

River Stour Trust Council Meeting
Tuesday 13 July 2023 at 9:45am
[virtual via Zoom - meeting was recorded]

Present - Trustees: Richard Blay (RB), Paul Brewerton (PB), Steve Durham (SD),
Others: Catherine Burrows (CB), Alan Ryan (AR)

1. **Apologies for absence:** Emrhys Barrell (EB), Maggie Gardner (MG), Jim Lunn (JL), Jane Rogers (JR) and Lisa King (LK - accountant). Everyone sent best wishes to EB hoping he recovers well from surgery.
2. **Minutes of last meeting:** It was **AGREED** to accept the minutes with no redactions identified for the online version.
3. **Matters Arising:** as tabled on Agenda.
4. **Appointment of Boat Operations Manager (BOM)/Deputy BOM**
Graham Gardner had met with JL and was happy to take on the role of RST BOM. There would be a handover process and his acceptance of the role needed to be ratified by the trustees. It was **PROPOSED PB, SECONDED SD** that 'Council is pleased to accept Graham Gardner as the newly appointed Boat Operations Manager' **AGREED UNANIMOUSLY**
5. **Reports**
 - a) **Financial** - P&L report had been circulated.
 - b) **Management**
 - i. **Dedham Focus Group** – RST invited to attend online meeting to discuss forthcoming 'street meet' and a 'day of action' following antisocial problems along the river but particularly focussed on Dedham.
ACTION: RB and CB to represent RST at meeting.
 - ii. **S2C** – Our volunteer organiser for the past few years, Seb Cailles, is in the process of moving away and had only recently confirmed that he is unable to undertake the role as he has done previously. Cancellation this year was a real possibility although the event brings in significant income before the winter months. A one-day event (ending at the campsite) was also a consideration as there are also navigational issues jeopardising the event, including the closure of portages and the actual navigation beyond Boxted Bridge. CB admonished those unfamiliar with the efforts and hours required to prepare for this and other events, which very much rely on a team effort. As such, there had been no recent promotion of the event and no bookings taken whilst details remain unknown. **ACTION:** PB and CB to liaise with Seb, EA, etc.
It was noted that communication channels with the EA seem to have broken down with no response to emails or phone calls. CB understood this was not a problem only RST had encountered but also seemed to be an internal issue within the EA.
 - c) **Membership** – No report.
 - d) **SBOC** – bookings were good with the weekend scheduled Henny Swan Lunch Cruise fully booked throughout July, August and most of September. There are also numerous weekday boat charters during those months.
 - e) **DVB** – It is intended to offer short trips at Flatford 7 days per week during the school summer holidays, subject to volunteer availability. However, the river congestion at the weekends is making the trip boat operation more difficult and less enjoyable for some and this has led to fewer willing weekend volunteers.

- f) **Dedham Lock** – AR reported that RB has joined the project team. KT continues to liaise with DMMC and there will be a meeting with Dedham Vale Tree Surgeons to discuss removal of a tree that will impede the works. The tree clearing and revetment repairs are priority before the lock gate installation. It is intended to take the lock gates out of storage so they can be submerged in the water at the site to absorb water before installation.
- g) **River Maintenance** – Emails on progress have previously been circulated. There is a break until September although smaller tasks are being undertaken such as the SSM Carol Lawrence jetty installation, painting at Dedham site, river clearance, finishing Cattawade fencing. A lot of these projects were long overdue and have been well received but it was important to highlight that no budget currently existed for RMG works. Since its inception the 3 Flatford tasks, there had been no further project costings submitted to allow RST control of its cashflow. **ACTION:** RB to prepare costings for upcoming and liaise more closely with the Treasurer.

6. Health & Safety

- i) **River collisions** - SD reported minor collisions on the Flatford-Dedham stretch between RST trip boat and NT rowboats (shock for those involved but no injuries). SD was writing a report to send to Simon Peachey (NT Flatford site manager). CB mentioned that dashcams being fitted to the boats had been suggested and agreed some time ago but not followed up.
- j) **Water level** – This can change a lot within a day. If the level drops below 1.3m then accidents occur. Also see item 7 below.
- k) **Operational error** – a stern rope had not been properly stowed and wrapped around a propellor. There were no injuries, but some embarrassment and volunteer got wet resolving the problem!
- l) **Working Party Lifejackets** – high-capacity types are required for working parties and the Dedham lock project.

7. **Environmental** – The Flatford bank breach is a particular concern so RST liaising with NT and landowner, Guy Lennox, to agree a way forward.

8. **Member Communications** – There was no progress for the production of the next newsletter. **ACTION:** Article suggestions and photos to be sent to CB, PB and MG.

9. AOB

- a) **Sudbury Canoe Club (SCC) request** – SCC have asked for independent access to VEC toilets. This was **AGREED** subject to trial period factoring in cleaning costs, other users, etc. **ACTION:** CB to follow up.
- b) **John Constable** – the surveyor has visited to provide a report for the insurance assessor. A copy will be provided for our records. It was **NOTED** that giving the lighter away is not a viable option due to grant conditions. Further discussion on way forward once we have heard back from our insurers.
- c) **Granary Fire Exit & decking** – Meeting to discuss and progress next steps still to be arranged. **ACTION:** PB, CB and JR.
- d) **Non trip boat registrations** – Annabelle Rose to be registered as an unpowered open boat. A BSC examiner is required for Wendy since John Hutley has retired.
- e) **Wendy & weedcutting** – We now have 4 volunteers trained to operate Wendy for weedcutting although still currently restricted to the Sudbury stretch of the river.
- f) **Cattawade portage** – MF had applied for a permit from EA which had been turned down for environmental reasons. RB sought clarity on the current position before undertaking works. **ACTION:** RB to speak to MF.

10. **Next meeting:** Tuesday 4 August 2023, 9:45am – via Zoom