

River Stour Trust Council Meeting
Tuesday 14th April 2026 at 2:00pm
[virtual via Zoom - meeting was recorded]

Present – Trustees: Richard Blay (RB - from item 5b), Jim Lunn (JL) Paul Brewerton (PB – Chair & Treasurer), Steve Durham (SD), Jane Rogers (JR – Company Secretary), Alan Ryan (AR), Kevin Taylor (KT)

1. Tribute to Emrhys Barrell

The sudden passing of Emrhys had been a great shock. His contribution and commitment to the Trust over many years has been invaluable. A moment of silence was taken to remember Emrhys.

2. Declarations of Interest: None.

3. Apologies for absence: [post meeting: CB - due to unexpected visitor and technical issues]

4. Minutes of last meeting held on 10.03.26: PROPOSED SD/ SECONDED JR “to accept 10.03.26 Council minutes as a true record; with no redactions for the published online version’ **AGREED UNANIMOUSLY**

5. Matters Arising – as tabled on agenda.

6. Notification of Any Other Business

- a. **(JR) S2C:** refer to Item 10
- b. **(SD) Mobiboat:** refer to Item 10

7. Reports

- a. **Governance** – reports had been submitted in advance with most opting to circulate by email (with CB subsequently uploading into shared access online folder).
- b. **Financial** (Document: “financial report part 1 April 2026”)
 - **Bank accounts** - PB reported current bank balances, including new savings account which had generated £140 of interest in its first month.
 - **Minimum Wage increase** – It was **AGREED** for no other payroll changes to be applied from 1st April.
 - o [post meeting note: There are three roles which now reflect the new statutory minimums applying to workers aged 21+: £12.71ph (4.1% increase) and workers aged 18–20: £10.85ph (8.5% increase). Caretaker & Cleaner (both 21yrs+) and Function bar staff (18-20yrs and/or 21yrs+).]
 - **Annual Accounts** – PB was following up progress with our accountant, Lisa King.
 - **Treasurer** – Carol Shakespeare has expressed an interest. She is a qualified accountant but spends a lot of time abroad. **ACTION: PB will follow up with her in April when she’s back in the UK.**
- c. **Management** – no report
- d. **Membership** (Document: “membership report april 2026”)
 - In reference to the circulated report, PB noted 325 active membership & 71 expired memberships that needed to be followed up (note: memberships include subscriptions for more than one person).
 - It was confirmed that membership numbers have remained fairly static over the past couple of years.
 - There has not yet been interest from for someone to fulfil the Membership Secretary role.
 - KT still had a query with gift aid eligibility on Membermojo and whether this was visible to members although CB had confirmed this was available to new and existing members. [post meeting note: screenshots available to show where gift aid eligibility option is available to new and existing members to opt in or out.]
- e. **SBOC** (Documents x 3: “SBOC mins 9.2.26”, “SBOC mins 9.3.26”, “sboc report 13 april 2026”)
In addition to the circulated documents:
 - PB said forecast wind and gusts had led to a school visit being cancelled with plans to rebook another date.
 - **Lifejackets** – 3 lifejackets had been discovered inflated (presumably accidental) and had also been missed for annual servicing. A restock of spares (cylinders, clips, cartridges) was required. **ACTION: SD to send parts numbers to CB for an order from usual supplier.**

- f. **DVB** (Documents x 4: “DVB 20.1.26 Cttee Mtg Minutes pdf final”, “DVB 19.2.26 Committee Mtg Minutes Final.pdf”, “DVB 17.3.26 Cttee Mtg Mins Final - Copy”, “DVB Report 15.04.26”)

In addition to the circulated documents:

- **Flatford Lock** - Research into required repairs remain a priority.
- **Langham Barn** - The surveyor’s report is awaited.
- **New trainees** – KT has recently overseen training taster sessions for 11 new volunteers with more trainees also in the pipeline. There is no upper age limit in place to be a volunteer, but certain circumstances may exclude an individual from participation in certain roles/activities on grounds of safety for themselves and others. The trainees complete a medical declaration and are made aware of the physical demands/capabilities that are required.
- **Flatford Sluices** – AR has spoken to Simon Peachey at National Trust about control of the water levels. There are plans to install a device that will monitor the levels and notify registered users when it drops.

- g. **RMG** (Document: “Council Meeting 14th April RMG Report”)

- The report was accepted with no further discussion required.

- h. **Granary Fire Escape & Balcony** (Documents x 2: “Granary - Piling Quote”, “granary fire escape report”)

- Final planning permission is still awaited before works can proceed.
- The piling works are required to support the new structure and can be completed without removing the lower veranda and a time period that will not impact on required use of the area.
- The quotations received presented the works as three separate phases: Fire Escape, Balcony and Veranda. The removal of existing structures was included within Phillips Engineering’s quotation but excluded from Stour Engineering’s quotation.
- There was discussion regarding how much of the project to undertake and in what time frame with regard to financial implications and other commitments. Additional internal works would also be required to make the venue attractive for bookings.

- **PROPOSED JR/SECONDED SD that ‘the entire structure – fire escape, balcony and veranda – are replaced; with Philips Engineering chosen as the preferred contractor.’ AGREED UNANIMOUSLY**
- **ACTIONL: PB to follow up.**

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

- The report was accepted with no further discussion required.

9. **Environmental** (Document: “12.04.26 Health and Safety - Environmental - Steve Durham”)

- The report was accepted with no further discussion required.

10. Any Other Business (AOB)

- a. **Sudbury to the Sea** – JR queried who would be taking responsibility for the event this year as it’s beneficial as a fundraiser and for publicity. PB said it had fallen to himself and CB to co-ordinate for the past few years since Seb Cailles had moved away. A volunteer organiser is required to assist in overseeing coordinating of tasks and volunteers, responding to queries (social media, emails, phone) and liaising with landowners, etc. RST office will also assist and continue to manage the website and bookings. **ACTION: S2C Coordinator vacancy to be promoted in the next newsletter.**
- b. **Mobiboat** – the intention had been to refurbish the boat to offer accessible trips at Flatford. This was in collaboration with the National Trust who sought funding for a wheelchair-accessible vehicle to serve as a shuttle service that assists visitors with mobility issues. NT had withdrawn their offer for RST to have use of their land and jetty due to concerns on bank erosion and jetty condition. NT were successful in obtaining a grant for the accessible vehicle. **ACTION: Final discussion with NT on any future collaboration for visitors with mobility issues will decide on future of Mobiboat.**

11. **Date and time of next meeting:** Tuesday 12th May 2026, 2pm – online via Zoom.

- Paperwork to be uploaded into shared online folder or circulated to all by the author.
- Possible face to face meetings to be arranged in addition to online meetings. Venues closer to Dedham Vale to be checked for pricing, etc.