

River Stour Trust Council Meeting
Tuesday 10th March 2026 at 2:00pm
[virtual via Zoom - meeting was recorded]

Present – Trustees: Emrhys Barrell (EB), 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), Kevin Taylor (KT)
Others: Catherine Burrows (CB - Manager)

- 1. Election of Chair: PROPOSED JR/SD SECONDED SD** ‘that PB, with his agreement and in the absence of any other nominations, act as interim Chair until the election of a Chair at the first meeting after the AGM’
AGREED UNANIMOUSLY
- 2. Declarations of Interest:** EB-Thames Electric Launch Company.
- 3. Apologies for absence:** N/A
- 4. Minutes of last meeting held on 17.02.26:** A verbatim transcript covering a relevant section of the meeting was also provided. **PROPOSED AR/ SECONDED KT** “to accept 10.03.26 Council minutes as a true record along with the verbatim transcript, subject to correction of date for next meeting; with redaction of the verbatim transcript for the published online version’ **AGREED UNANIMOUSLY**
- 5. Matters Arising** – as tabled on agenda.
 - a. Strategy Day** – RB asked about Steve Giudici’s (SG) progress report given at the last meeting as he’d not received any documents. RB had made his own notes but queried whether there any records of the meeting and actions agreed. It was clarified SG had provided a verbal summary only, but it was now considered an oversight that there was nothing more available. **ACTION: RB will attempt to produce a summary of the session from his own notes.**
 - b. Resignations** – RB asked whether there had been any follow up with SG and Hilary Gallo. Each had their individual reasons but were happy to assist with queries or follow up regarding matters they had been overseeing
- 6. Notification of Any Other Business**
 - a. (JR) Langham Barn:** refer to Item 7f
 - b. (JR) Tea Room:** refer to AOB
- 7. Reports**
 - a. Governance**
 - i. Motion for Modification to Standing Orders:** EB had prepared a motion to regarding the way Council conducts its meetings as follows:
 - Every report for a Council meeting shall be sent to the Manager at least 12 hours prior to the meeting for circulation to Council members. To include Manager’s Report, Finance, Membership, SBOC, DVB, RMG, H&S, Environment, plus any others
 - Items for AOB shall be put forward on the agenda immediately after Matters Arising and discussed at the end of the meeting. Any AOB items that crop up during the meeting shall be added to the list at the discretion of the Chairman.
 - Council members who are unable to attend a meeting can nominate the Chairman to cast a vote on their behalf at any point during the meeting.
 - Any member can request that a vote on any item can be recorded on a named basis.

CB referred to the 12-hour timeframe still being very tight, but it was ‘at least 12 hours’ and it was envisaged this process would speed up meetings as the submitted written reports can have specific motions or items discussed only as required. CB recommended that Trustees take a more proactive and independent approach towards circulation and notification of Council documents (it is possible to upload directly into the shared online folder and also to email one another directly).

PROPOSED EB/ SECONDED JL that ‘**EB’s Modification to Council Standing Orders is accepted, with the additional action that Trustees independently circulate their reports/documents before each meeting’**

b. Financial

i. Bank accounts

- £50,000 – new Reserves bank account – 30-day notice account with Cambridge & Counties Bank (3.8% interest on opening, currently at 3.73%) as transferred from Lloyds accounts.

Existing Lloyds accounts balances are as follows:

Projects £25,000 (restricted funds before allocating the expenditure- currently comprises £15,000 for the Flatford Breaches Project and £10,000 for public jetty works).

Reserves £97,000 (unrestricted funds – perhaps needs to be renamed for clarity!)

Main £40,000 (current account for general income and expenditure) – currently at its lowest whilst we are outside our main operational period

- Profit & Loss Report** - not available for this meeting as a lot of accounting activity in recent months (e.g. in Dec25, there were 57 supplier invoices (rather than the presumed 10!) alongside our own customer invoices and reconciling income and expenses). There had also recently been unexpected involvement with arrangements and financial implementation of numerous projects that are running concurrently.
- AGM 2026** – CB said that a meeting with our accountant is required should there still be a plan to bring forward the date of the AGM this year.
- RST finances review & Treasurer role vacancy** – KT asked after progress as HG had been leading on the presentation of our accounts and budgets. **ACTION: PB to liaise with HG to check on this and other handover matters.**

At this time, none of the Trustees were willing to take on the Treasurer role so this vacancy needs to be shared with RST membership. EB recommended outlining the scope of the role and commitment required. For inclusion in the newsletter should time and space allow but certainly an email to the membership. **ACTION: PB to draft the plea for CB to send out to membership**

c. Management

- Wedding Licence renewal** – this is for 3 years, and an additional re-application and payment will not be required when our usual capacity is reinstated.

