be needed.

ACTION: PB and RB

15. Correspondence – none received.

16. AOB

(a) – Land opposite the Swan Inn at Stratford St Mary. A paper had been circulated with suggestions for making use of the land between the road and the river opposite the pub. Following discussion, it agreed to seek a permissive path to allow members of the public to cross the grassed area to access the jetty (built by River Stour Boating some years ago), where they could board our boats, or those of RSB, in order to travel on the river.

(b) CB referred to a training course being offered to learn about the new Data Protection Rules coming into force in 2018, at a cost of £40. It was agreed that it would be necessary for someone from RST to attend such a course. CB was asked to decide who would be the best person and to book a place on the course.

ACTION: CB

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 4.30 pm.

Dates of future meetings:

2018 Celebrations Management Group – Thursday 11 January 2018, VEC, 11.00am

Council – Thursday 11 January 2018, VEC, 2.00pm

Council – Thursday 8 February 2018, 2.00pm – venue tbc