

**River Stour Trust Council Meeting**  
**Tuesday 13th January 2026 at 2:00pm**  
**[virtual via Zoom - meeting was recorded]**

**Present** – Trustees: Richard Blay (RB - from item 5b), Jim Lunn (JL) Paul Brewerton (PB), Steve Durham (SD), Hilary Gallo (HG - Treasurer), Steve Giudici (SG – Chair), Jane Rogers (JR – Company Secretary), Alan Ryan (AR),  
Others: Catherine Burrows (CB - Manager)

1. **Declarations of Interest:** None for those in attendance.
2. **Apologies for absence:** Emrhys Barrell (EB), Kevin Taylor (KT)
3. **Minutes of last meeting: HG PROPOSED/AR SECONDED** “to accept 09.12.25 Council minutes as a true record, subject to correction as below; with redaction as below for the published online version’ **AGREED UNANIMOUSLY**

Corrections/redactions:

- Item 3 – Amend date of last the meeting
- Redactions for online published version of minutes:
- Items 5c – total redaction of discussion

4. **Matters Arising** – as tabled on agenda.

## 5. Reports

### a. Governance

#### i. Strategy Meeting, 23 January

It was **AGREED** to meet at VEC for simplicity and convenience. SG outlined intentions for discussion to factor in SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) and the 4 Ps of Governance (People, Purpose, Process and Performance). **ACTION:** SG to request additional agenda items and circulate agenda.

#### ii. Identify Verification

A reminder that everyone needs to verify their identities before the next confirmation statement submission date of July 26th. Identity verification with Companies House - PB advised that he had recently undertaken the process by downloading the GOV.UK One Login app and he had found it easier using his driver’s license as proof of identity rather than his passport.

### b. Financial

#### i. Reserves Policy

It was **AGREED** to accept the written policy as circulated and as follows: “Our Reserves Policy is to agree an amount to be set aside in a separate account at the beginning of the year that will by the end of the year, with ongoing contributions, cover six months of operating costs. We also maintain a contribution to the Reserves account of £1000 per month. In 2026 we agreed £50,000 at our January Council Meeting and expect this to grow to at least £62,000 by year end. The amount of reserves is reviewed as necessary. On review, the capital amount may be added to or a withdrawal into general funds may be made.” [RB joined meeting]

#### ii. Bank Accounts

Additional account/s to be opened to meet FSCS protected limit of £120,000 and optimise interest rates, where applicable in line with Reserves Policy. **ACTION: HG and CB**

### c. Management

- i. **Key Account Party** - Lloyds require identification and verification of some RST directors/trustees who are considered as 'Key Account Parties' i.e. RB, SD, AR, KT and EB. **ACTION:** CB

- ii. **Newsletter** - Thanks to John Kemp for coordinating the recent newsletter. It will be quarterly issue with the next one due in March.

**Events** – RST’s usual calendar of events with the addition of Sudbury on Show and Constable 250 events. AR mentioned RST’s invitation to a Constable250 church event for which the lock model at VEC will be borrowed.

- iii. **Tea Room** – Volunteers meeting to discuss tearoom plans and coordination since MC has stepped down from management role.
- iv. **Pension re-enrolment** - This has been completed other than staff letters.
- v. **Website and new computers** - being followed up.

#### d. Membership

##### i. Insurance & Membership

We need to clarify policy coverage for non-member as opposed to member volunteers. SD thought all volunteers are covered under employers' liability, but members have enhanced coverage equivalent to the organization's full policy. Membership was considered crucial for those crewing our boats, using RST equipment and undertaking training at RST expense. Nonetheless, all volunteers need to complete forms e.g. emergency contact, participate in safety induction, etc. **ACTION: SG**

##### e. RSPB Flatford Wildlife Garden - update

Our bid has not been successful. **ACTION: HG and RB to ask for feedback.**

CB suggested that there might be scope for us to talk to the new owners about using some space.

##### f. SBOC (08.12.25 minutes as circulated)

- EL awnings - A quotation for their replacement had been forwarded to HG for information.
- JC taking on water – investigations have verified this is via the deck rather than the hull. The bilge pumps are operative but there's not enough water to activate them.
- Cornard Lock condition – this is being monitored, following subsidence of the concrete plinths (it was thought these were previously re-concreted in 2013). Loose brick capping will need adjustment and repointing to prevent bricks from falling into the lock chamber.

