

River Stour Trust Council Meeting
Monday 11th August 2025 at 2:00pm
[virtual via Zoom - meeting was recorded]

Present - Trustees: Emrhys Barrell (EB), Paul Brewerton (PB – Chair of Council), Steve Durham (SD), Hilary Gallo (HG – Treasurer), Steve Giudici (SG), Jane Rogers (JR), Kevin Taylor (KT)

Others: Catherine Burrows (CB), Lisa King (LK - Burdett King Accountancy)

David Kirkman – David passed away at the end of July. He previously served as Trustee and SBOC Chair remaining an active member with boat operations, being particularly dedicated to the John Constable Lighter in recent years. His widow has been contacted and there is no planned funeral or wake.

1) **Declarations of Interest:** EB - Thames Electric Launch Company.

2) **Apologies for absence:** Alan Ryan (AR), Graham Simmons (GS), Jim Lunn (JL)

3) **Minutes of last meeting**

It was **AGREED** to accept 08.07.25 Council minutes as a true record, with no redactions for the online version.

4) **Matters Arising** – *as below and as tabled on agenda.*

5) **Notification of Any Other Business (AOB) – as tabled in advance of the meeting:**

- a) **Granary Project (SG & SD)** – item 10
- b) **S2C update (SG)** – item 7ci
- c) **Tea Room succession (SG)** – item 7cii
- d) **Website (SG)** – item 7cv

6) **AGM Arrangements**

- a) **Approval of Annual Accounts** – email queries had been circulated in advance of the meeting. It was **NOTED** that there seems to be no issue following data transfer when we transitioned from Sage to Xero.
 - i. The Trustees' statement (needs approval) and authorisation issue date. **ACTION: PB and LK**
 - ii. Page 11, note 10 – Trustee Reimbursed Expenses & Benefits – EB and SG trustees' reimbursement to be updated. Smaller claims for operational purchases, such as nominal cost purchases for tearoom, do not need to be listed. Only EB's TELCO invoices (£10,126) and SD's claims totalling £401 will be noted.
 - iii. Trustee list – HG not currently registered on Charity Commission or Companies House due to further details required. **ACTION: HG's details to be confirmed and his appointment to be dated 15.08.24.**
 - iv. Note 7 & 8 – The former covers payroll for all staff (office, cleaner, caretaker and bar manager) whilst the latter is admin payroll (office staff only).
 - v. Boat Operations costs includes Dedham Lock Project costs circa £73k so an explanatory note will be added and mention it was partly funded by grants (note 3). **ACTION: PB to provide wording.**
 - vi. Restricted grants totalling £39,300 towards Dedham Lock. Going forwards, it would be worthwhile having accurate records which clarify split of restricted funds (as allocated by the donor) and designated funds (decided by the Trustees). There is a historic restricted total of £150k which we need to match against relevant purchases and could clarify whether any is actually designated funds.
 - vii. VAT reclaim for Dedham Lock – VAT is recorded and VAT return is submitted.
 - viii. Gift Aid Claim – need to confirm 2024 claim submission total. **ACTION: CB to provide claim details for each year.**

- ix. Bank accounts threshold – We still require another bank account but opening the Virgin account had stalled due to lack of readily available information during the application process. Lloyds will be changing from a Treasurer's Account to Business account with charges since our income exceeds £50k. The benefit of Lloyds account is that Sudbury still has a branch.

[LK left meeting]

b) Confirmation of Trustee Nominations

JL, PB and SD retired by rotation and standing for re-election. SG and GS co-opted during the but GS unfortunately standing down. Richard Blay is a new nomination.

7) Reports

a) **Governance – CONFIDENTIAL** (refer to document).

b) **Financial** – (circulated P&L Qtr 1 & 2, 2024 & 2025) – Boating costs of £9260 includes Gasworks desilting costs of which SRC contributed. The EA agent sales need to be rectified as it is known that the majority of the money goes to EA with 10% commission retained by RST. **ACTION: CB to check with LK.**

