

River Stour Trust Council Meeting
Tuesday 9th December 2025 at 2:00pm
[virtual via Zoom - meeting was recorded]

Present – Trustees: Richard Blay (RB), Paul Brewerton (PB – arrived end of item 5b), Steve Durham (SD), Hilary Gallo (HG - Treasurer), Steve Giudici (SG – Chair), Jane Rogers (JR – Company Secretary), Alan Ryan (AR), Kevin Taylor (KT)a

Others: Catherine Burrows (CB - Manager)

1) Declarations of Interest: None.

2) Apologies for absence: Emrhys Barrell (EB), Jim Lunn (JL)

3) Minutes of last meeting: It was **AGREED** “to accept 11.11.25 Council minutes as a true record; with redaction as below for the published online version’ **AGREED UNANIMOUSLY**

- Redactions for online published version of minutes:

- o Item 5b – redact bank account balances
- o Items 5c and 5dii – total redaction

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

- a. Pension re-enrolment and re-declaration – IN PROGRESS **ACTION: CB**
- b. Insurance Renewal – The renewal proposal quotation has been received with renewal due before 31 Dec 2025. Our insurance renewal has been automatically arranged through our IWA non-profit making corporate membership. **ACTION: Comparative quotes to be obtained as part of next year’s renewal process. The submitted pre-renewal document and policy terms will be forwarded to SD for review, particularly in relation to volunteers and member to member clause.**
- c. EA sales financial reporting – IN PROGRESS **ACTION: CB**
- d. Lapsed Members – IN PROGRESS (CB had emailed lapsed members who are active volunteers to help with their subscription renewal). **ACTION: PB**
- e. DVB vouchers – RESOLVED
- f. Beth Chatto’s storage enquiry – RESOLVED
- g. Away Day/Strategy Day – RESOLVED (see item 9)
- h. Finance Meeting – RESOLVED (see item 5bi)
- i. RSPB Site visit – RESOLVED
- j. Waste Exemption for VEC area – RESOLVED (not required at this time)

5) Reports

- a. **Governance** – From 18 November 2025, identity verification with Companies House becomes a legal requirement. **ACTION: ALL** [post meeting note: Visit <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/verify-your-identity-for-companies-house> to complete before 2026 confirmation statement filing date of 12 July (no later than 26 July). CB will follow up with River Stour Navigation Company directors ahead of 25 Sep filing date (no later than 9 Oct).

b. Financial (P&L reports circulated)

- i. **Financial Meeting** – This was attended by CB, SG, HG and our accountant, Lisa King.
 - Restricted funds - identified as mainly historic which no longer apply nor needing to be reported within ongoing accounts (e.g. relating to locks and similar structures as well as depreciation on trip boat/s). An updated restricted funds total of £25k relates to existing grants - £15k Footpath repairs (awarded in 2025) and £10k Public Jetty maintenance (awarded in 2021). It was suspected there has been some expenditure for the latter, but this predates the accounting system. It was **AGREED** to

‘release’ £19k from Projects account into general funds, subject to doublechecking grants status with EB.

- Reserves – The policy has been that £1k is deposited each month into our Reserves Account and this has yielded a healthy £125k balance. It was **AGREED** to accept SG and HG recommendation for Reserves balance to be adjusted by the end of each year to cover operational costs for a 6-month period. If the current balance is reduced to £50k, on the basis that it would be enhanced by a further £12,000 by the end of 2026, this will liberate circa £75k. **ACTION: HG to prepare revised Reserved Policy for formal approval.**
- ii. **EA Sales Income** – there will be changes in how this is recorded to distinguish how the income is split as our commission and what is payable to the EA.
- iii. **AGM 2026** – the plan is to have an earlier AGM at end of April so draft annual accounts can be prepared for circulation to Trustees towards end of February/early March.
- iv. **Banking Arrangements** - HG was pleased to report that we appear to have sufficient funding to set aside £80-100k for upcoming projects before our main earning period commences in 2026. However, our Lloyds bank balances exceed the FSCS protected limit of £120,000 (applies across all accounts within a single bank or banking group). Now that our financial position regarding restricted funds has been resolved, we can proceed with opening account/s elsewhere with a better interest rate e.g. 30-day notice account.

c. RSPB Flatford Wildlife Garden [REDACTED]

d. Management

- i. **Weddings** - Our application to renew for 3 years (until Dec 2028) has been submitted. An additional charge will not apply as we have been permitted to include the current 60-person capacity restriction until such time as we can revert to our normal capacity. We have recently been approached to hold a wedding fair, but venue renovations would need to be completed.
- ii. **Chargeback follow up** – The importance of keeping good records was highlighted following a disputed August card transaction. Only the transaction details were provided for us to respond with proof that the charge was valid and to not incur an additional fee. This was a Flatford boat trip so, in lieu of a customer receipt, the completed takings sheet was the only documentary evidence. Our payment identifier for bank statements is ‘River Stour Trust’ which is usually sufficient, but card payments can still be disputed up to 120 days after the transaction.
- iii. **2026 Constable’s 250th Anniversary** – We have the John Constable Lighter and more trained skippers to join in the celebration. There will be associated events and activities throughout the year.
- iv. **Office equipment upgrade** – It has previously been agreed to upgrade the office computers due to performance issues, reliability and software/new technology demands. SG had provided potential models that met our requirement specifications.
- v. **Future income** – The Profit & Loss report shows Granary 2025 income total as £25,878, but this excludes £7,903 relating to 2025 functions but received the year before and recorded as Future Income. This total currently resides on the balance sheet rather than Profit & Loss making the revised total is £33,781.

