

Minutes of the River Stour Trust Council
held on Monday 16 September 2019 at The Granary, Sudbury

Those present: Paul Brewerton (PB), Bob Foster (BF), Jim Lunn (JL), Alan Thomas (AT)
Minutes Secretary: Catherine Burrows (CB, Administrator)
Members: Mike Finch (MF), Kevin Taylor (KT)

1. Apologies for Absence: Emrhys Barrell (EB), John Morris (JM), Graham Simmons (GS),

2. Declaration of Interests (DoI): None.

3. Minutes of the meetings held on 11 July 2019: to be circulated before the next meeting

4. Matters arising not covered in this agenda: N/A

5. Notification of AOB: JL – personal matter, AT- boat incident (discussed under item 8c), PB – John Mills

6. Appointment of Company Secretary: Keith Grinstead (KG) had resigned as Trustee and Company Secretary as he was currently unable to meet the time specific demands of the role (this also includes his other voluntary activities such as crewing on the boats and assisting with our social media). PB, GS and CB had met with KG to thank him on behalf of the Trust for his contribution. He would assist with one off enquiries in regards to the tasks he had undertaken and perhaps become involved again in the future.

JR had declined the offer to return to the role but did offer administrative assistance with a weekly office visit. CB had also been approached but explained she was unable to do so due to a lack of the required knowledge and experience as well as wanting the responsibility of the role to remain within the domain of the Trustees. It was suggested that the Trust utilise specific websites to advertise the role. In the meantime, JL agreed to be named as Company Secretary as long as JR and CB would fulfil a supporting role.

7. Financial Report:

A full report would be prepared for the October meeting with the main topic to focus on the VEC rebuild. DVB and SBOC were pleased with their respective operations and boat income. The Granary was quieter with wedding bookings this year (presumably due to the delay in confirming wedding licence renewal) but it had instead hosted more general party bookings and we were in profit for bar income even with purchasing start up stock for the bar.

VAT boats - The initial paperwork to assess our claim to HMC had been sent to Saffrey Champness. A phone discussion had also indicated that there was potential to include FJ. Although it does not have 10 fixed seats, its modifications are to accommodate disabled passengers for which other clauses can be referred to. Before paperwork at the VEC went into storage, CB had extracted what might be required for a claim but it is unknown at this stage what HMRC might request. Unfortunately, annual leave for both parties had delayed the engagement process.

IE/Auditors – expressions of interest have been sent to Peyton Tyler Mears (current IE), Burdett King Accountancy Limited (recommended by GS), Seago and Stopps (Sudbury firm).

8. Update Reports

8a) VEC rebuild (VEC Rebuild paper circulated before the meeting) – Following the return of Tenders for the VEC rebuild, we have now analysed the only creditable tender alongside our

Insurers. Unfortunately, this tender which represents all the additional changes, for example access for all and fire safety compliance has come in considerably higher than early estimates. In effect, this alongside costs already incurred by our Insurers could make the total rebuild cost higher than the total sum insured. The Trust has had the premises revalued professionally on a regular basis. Our Insurance Policy provides the following: -

1. The policy covers reinstatement as 'like for like' of the VEC-any additions or alterations are the responsibility of the RST.
2. The policy does not cover loss of earnings currently £5500 pa.
3. All professional fees, planning, building regulations and specialist surveys come out of the total sum insured.
4. The policy does provide separately for contents and interim setting up costs.

The cost implications were set out in the VEC Rebuild Paper and HMRC have been contacted due to the VAT element of the project. Our insurer has not paid VAT on previous claims and RST could not claim back all the VAT as we are partially exempt. This leads to a cashflow issue for the RST and it was thought worthwhile that Saffrey Champness assist in the matter of VAT.

We have been looking at a number of options that might with further research become workable solutions once discussion with HMRC and Insurers are explored.

1. Re-tender in the hope that a more economic result is obtained
2. Proceed with JW Hughes, this runs the risk that the trust will end up having to bear a proportion of the cost.
3. Revise the works to a lesser scope, this may reduce overall cost but will not provide a 'like for like' building and is likely to increase further professional fees etc.
4. Agree a cash settlement up to the amount of the sum insured less costs incurred to date.

The following formed part of the discussions:

- Possibly moving the office downstairs to negate the need for a lift with the upper level to remain as an attic storage space.
- Volunteers to carry out a lot of the internal decorations as had been the case initially.
- Taking a cash settlement and having a completely new building (e.g. pre-fabricated).
- Selling the land (not possible as gifted to RST and also a perfect site for educational visits).
- Descoping the plans and utilising local architect and builders to bring the costs down (still to be managed by our insurer).

Overall, it was agreed to form a working group to look into this in more details (comprising PB, GS, AT and inviting RST member, Alan Ryan). **ACTION:** Electronic copies of the schedule to be circulated to all. Site visit to be arranged.

[CB left the meeting]

8b) Dedham Lock – The VAT claim was discussed as it would presumably fall under the same rulings as previous lock restorations. It was NOTED that Council thanked KT for all his work on this project, particularly over the last month.

[CB returned]

8c) BOM – A National Trust (NT) rowboat hirer had emailed RST, NT and IWA following a collision between his rowboat oar and Trusty. RST had been in touch with NT in person and by email- they seemed satisfied with our follow up. An email response to all parties had been sent advising that this was being looked into but no follow up communication from the hirer or IWA. The rowboat hirer had been emailed separately for further information but no reply to date. AT has assessed that our volunteers' initial response on the day could have been better whilst MF explained that overhanging vegetation narrows the river significantly. BF said that Dedham Boathouse Rowboat operator explains to its hirers that overhanging vegetation and varying river levels might force RST boats to the left-hand side of the river.

8d) SBOC – a new volunteer has previous experience in their working life preparing risk assessments. They were looking at our policies and paperwork to suggest improvements. For example, a new sign in sheet for boat volunteers that includes recording the wind speed and general weather conditions to ensure a permanent record is maintained for future reference should this ever be needed. It was suggested that he should liaise with his DVB counterpart (Colin Daines/Steve Durham).

SBOC had hosted a visit from Grove Ferry who commercially operate a boat similar to EL on the Kent River Stour. This was an opportunity to give information on the history of the Suffolk/Essex Stour, the Trust as well as share ideas. It is hoped a visit to their Stour can be arranged next year.

8e) DVB – River congestion is increasingly causing problems. There had been a trial to operate a regular boat trip from Dedham but the riverbank is akin to a beachside location which proved stressful for our volunteers who are concerned that they might hit people who are wading/swimming in the water.

The boat storage for this winter remains the same but we do need to find an alternative for winter 2020.

It was suggested that DVB takings are paid into a different bank account to be administered by a DVB volunteer. The practicalities and merits of this proposal to be discussed outside of the meeting.

9. AOB notified under item 5

9a) Personal matter, Jim Lunn – JL explained his desire to stand down at the next AGM and also relinquish the role of Designated Premises Supervisor.

9b) John Mills - PB explained that longstanding member, John Mills, was moving away at the end of the month with an invitation to all for farewell drinks at The Henny Swan on 18.09.19 (2-4pm). He has already been awarded life membership but it was recommended that his contribution to the Trust be recognised by appointing him as a Vice President. It was **AGREED** to offer John Mills the role of Vice President.

CB suggested that a new category be devised that could acknowledge the contribution of members in the future.

10. Date & time of next meeting: 10am-12pm, Monday 14 October, 10am-12pm, The Granary

MEETING CLOSED