##### g. DVB

- Dedham Barn - AR has kept in touch with Jax Horswill who is chasing RST's decision on whether to purchase the barn.
- Flatford Lock condition – Green Oak Carpentry to provide a quotation.

RST The group discussed volunteer recruitment challenges and operational expansion limitations.

- Boat maintenance - tasks include repainting Kathleen's hull, cover repairs for Trusty and cover replacements for Maria Constable.
- A decision is due whether to swap replace Kathleen with Maria Constable at Talbooth.
- Dedham Shallows - SG continues to liaise with EA about reduced scope for desilting at the location.

##### h. RMG

- RB has appointed a deputy, Marc Ruse, who is currently preparing the funding application to Brantham Parish Council in relation to Cattawade project path and drainage costs.
- RB had met with SCC direct contact for the Flatford works (Callum Leslie) where it had been agreed for RST to oversee and submit permit applications rather than SCC.
- We also need agreement with National Landscapes regarding our proposed plastic piling solution, but there could be considerations for the area such as aesthetics so the addition of wooden cladding might be required.
- There's a possibility that another 200 tonnes of soil will be acquired. This can only be transported into the field over the bridge, which is limited to no more than 6 tonnes per trip.
- Timing for works is unclear due to fish spawning season so if it cannot be completed in Apr/May then it might have to be postponed until Sep/Oct.
- Polesaw and chainsaw training is required for 2/3 new volunteers. SG asked to be included in list for polesaw course.

##### i. Granary Fire Escape & Balcony

SG provided an update on the Granary Fire Escape and balcony project, mentioning uploaded plans and structural engineer calculations. He noted that piling would be relatively simple and cost-effective, with 7 piles to be installed at approximately £5,870, with an additional £80 per metre for depths beyond 6 metres. The work can be done from the veranda without taking it down nor requiring a rig in the water. The amended planning application was submitted before mid-December, with hopes for a decision in February, after which they would discuss logistics and obtain competitive quotes from Stour Engineering and Phillips Engineering.

**j. River Health Group**

- First work party, 5 Dec 2025

John Kemp's press release got about 14 volunteers, but the initial work party was kept to a small group of existing volunteers initially. Positive feedback from EA, Sudbury Common Lands Charity following a debrief. The EA support letter (accessible in online folder) outlined permission for works to be carried out on the whole of the navigation.

- Cornard portage

It was preferable for the EA to reinstate the normal portage route sooner rather than later. The current diversion was only meant to be temporary and will impact on our activities as well as being a H&S issue. RST agrees, in principle, for our upstream jetty to replace the upstream portage on the basis that the downstream portage is fixed and reopened.

- New SBOC Chair – Chris Parsons has taken on the role in place of SG who has stood down.

**6. Health & Safety**

- DVB Operations Manual - This was currently under review following an update by SD, before being presented and signed off by DVB. There was some discussion about uniformity to both operations and training manuals, while acknowledging operational differences, there should be a shred format/layout.
- Boat Safety Inspections – **ACTION: PB to check on maintenance progress in early Feb to plan for Freshwater Marine to complete BSS examinations in late Feb.**

**7. Environmental** – nothing to report.

**8. Any Other Business (AOB)**

- Brian Cornell** – a long serving member of RST who has sadly passed away. A good selection of RST representatives was expected to attend the funeral on 30<sup>th</sup> Jan, 1:30pm at Seven Hill Crematorium, Felix Stowe Road, Ipswich (family request attendees wear bright clothing). **ACTION: JL to write epitaph for RST's forthcoming newsletter.**
- CPD Training, 10<sup>th</sup> February** – open to all trip boat volunteers although SD expressed doubt on relevance for DVB volunteers due to differing progress on training modules. It was clear that aligning training modules and CPD sessions across different locations was required.
- RSUG** – a pre-season meeting with EA and other river users should take place in March.
- Members's Lunch** – This would not go ahead since Graham Gardner had wanted to plan an event for volunteers rather than inviting the whole membership.
- Solar Panels at VEC** – SG confirmed that the lease has been signed and backup batteries were rejected due to cost and that we will not generate enough power to justify this expense.
- Rateable value** – SG had uploaded a document, but this had not been seen by all attendees. **ACTION: SG to investigate and bring to next meeting.**

**9. Date and time of next meeting:** Tuesday 17th February 2026, 2pm – online via Zoom.