e. Membership (report had been circulated)

There were no new members to formally approve. SG queried the increase a 30% increase in membership subscriptions and CB said this would mostly likely be due to receipt of overdue subscriptions.

f. SBOC

- All boats out excluding JC and EL (latter due out early Jan 2026)
- Santa Boat Cruises are taking place over the first two weekends in December.
- Potential school visit on 23rd March precedes official start of 2026 on Easter weekend.

- JC is to be used a floating platform for some river clearance works before her upper deck is repainted.
- Great Cornard Lock has been extensively surveyed by one of our volunteers. We will be monitoring the cracking of the concrete plinths, particularly subsidence of the lower concrete plinth (on VEC side). There are some maintenance tasks such as greasing the lock mechanism, replacing lock jetty boards, treating and monitoring condition of the lintels and general tidying.
- Operational jetties are being worked on with non-slip treads being replaced/added, as required.
- Next SBOC meeting to record change to boat trip adult age (14yrs+) and dog fare as £2.

g. DVB

- The local church is keen to collaborate with us next year as part of the Constable anniversary.
- RST had a decorated tree and promotional material at the Dedham Tree Festival.
- End of season lunch at Boatyard went well.
- Flatford Lock maintenance will comprise some voluntary tasks and Green Oak Carpentry to provide quotes to replace the 4 lintels that are in a terrible condition.

h. RMG

- Cattawade permits submitted and approval expected this week.
- Permit applications are required for Flatford bank repairs being prepared. RB mentioned that his SCC contact hadn't responded to his calls for the last 6 months so might have moved on.
- Dedham reprofiling – SG has sent images and details to Aquatic Solutions for a quotation. The EA have agreed for RST to assist in preference to higher costs from EA having to revert to framework contractor. **ACTION:** RB to send SG drone images of the area.

i. Granary Fire Escape & Balcony

- We are now in receipt of both the structural engineer's technical drawings and the surveyor's drawings to submit planning permission with response expected end of Jan/Feb 2026.
- EA need to be consulted as to whether permissions are required because the piling affects Gasworks Cut.
- There were concerns regarding the timescale of the works and impact on Granary venue hire and tearoom.
- Balustrade on the lower balcony (two chains) needs to be updated to satisfy planning requirements.

- e. River Health Group** - An official EA letter is awaited that will recognise the group as having EA authority to undertake work and liaise with landowners. An agreed procedure will also be formalised to satisfy H&S and legal requirements.

6) Health & Safety

SD has been reviewing the DVB Operations Manual. **ACTION:** To be circulated to AR, KT, SG and JL.

7) Environmental – nothing to report

8) Any Other Business (AOB)

- River Health Group (RHG)** – SG has the EA's letter of authority, and the first work party took place on 5 December with next one scheduled for 16 January 2026. SG and RB will liaise about coordinating works to improve the navigation on the middle stretches.
- Training** – It was pointed out that the training contradicts the recommendations put forward by Andrew Phasey (IWA). Our preference for classroom based rather than practical training for certain drills stems from the impracticality of the method.
- RST branded waterproof jackets** – SD suggested these be added to the corporate clothing attire. **ACTION:** CB to seek quotation from usual supplier.

- iv. **Member's Lunch** – Rather than restricting to volunteers only, it was suggested to extend an invitation to the entire membership to join us for a social lunch. The date would need to be discussed to avoid a clash with any pre-season volunteer meetings. **ACTION:** Graham Gardner to be contacted about liaising with Hintlesham Hall regarding potential dates.
 - v. **Solar Panel batteries** – It as decoded not to proceed based on the £5k cost.
 - vi. **Duty of Care** – A recent incident involved a skipper insulting someone so AR wanted to verify RST policy.
 - vii. **Norwich to Tilbury National Grid Works** – KT suggested possibility of compensation from loss of income e.g. S2C affected due to closure of the river at certain points? [post meeting note: [click here](#)].
 - viii. **Trustee Strategy meeting** – Friday 23 January 2026, 10:30am. HG said Beth Chatto have offered us use of their meeting room. **ACTION:** Venue to be confirmed by email.
- 9) **Date and time of next meeting:** Tuesday 13th January 2026, 2pm – online via Zoom. (KT gave apologies)