River Stour Trust Council Meeting
Tuesday 9th June 2026 at 2:00pm
[virtual via Zoom - meeting was recorded]

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

Catherine Burrows (CB – Manager)

1. **Declaration of Interest:** None
   Updated Charity Commission guidance on conflicts of interest would be considered later in the meeting, with a view to developing a formal policy.

2. **Apologies for absence:** Jim Lunn (JL)

3. **Minutes of last meeting held on 12.05.26: PROPOSED JR/ SECONDED AR** "to accept 12.05.26 Council minutes as a true record; with redaction of last sentence in item 6-g-ii for the published online version' **AGREED UNANIMOUSLY**

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

5. **Notification of Any Other Business**
   A. **(SD) Mileage:** refer to Item 10-i

6. **Reports**
   A. **Financial** *(Document x 1: 'Carol Shakespeare - River Stour Trust June 2026')*

CS advised that discussions had taken place with both CB and our external accountant (Lisa King). The Xero accounting system does not currently reflect the true financial position because outstanding year-end adjustments for 2024 and 2025 have not yet been fully completed. CS advised work to address the issues would take time but was entirely achievable. This includes:

- all necessary year-end adjustments will be uploaded onto Xero.
- outstanding 2025 year-end accounts will be completed.
- accounting processes will be reviewed to improve efficiency and ensure more accurate ongoing reporting.

For the present, monthly financial reports would concentrate on the current cash position and available reserves. Future reports will include project expenditure and budget monitoring. Work on developing a five-year financial planning framework had commenced but there was an absence of formal project budgets. Clarity was also sought on the expenditure status of restricted funds.

   B. **Governance**

i. **Trustee Identity Verification** – Several Trustees are still to provide their unique 11-character Companies House personal code. **ACTION: CB to resend the guidance notes for the information to be provided <u>before 12 July</u>.**

ii. **Conflicts of Interest –** The Charity Commission had issued updated guidance. It was **NOTED** that conflicts of interest are not limited to financial matters and that the guidance provides broader clarification. **Action: Trustees to review the Charity Commission guidance prior to consideration of a draft policy.**

C. Management 2026 *(Document x 1: 'Management Report Jun26')*

The report was accepted with further discussion on the following items:

i. Record Management

- Many operational documents currently exist only on individuals' computers, creating a risk of information loss and version control issues. It was **AGREED** that a central document repository for operational documents, manuals, policies and similar records should gradually be transferred into the central system. Editable master copies should be available to RST.
- PB suggested that, pending completion of the new filing system, that RST Manager is copied in on significant correspondence to ensure an organisational record is maintained.
- **ACTION: CB to establish a central document repository. Editable versions of documents to be sent to the office pending completion of the new arrangements.**

ii. Additional Policies

- It was noted that additional policies and operational procedures require creation or updating to reflect current practice and Charity Commission expectations.
- One example being use of social media where a consistent approach should be adopted to ensure that communications accurately reflect RST objectives and reputation (refer to guidance provided by the Government and Charity Commission). **ACTION: PB to draft a policy for approval at a future meeting.**

iii. Insurance Update *(Documents x 3: 'INS1 - Mechanical Plant and Vehicles - Training Experience and Record Keeping', 'INS2 - 2026 Insurance Update- Mechanical Plant and Vehicles' and 'INS3 - AA - Risk Management Questionnaire 2026')*

- It was **AGREED** RST should continue strengthening its health and safety procedures in response to insurer expectations. It was **NOTED** that insurers are placing greater emphasis on documented evidence (following any incident), so it was increasingly important to maintain proper records of volunteer inductions, toolbox talks, training and competency records, volunteer attendance lists and emergency contacts.
- RB acknowledged that recording within the River Management Group (RMG) had not always been consistent and undertook to improve documentation going forward. Discussion took place regarding how frequently toolbox talks should be repeated for volunteers undertaking routine tasks versus new or higher-risk activities. For forthcoming works at Cattawade, including scaffolding and jetty construction, task-specific briefings and appropriate PPE will be required before work commences. SD confirmed that, as the scaffolding is not being used for work at height, specialist scaffold qualifications are not required, although safe working practices remain essential.
- SD recommended all RST volunteers receive a basic induction and suggested producing a standard induction booklet covering essential safety information. JR offered to prepare a draft induction programme for Tea Room volunteers and to work with SD to develop it into a suitable induction process.
- KT commented that the insurance update had wider implications for RST activities and suggested it should be reviewed more thoroughly **ACTION: All Trustees to read the insurance related documents for discussion at the next meeting.**

D. Membership *(Document: "Membership Report - Jun26")* The report was accepted with further discussion as follows:

- **New Members – PB PROPOSED/JR SECONDED 'to accept all new members'. AGREED UNANIMOUSLY**
- **Volunteers –** A record of those who will be or are currently participating in RST voluntary activities is required e.g. Trip boats, work parties - RMG and RHG. **ACTION: Group coordinators to provide the requested information.**