c) Management

- i. **S2C** – booking portal almost ready but there are a few issues. A recent emergency closure of Bures portage is being investigated as this was not issued by the Navigation team. SG will attend on-site meeting with Paul Lunan (EA River Inspector). We are still awaiting EA approval for the event. The alternative Boxted portage is acceptable to both the landowner and EA so a team will be installing this early September. Sudbury Canoe Club are completing Sudbury to the Sea the weekend prior to S2C.
- ii. **Tea Room succession** – Margaret Cresswell is retiring from Tea Room Manager role at the end of this season. She is undertaken this role for 10 years and it takes a lot of work. The team was informed at the start of the season.
- iii. **Mill 2 Mill Swim** – This event had been raised at the River Stour Users Group because it closes the navigation for over half an hour which is contrary to the byelaws. Lee Cobbold (EA Waterways Team Leader) had delayed approval of this year's event due to a lack of requested information from the organiser. EA has clarified that next year's Mill 2 Mill is under consideration depending on factors such as timings that impact other river users.
- iv. **VEC Fire, Sep 2018** – the insurance investigation has finally closed.
- v. **Website** – It was **AGREED** to re-establish contact with the current developer or opt for an alternative. **ACTION: CB & SG**
- vi. **MemberMojo** – Members can now log in to access their basic membership information and renew their subscription through the system. There had been some confusion when it transpired that outdated information had mistakenly been uploaded but this is being worked on. Further improvements to follow.
- vii. **Sum Up Card reader** – Removable protective cases have been ordered for DVB card readers. [Post meeting note: cradle charging is preferred method for Kathleen's machine which stays on the boat and this is not possible with the protective case. It will instead be used for SBO card reader.]
- viii. **Coracles at Bures** – this went ahead thanks to the efforts of CB, Michelle Mandry, Steve Miles and Carol. It is a free event (donations gratefully received) and was well attended. It was a sunny day and helped to promote the river at a different location as well as showcasing coracles.
- d) **Membership** – MemberMojo is now live but it transpired that some outdated information was uploaded during the transfer which did lead to some confusion for some members regarding their current membership status. More updates and changes will be introduced over time.
- e) **SBOC (Sudbury Boat Operations Committee)**
- i. **Wendy weedboat** – returned to the water following maintenance. In discussion with EA regarding classification as floating plant machinery.
- ii. **John Constable** – training underway and going well. She will be used for Bat Cruises on 22 Aug and 18 Aug.

Once we have more trained crew then we need to promote JC e.g. corporate charters and liaise with other organisations. It was **NOTED** that she should be involved with celebrations for artist John Constable's 250th birthday anniversary in 2026.

f) DVB (Dedham Vale Boat Operations Committee)

- i. **Trailer** - this is now repaired and is being picked up tomorrow.
- ii. **Dedham Boat Storage Barn** – Jax Horswill had instructed contractors on improvement works which are now nearing completion which readies the barn for sale.
- iii. **RSPB, Flatford Wildlife Garden – [Redacted]**
 - g) **Dedham Lock** (*discussed after 7B due to KT appointment elsewhere*) – Trespass and jumping still occurring and signage has previously been discussed. Additional railing being considered with anti-vandal paint (DMMCL to renew annually) or possibly roller bars and vertical made wide enough to prevent a foot holding. Stour Valley Engineering might be able to make suggestions when we arrange removal of the wingwall ladder which is used as easy access by trespassers. Site inspection to discuss solutions is to be arranged. KT had attended an online meeting regarding Dedham visitors and various issues, in his capacity as both RST Trustee and as a resident. It was attended by Suffolk and Essex representatives from Police, Highways, Parking, Planning Officers, Councils as well as the EA, Dedham Vale National Landscapes, etc. A problem-solving plan is being devised but further meetings are expected.
 - h) **River Maintenance Group (RMG)** – the usual team is taking a well-earned break. A group of RST and Rotary Club members worked together to clear RST path/land at Flatford with a 'wildlife' area.

8) Health & Safety

- a) **Passenger boarding/disembarking** - There have been a couple of minor accidents at Sudbury with a passenger tripping when disembarking Rosette (one at Henny and one at Granary). No further contact from the two individuals but RIDDOR have been informed and Babergh Safety Officer due to visit. SBOC is reiterating the process for passenger boarding and disembarkation to all volunteers.
- b) **Electric boats** – EB referred to a video being circulated online 'electric trip boat explodes' which had lithium-ion batteries. It needs to be made clear to volunteers and the public that all RST electric boats have lead acid batteries which do not explode.

9) Environmental

- a) **River ecology project** - A newer member, Keith Seaman, has an ecology business, has a chainsaw licence and is a paddler. He carried out an initial survey on a Sudbury stretch but could be approached for lower river issues. Perhaps he would be interested with taking on the role of Environmental Officer?
- b) **Blue green algae** - We had been contacted by local press following dog deaths at Sudbury after swimming in the river. Blue green algae had been suspected but it transpired this was not present.

10) AOB (as declared in item 5)

- a) **Granary Project** – Working group to comprise CB, SG and SD will meet with architect and structural surveyor to plan way forward. The two differing structural reports were discussed and the situation needs to be clarified. **ACTION: SG, SD and CB**
- b) **Granary exterior woodwork** – The doors have far exceeded a state of repair. SG had circulated two quotations. We might need to check with Heritage Officer whether painting is a requirement. It was **AGREED** that SG choose the contractor.

11) Date and time of next meeting:

Tuesday 2 September 2025, 2pm – via Zoom [post meeting note: this was postponed until 16 Sep]