

River Stour Trust Council Meeting
Tuesday 22nd April 2025 at 2:00pm
[virtual via Zoom - meeting was recorded]

Present - Trustees: Emrhys Barrell (EB), Paul Brewerton (PB – Chairman of Council), Steve Durham (SD), S. Giudici (SG), Jim Lunn (JL) – *from item 4*, Jane Rogers (JR) – *from item 4*, Kevin Taylor (KT)

Others: Catherine Burrows (CB)

1. Apologies for absence: H. Gallo (HG – Treasurer, Alan Ryan (AR), G. Simmons (GS)

2. Minutes of last meeting

It was **AGREED** to accept the 25.03.25 Council minutes as a true record of that meeting, without amendments and no redactions for the online version.

3. Matters Arising:

- a) **Granary repairs** – Due to the urgent need to address brickwork condition, PB had approved expenditure of £785 to proceed with this work. We currently have a quotation of £3600 the painting and oak window frame repairs (contractor available to undertake work during August) and a second quotation will be obtained.

4. AGM Arrangements

PB is hoping for an AGM to be held in July 2025, depending on progress with the 2024 accounts.

[JL & JR joined meeting]

5. Reports

- a) **Financial** (Qtr 1 Jan-Mar P&L 2024 & 2025 comparison circulated)

- Up to date Lloyds bank account balances were provided.
- A £17,000 grant had been awarded by Babergh District Council - split as £15,000 “REPF allocation for the River Stour Trust to purchase materials and undertake improvement works to footpaths in Dedham Vale/Stour Valley project” with £2,000 “contribution to the River Stour Trust”. It was understood that the grant covered a period of 3 years and ‘improvement works to footpaths’ will be a continuation of bank breach repairs previously undertaken.
- There was a query regarding how expenditure for John Constable’s new propulsion system is shown on the accounting system as the net cost is paid by the insurer whilst only the VAT amount and £250 excess is paid by RST. **ACTION: HG, CB and PB to ensure entire costs are clear within our Annual Accounts.**

- b) **Management** – nothing to report

- c) **Membership** (report had been prepared but not circulated) – **ACTION: to be circulated ahead of next meeting.** Final transfer onto new system, Membermojo, yet to be completed.

d) SBOC

- i. **JC repairs** – The new motors will fit onto the existing transoms. Works to cavitation plates being undertaken by Philips Engineering before TELC return to complete the installation. Trained JC crew to have familiarisation sessions using the new system before training takes place for new crew. The addition of the two hatches in the deck had been beneficial for easier access but these require a higher level of security on the underside to protect batteries from theft/vandalism. **ACTION: SG, PB.**

- ii. **Start of season** – a dull day but busy due to special promotion of free trips for children with some trips pre-booked in advance.
- iii. **Wendy** – SG flagged up 80l of hydraulic oil will need to be changed, at an estimated cost of £250-£300.

e) DVB

- All boats in with particular thanks to Jonny Kemp for his invaluable assistance with launching DVB boats.
- Trusty's propellor shaft started knocking during use and this will be investigated tomorrow although it is more than likely due to bearings needing to be tightened.
- Easter weekend takings of almost £480 but not a straightforward operation with 2 boats and only 3 skippers. There needs to be some consideration on how workable this set up is.
- i. Training of 6 trainees (from an initial 13) will be overseen by KT and Kevin Ward. A drop off in numbers is never unexpected but KT referred to email feedback from one of the trainees which had also copied in other trainees. KT had addressed misunderstandings the listed reasons for the individual no longer wishing to continue but sought some additional clarity from Trustees. **ACTION: Going forward, it was thought best to utilise the BCC option for contacting multiple trainees until training is complete.**
- ii. Requirement to pay annual membership subscription – this was not considered an unusual or unfair requirement since volunteers are representing RST when carrying out activities which intend to raise funds and awareness to help RST achieve its objectives. It was pointed out that the crew training program is equivalent to costs of £500. There was a query to verify members are specifically covered under RST insurance as in previous years. In any case, RST must choose how best to protect its assets and members through its insurance and liability cover. [Post meeting note – wording in our insurance policy is as follows: “Member to Member endorsement: Person entitled to Indemnity is extended to include: All parties comprising the insured and where applicable all individual members of such parties shall be indemnified in the same manner and to the same extent as if separate policies had been issued to each provided”.]
- iii. Paying for car parking – there have been changes to parking provision at Dedham but RST are able to reimburse costs; and a permit parking solution is also being discussed with Colchester City Council.
- iv. IWA's Medical Declaration Form – RST is guided and aligned by the IWA training and certification scheme as an alternative to the onerous and expensive Boatmasters' Training and Certification criteria. SD had emailed Trustees to clarify that the IWA medical declaration is a simplified and slightly watered down version of the MCA's ENG1 Medical standards for seafarers and ML5 Boatmasters medical standards for inshore and commercial inland waterways vessels; but some of the terminology is misleading for our purposes. We need to reassure applicants that potential medical issues can be reviewed as we have volunteers with conditions that have not precluded them from volunteering. **ACTION: An explanatory cover sheet will be added to the IWA's Medical Form. SD will attempt to extract the flow chart sections of the MCA medical standards guidance and relate it to our operations.**

f) Dedham Lock

- Penstocks – Aquiko have visited site to carry out inspection and the problem was identified as there not being a means to stop the framework from distorting so the bolts attaching the penstocks have been loosened to help resolve this issue.
- Upstream gate problem – the lock was clear at time of installation but now will not properly close against the cill. This could be due to a buildup of gravel but a diver is needed to properly investigate. **ACTION: KT to liaise with Fritz (Stour Valley Engineering) who is a diver and could have diving contacts. Manningtree Pontoon Company and social media plea were other options.**
- Gate tiebacks – the current system has not been effective. KT has designed a new stronger and adjustable system that Stour Valley Engineering are quoting for its manufacture.

- Area maintenance – Adrian (Dedham Mill gardener) will also maintain our area by the lock with fortnightly visits at a cost of £30 per visit.

i. Opening Ceremony

EB had kept everyone informed of progress and updates. There was discussion regarding final arrangements for chairs, tables, gazebo and signage requirements.

ii. Piling Update

Initial testing of proposed system is postponed until an inspection to clarify the water vole situation is undertaken.

g) River Maintenance Group (RMG)

- Works to be undertaken tomorrow to remove a tree blocking Dedham Lock entrance.
- Thanks to Richard Blay for recent successful applications for grants towards proposed works (Dedham Vale bank breaches and Cattawade).

6. Health & Safety – nothing to report

7. Environmental – nothing to report

8. AOB

a) Co-option of Trustee – Steve Giudici (SG)

PB proposed/Seconded SD that 'Steve Giudici is co-opted onto Council'. **AGREED UNANIMOUSLY**

b) River Stour Users Group – This is to take place at VEC or Granary (TBC) on Thursday 8th May at 3pm. A limited number of RST representatives were sought to meet with the EA Waterways team representatives and other local river users. PB and SD confirmed their attendance.

c) Office equipment upgrade – the computers and laptop are not operating efficiently with poor multitasking capability hindering the office team. The machines are six years old and using Windows 10 operating system for which Microsoft are phasing out free updates, technical support and security fixes. It's recommended to upgrade to Windows 11 for continued security and support. **ACTION: CB to research options and costs.**

9. Next meeting: Tuesday 27 May 2025, 2pm – via Zoom [postponed until Tuesday 3 June 2025]