E. **SBOC** *(Document x 1: 'Paul Brewerton - sboc & Granary report june 26')*

The report was accepted with further discussion on the following items:

i. **Lock operation**

- The recent ruling that qualified crew should not be on helm when skipper is ashore had created some disquiet. It was stressed that crew are trained to the same level as skippers and are quite capable of taking the boat through the lock. Council had been asked to reconsider this ruling following insurance concerns (reference to earlier item 6-c-iii).
- The change stemmed from the insurance update and CB referred to the requirement that "Each organisation should have a system in place to ensure that only authorised, appropriately experienced and trained personnel can use such equipment." so queried whether our training records could simply be updated to reflect this.
- Nonetheless, it was **NOTED** that the majority of Sudbury crew are experienced enough to be assessed to skipper if that is the agreed solution. [post meeting note, the insurers refer to "…large passenger boats (*more than 12 passengers*) the skipper experience requirements set by the Maritime & Coastguard Agency are considered sufficient…]

F. **DVB** *(Document: 'DVB Report - Jun26 AR - by email')*

The report was accepted with further discussion on the following items:

i. **Dedham and Dedham Lock** – KT continues to attend meetings regarding ways to resolve issues with increased visitor numbers and antisocial behaviour at Dedham. In addition to existing warning signs at the lock, DVB was researching practicalities and costs of extending the height of the railings (possibly with rollers) and anti-climb fencing to impede unauthorised access.

ii. **Cattawade parking** – the site was not considered big enough for the parking operator but could be considered as a commercial proposition alongside another site. KT asked about Quay Lane car park would be and CB said Quay Lane Trust would need to be approached, but it's covenant likely makes this unviable.

iii. **Cattawade gardening maintenance –** A contractor is required to regularly maintain grass cutting, etc on an agreed basis. This was to be followed up once Cattawade jetty project is completed.

iv. **Dedham Lock upstream penstocks –** these need to be repaired which will necessitate transportation of the stop logs from SSM. KT has been in touch with Aquico for them to come down and fix the problem.

G. **RMG** *(Documents: 'Richard Blay - Council Meeting 9th June_RMG Report')*

The first report was accepted with no discussion required.

i. **Cattawade jetty project** *(Document 'Richard Blay - RMG Article 2_Changes Afoot at Cattawade_May 2026')***.** The next report was accepted with further discussion:

- Funding for this project which includes £4k from DVNL (received) and £1,500 from Brantham Parish Council (upon project completion). A contribution from the RSBCIC £10k designated for public jetties and access points could be used.
- Additional costs had been incurred (circa £1,000-2,000) due to some of the oak purchased earlier in the year having to be replaced due to twisting/warping. A detailed, costed budget had been prepared but final project cost is to be reviewed.
- Site closure – RB had posted to a group on Facebook using his personal account. CB asked for up-to-date closure information to be resent for publishing on RST website and Facebook account.

ii. **Future Flatford breach works** *('Richard Blay - Flatford Erosion Site Status and Repair Proposals_2026 to 2030').* The final report was accepted with further discussion:

- The repair schedule listed 10 erosion sites with repair priority levels and phased repairs over the next 4 years (until 2030); although subject to plan agreement, funding and resourcing.

- Council recorded its thanks to RB and the RMG volunteers for their achievements thus far. It was important, before committing the RST to ongoing works in this area, to ensure not only the necessary funding source but also the people we will rely on with the necessary skills and experience to undertake the work.
- Our thanks to RST member Keith Seaman, as a qualified Ecologist, is intending to carry our ecological surveys at no charge to assist with bespoke permits applications.
- The report did not outline current expenditure on the 3-year funding previously received; and the status of any remaining funds against outstanding tasks needs review. **ACTION: RB to liaise with CS and CB.**

7. **Granary Fire Escape & Balcony** *(Document x 1: 'Paul Brewerton - sboc & Granary report june 26')*

- SD and PB are in contact with chosen contractor, Philips Engineering, regarding the construction phase plan. Dates for the piling will be set with the piling contractor once final approval is granted. It is expected this will take 4 days on site and will not impact on opening of the tearoom.

8. **Health & Safety** *('HSE Report for Council June 2026' and 'Ian Connelly 05-06-26 IC DVB RST IWA accident reporting form')* - The reports and action taken were accepted.

9. **Environmental** – *('HSE Report for Council June 2026' – included a section on Environment)* - The report was accepted.

10. **Any Other Business (AOB)** – discussed under other items.

    i. **Mileage Policy**

- Following HMRC update to the standard mileage rate, it was **AGREED** to undertake a wider review of the mileage and expenses policy, including consideration of how different volunteer roles and responsibilities should be reflected within the policy.
- Members discussed the need to ensure any revised arrangements complied with charity governance requirements, particularly regarding payments to trustees.
- **ACTION: A small working group (CS, KT and AR) will review the Trust's volunteer mileage and expenses policy and report back with recommendations for a fair, consistent and legally compliant policy.**

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

- It was **AGREED** that, wherever possible, Council meetings would normally be held on the second Tuesday of each month at 2.00 pm, with flexibility to alter dates if necessary.
- UPLOAD via this link: UPLOAD LINK
    - *If this is not possible then please ensure that all regular meeting attendees are emailed the document at least 12 hours before meeting*
- VIEW via this link: LINK TO VIEW
    - *Refer to folder 'Reports for Upcoming Council Meeting'*