d. Membership

- Membership Secretary vacancy** – this role has arisen since PB has taken on the role of interim Chair. The office can manage the day-to-day administration but someone to focus on what our membership can offer and attract new members is needed. **ACTION: PB to draft the plea to be included alongside the Treasurer role (see item 7biv).**
- Membermojo system** – the automated emails for membership renewals are very effective. KT had queried how to check/amend gift aid status as he was eligible for this. **ACTION: CB to check** [post meeting note: gift aid status can be amended both through renewal process and accessing your online membership record].
- Life membership for Ian Whale** – KT asked whether Ian had been written to regarding this and it seemed this had been overlooked during the transfer of Chair. **ACTION: KT to draft letter for PB to sign.**

e. SBOC

- Preparations were well underway for the start of the 2026 season with refresher training sessions having good take up.
- First school visit of the year due to take place at the VEC on 25th March. CB will talk to school about use of photographs for RST to be able to promote this activity.

f. DVB

- Preparations underway for relaunching the boats on 27th March ahead of a boat booking for a Talbooth wedding.
- The pre-season meeting had been well attended with an opportunity to meet new volunteers who have responded to promotional posters and articles in local magazines, as circulated by Christine Gilbert.
- **Langham Barn** - Barry Whymark had visited the site, and a report is expected which will enable Trustees to discuss and make an informed decision on whether to proceed with the barn or negotiate with Beth Chatto about possible storage. **ACTION: AR**
- **Pricing for charters and weddings** – an increase for the coming year with 1hr charter at £150 or 2hrs at £200 whilst weddings are £300. A 10% discount has been agreed for Talbooth inhouse events.
- **Dedham River & Business Group, 24th March**- KT will represent RST at this ongoing discussion on how best to manage the increasing number of visitors to the area.

- **Fares & age ranges** – Following some internal messages between volunteers, CB sought to clarify the cut off age between child and adult as Child aged 5-13 years, Adult aged 14yrs and older. However, lifejackets/buoyancy aids are still to be worn by passengers under 12 years old.

g. RMG

- Cattawade Jetty** – Most of the materials have now been purchased in order to meet the DVNL funding requirements. RST recently upgraded to a larger storage unit at Schofields and EA have agreed to works commencing during fish spawning season (May/June) rather than delaying until later (June-September). Brantham Parish Council have also awarded a further £1500 towards the jetty. RB will contact BDC about additional funding as CIL and DEFRA funding could be available.
 - Flatford breaches** – DEFRA has awarded £10,000 but this is not yet received and is subject to purchases before mid-March to meet the deadline for this year's funding window. A total of £8,000 has been expended so far with works due to start on 23rd March for one of the smaller breaches between Flatford and Fen Bridge. A further EA exemption is awaited and there are still investigations on how best to move a large amount of clay into the field.
 - River levels and National Trust Flatford** – RB was in contact with NT (as an individual and not representing RST) due to problems with requests to lower the river level by a foot in order to help with the repairs. NT are seeking an exemption from the EA, which does not exist. RB is in touch with EA about permission for this activity.
- h. Granary Fire Escape & Balcony** (Documents x 2: "*Granary - Piling Quote*", "*granary fire escape report*")
- Phillips Engineering have submitted a quotation, but PB will ask for a breakdown for fire exit, upper veranda and lower decking. Stour Engineering have also been asked to quote on that basis.
 - The piling works will be undertaken by a separate contractor with works to be scheduled so as to minimise the impact on venue bookings and the tearoom.

8. Health & Safety (Document: "*12.04.26 Health and Safety - Environmental - Steve Durham*")

- Boat Safety Inspections** – An issue had arisen regarding our use of the P20 fire extinguishers which do not hold the 'B' rating currently recognised by BSS. The boats had passed in all other areas, so SD is appealing directly with the BSS to obtain exemption or approval regarding these new type extinguishers. We need the BSS certification to renew our trip boat craft registrations. **ACTION: SD**
- First Aid Course** – SD has 7 people booked in for this course taking place on 24th April, 9:30am-3pm, at Dedham Sports Hall. Some Sudbury based volunteers might be able to attend.
- Norwich to Tilbury project** – KT wondered if RST could seek any financial compensation from loss of earnings i.e. not being able to hold S2C event.
- Insurance** – there have been some inconsistencies with how our insurance renewal has been presented which has led to confusion about where and what is listed as insured, including our trailers. **ACTION: SD and CB to liaise with our insurance contacts.**

9. Environmental

- River Rights** – SD gave an overview of the movement where local communities are seeking to secure legal rights for their waterways. SD had attended a recent meeting including various councillors from different parishes and town councils. He was able to advise on the history of the River Stour Navigation and the rights it already has enshrined in law. RST could choose whether to get involved and have a 'legal guardian' appointed, but it was early days and it was agreed to see how this progressed elsewhere.

10. Any Other Business (AOB)

- Tea Room** – JR invited those present to the join the tearoom team or encourage others to do so.
- RST Social, Quiz Night** – this had a good turnout and was enjoyed by everyone who attended.
- Boxted Bridge portage** – PB was delighted to report that the bridge has reopened for use by pedestrians and cyclists whilst through navigation has also been reinstated following removal of the booms. This is good news for general river users and S2C as a temporary portage structure and route will no longer be required.
- Dedham shallows** – the EA's contractors had completed the bathymetric survey last week, but we hadn't heard from the EA yet regarding next steps. **ACTION: RB to contact EA's Ian Watts**

11. Date and time of next meeting: Tuesday 14th April 2026, 2pm – online via Zoom.

Paperwork to be uploaded into shared online folder or circulated to all by the author.