

**River Stour Trust Council Meeting**  
**Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2025 at 3:00pm**  
[virtual via Zoom - meeting was recorded]

**Present - Trustees:** Emrhys Barrell (EB), Paul Brewerton (PB – Chairman of Council), Steve Durham (SD), H. Gallo (HG – Treasurer), S. Giudici (SG), Jane Rogers (JR), Alan Ryan (AR), G. Simmons (GS), Kevin Taylor (KT)

**Others:** Catherine Burrows (CB)

**1. Apologies for absence:** Jim Lunn (JL)

**2. Minutes of last meeting**

It was **AGREED** to accept the 22.04.25 Council minutes as a true record of that meeting, with redaction of item 5 for the online version.

**3. Matters Arising:**

- i. **Item 8 C** – The changeover from Windows 10 to Windows 11 means software on RST computers will no longer supported by early November 2025. The office hardware was replaced after the VEC fire and needs upgrading as the processes are slow. Microsoft are also downgrading deals for not for profit organisations which means ascertaining the software functionality we require.

**4. AGM Arrangements**

There has been no direct contact with our accountant so it was suggested that a revised AGM date be 21<sup>st</sup> August in order to collate information to send out to membership. **ACTION: HG to follow up with accountant.** It was **NOTED** that office will require additional help due to increased workload in busier summer months and S2C event.

**5. Appointment of President**

There had been some discussion outside of the meeting to arrange appointment of this honorary role. The Lord Lieutenant of Essex had been proposed. **ACTION: EB to follow up.**

**6. Reports**

**a) Financial** (P&L Jan-Apr 2024 & 2025 comparison circulated)

A better budgeting system will be put in place over winter months so can more easily compare against expected costs and income.

**b) Management** – nothing to report

- i. **Granary fire exit & lift project** – this will need further discussion to progress.
- ii. **Letter from barn owner** – it had been thought that someone had been liaising with [barn owner] but she informed there had been no response to her email (received at the end of December) which followed her September visit to the barn. As discussed at previous meetings, [barn owner] had been advised of the barn's deteriorating condition. RST had liaised with contractors but the extensive repairs against site limitations, restrictions to access were inherent difficulties that put off contractors. There is concern on liability with potential damage/injury to RST items, volunteers and the general public. **ACTION: CB to forward on recent correspondence and 'License to Occupy' for AR and SD to respond to [barn owner].** It was important to know funds required for DVB boat storage. The invoice also included a reference to a "rate account for electricity to be issued at the end of storage term" but it was not clear what period this related to.

- iii. **RSPB land at Flatford** – It seems likely that NT would be in pole position to take on the site but RST teaming up with another organisation, such as Suffolk Wildlife Trust, could strengthen our bid. The site does generate an income and the arrangement includes retention of some onsite RSPB staff. RSPB are still compiling the portfolio. Details to follow for further discussion as and when they are available.

c) **Membership** (report circulated) – Council approved all new membership applications.

d) **SBOC**

- i. **Wendy weed boat** – It was hoped to be able to return her to the water soon with the intention of carrying out weedcutting, subject to EA permission, in addition to the EA's contractors carrying out this activity (usually no later than early July ahead of the Sudbury Rowing Club Regatta).
- ii. **Weed issues** – FJ's outboard is overheating and cutting out but will arrange visit by usual engineer.
- iii. **John Constable** – It is hoped to have her back up and running tomorrow afternoon to commence training before she is brought back into service.
- iv. **Wild in the Stour Valley** – This family friendly event is organised by Dedham Vale National Landscapes and RST provided free boat trips.

e) **DVB**

- i. **Sum Up card reader issues** – There are ongoing connectivity issues and unreported damage to the card reader. Some volunteers have been linking device to their own 5G mobile data to improve connectivity.
- ii. **MC trailer repairs** - This is now with Indespension in Ipswich and estimated repair cost of £700.
- iii. **Water Level Gauge** – newly installed at Dedham akin to Flatford for an estimation of whether RST boats can operate e.g. pass under bridges safely.

f) **Dedham Lock**

- i. **Piling Update** – Those Trustees present at the opening event held an ad hoc meeting to discuss the budget proposals for options researched and compiled by Richard Blay. An urgent decision was required because the piling supplier was extending their production timeline to include our order. Unfortunately, this does mean that a trial of the piling system before placing a full order is not possible. It was **AGREED** on 24.05.25 to proceed with Option 2 (costings overview as below – refer to Dedham Piling Budget' document for further details).

	Total (NET)	VAT	Total (GROSS)
<b>Option 2. Order of everything prior to Test with hired PD1 drivers</b>			
Sheet piling material and tools	3740.26	748.05	4488.31
All other items	2604.66	450.93	3105.58
<b>Total</b>	<b>6344.92</b>	<b>1198.98</b>	<b>7593.89</b>
Contingency 10%	634.49	119.90	759.39
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>6979.41</b>	<b>1318.88</b>	<b>8353.28</b>

There is a burrow close to the piling location and the inspector was concerned that it could possibly be in use by water voles we've agreed to change the area where the piling will finish as a precautionary measure. The island also has indications of numerous field voles and bees.

ii. **Opening Ceremony**

There was a thank you to everyone. EB reported on positive outcome from the event and new supporters that might help RST in the future. We were grateful to Paul Milsom and Dedham Lock Cottage owners who had both gifted wine for the event. Colchester City Council had been particularly helpful with provision of the car park for the event

(in addition to the 4 x 2 year parking permits enabling RST volunteers to use the car park without charge whilst on duty). **ACTION: EB to send remaining thank you letters to Paul Milsom and Dedham Lock Cottage. Wording and design for Dedham Lock recognition plaque will also be circulated in the coming months.**

#### g) River Maintenance Group (RMG)

Piling works now underway and newly purchased petrol saw will assist with the removal of fallen trees/branches.

### 7. Health & Safety

A generic risk assessment is available but some tasks require their own risk assessment and it is not clear whether hazard prevention advice is relayed to the volunteers. SD has previously asked RB to ensure volunteers sign an attendance register for pre-task safety briefing and these need to be provided for RST records. It was **NOTED** that RMG volunteer, Simon Page, has safety management qualifications and has agreed to take on Safety Officer role.

- i. **[name redacted]** – fractured ankle following a fall whilst volunteering for RST. He was carrying wood on the lock island and tripped due to dip in ground only 20” x 24” and about 1” deep. The whole area of the island is undulating and rough and this was an unfortunate stumble. SD is in touch with [name redacted] who advises that fracture boot will be worn for 6 weeks but he’s in good spirits otherwise. It was not something that could have been reasonably prevented but our insurers could want to see a risk assessment for the task. **ACTION: Accident report to be sent to Insurers.**
- ii. **[name redacted]** - hand cut from lock handle operation as sharp burr on inside that has now been filed off. She was treated at the scene but accident report is needed. **ACTION: SD to follow up and ensure RMG, the barn and boats all have uniform accident report book.**

### 8. Environmental

- i. **Designated Bathing Water** - testing period started in May with the designated Friars Meadow section having a ‘Good’ rating result.
- ii. **Solar Panels** – SG and Gill Boardman met with West Suffolk Council and it was **AGREED** for SG to continue the research. **ACTION: SG to circulate lease.**

### 9. AOB

- i. **Governance** – GS had been looking at Charity Commission rules and RST needed to ensure that Declaration of Interest was an agenda item. It was also recommended that Governance as an agenda item was also added. This could comprise Chairty Commission updates and financial governance i.e. a program of works is required so Trustees are aware of RST commitments and can effectively manage RST finances.
- ii. **Granary Fire Exit & Lift** – the working group had not convened due to delays with the planning permission. The potential costs for this project were unknown. **ACTION: PB to arrange meeting end of June/early July.**
- iii. **Notification of AOB items** – it was **AGREED** that these are best notified in advance of the meeting rather than during the meeting.

### 10. Next meeting: Tuesday 8 July 2025, 2pm – via Zoom