

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

Present – Trustees: Paul Brewerton (PB – Chair & Treasurer), Alan Ryan (AR), Carol Shakespeare (CS), Kevin Taylor (KT)

Other attendees: Catherine Burrows (CB – Manager)

1. Declaration of Interest: None

2. Apologies for absence: Richard Blay (RB), Steve Durham (SD), Jim Lunn (JL), Jane Rogers (JR – Company Secretary)

3. Minutes of last meeting held on 09.06.26: Since the upload into the shared folder had failed, it was **AGREED** to approve these at the next meeting.

4. Matters Arising – It was **AGREED** to carry this over until the next meeting.

5. Notification of Any Other Business

A. Travel/Mileage Policy update – item 10-i

B. (AR) Flatford-Dedham water levels – item 6-F-ii

C. (CS) RMG sub-committee – item 6-B-11

6. Reports

A. Governance

- i. **AGM** – The Annual Accounts are not yet finalised, but PB suggested proceeding with Thursday 20th August. **ACTION:** PB to determine candidates due for re-election and liaise with CB on paperwork preparation and circulation.

B. Financial (*document 'Carol Shakespeare - River Stour Trust July 2026'*)

- i. CS and CB were making progress with the accounts to reflect our financial position more fully. A meeting with our accountant, Lisa King, was taking place on 4th August to discuss this as well as a new query, as raised by Mike Finch, relating to RST leasehold agreements with specific relevance to our assets figure as a 'right-of-use' assets rather than a finance lease would significantly reduce the value of the Leasehold Property in the Balance Sheet and therefore the overall value of the RST.
- ii. **RMG sub-committee** – CS suggested a small sub-group meet every 2/3 months to review the progression of the work, application for grants, areas of concern, costs to date, costs against forecast and to identify any additional expenditure that is required to be brought to the Trust's attention for approval. KT suggested that the group also discuss how project practicalities and aligning with RST aims and objectives, alongside volunteer management. **ACTION: CS, KT and AR to arrange an initial meeting with RB.**
- iii. **RMG BBQ** – 15 or so volunteers were due to attend a gathering organised by RB in gratitude for their efforts with recent projects. It was **AGREED** to contribute up to £100 (in line with contribution to boating volunteers at laying up events).

C. Management 2026

- i. **IWA Restoration Panel** (*document 'Inaugural Meeting of IWA Restoration Panel'*) – This would focus on restoration strategy and to facilitate knowledge exchange between organisations over a series of face-to-face and online Panel gatherings every 2-3 months. The first meeting will be in person on the 22nd August (venue in the Midlands to be advised), and RST is invited to send a delegate.

- ii. **Langham Barn** – the storage invoice includes a request for AR to give an update on RST potentially purchasing the barn. AR wanted to speak with Barry Whymark directly as well as arranging a structural survey to enable a valuation. **ACTION: CB to ask BW to call AR.**

D. Membership (*Document: "Membership Report - Jul26"*)

- **PB PROPOSED/JR SECONDED 'to accept all new members'. AGREED UNANIMOUSLY**
- **Pending payments** – CB explained the online system requires approval of new members by an administrator before they can pay. This will be changed to stop payment delays and enable faster processing.

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

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

- i. **Lock operation** - There was still disquiet regarding the recent ruling that qualified crew should not be on helm when skipper is ashore. Sudbury crew skills are at a par with a skipper, and were assessed to IWA standard so it could be a matter of terminology usage at Sudbury (DVB has skippers and senior skippers). It was suggested that SBOC has the opportunity to review the insurance documents.
- ii. **Bookings** – the pre-bookable scheduled weekend Henny Lunch Cruises have been fully booked with lots of booked charters on weekday throughout the summer.
- iii. **Abandoned boat** – A 12-15ft day cabin cruiser boat had been abandoned on the Granary slipway. This had been captured on CCTV but not enough detail to identify the vehicle used. The office clarified that it was not registered with the EA and the police had no record of a stolen boat. A notice was attached giving a week before RST would arrange its removal. We also posted on Facebook and received expressions of interest for taking the boat. The boat was finally taken by Cavendish School PTA to be repurposed for use in the school playground with a plaque that it was donated by RST.

F. DVB (*Documents x 2: 'AR - Lower River report' - by email, ' and 'Jax - barn update query'*)

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

- i. **Dedham area** – AR expressed concern about usage of the riverside opposite the Boatyard impacting on safe operation for both Boatyard and RST boats.
KT reported, at the most recent meeting of the Dedham River & Business Group, that Cllr Sheila Beaton will investigate possible deterrence actions. The farmer owning the field has exceeded permitted days of usage and was served a notice to cease and desist. However, he has logged an objection which takes 60 weeks to be determined, and use of the land can continue during this period.
- ii. **Flatford-Dedham water levels** – AR recommended a meeting with National Trust and EA to discuss the issues. It was understood that the Boatyard intended to put forward a claim for loss of income. RST did not plan to do the same, but it would be worthwhile to be able to calculate loss of income arising from poor management of the sluices. KT was disappointed by lack of understanding of the problems and follow up from EA. **ACTION: PB to be provided with words to follow up our concerns with the EA.**

G. RMG.

- i. **Cattawade jetty project** – The newly installed jetty was recognised as a vast improvement by RST and other river users alike.
- ii. **Dedham Mill Pond** - Councillor Beaton approached RB with respect to blocking an exit route used by bridge jumpers from the Mill Pond. The consultation with the landowner before the work was done resulted in some misunderstanding and the work carried out was not as the landowner was expecting. This was not helped by the fact that within 18 hours of completion the works had been demolished by some unknown objector leaving things very untidy. It was agreed that RB would clear the site.

7. Granary Fire Escape & Balcony

- Following the final approval from Babergh Building Control, PB and CB had a site meeting with Barry Whymark and the piling contractors. SD was reviewing CDM paperwork with the plan for works to be carried out within the next 4 weeks.
- The initial deposit had been paid to Phillips Engineering so prefabrication of the metal structure could commence. We were on track for the works to be complete before Autumn.

8. Health & Safety ('Stephen Durham - HSE Report to RST Council July 2026' by email)

The reports and action taken were accepted, with further discussion as follows:

- i) **Dedham Lock incident** - As reported on Facebook and local newspapers, a young girl was injured after jumping into the river at Dedham Lock. She impaled her leg on an underwater obstruction to the extent corrective surgery was required. Unfortunately, numerous clear safety signs fitted by RST prohibiting access, diving/jumping and underwater hazard warnings had been ignored. **ACTION: DVB: currently seeking costs of surrounding both North and South Wing walls with anti-climb fencing to prevent future trespass (Although we have no legal obligation to do so)**

9. Environmental – ('Stephen Durham - HSE Report to RST Council July 2026' by email – included a section on Environment) - The report was accepted.

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

- i) **Mileage Policy** (Documents x 'Proposed Mileage Claim Doc 07.26' and 'Mileage without names')

A small group (CS, KT and AR) had met to consider a fair, consistent and legally compliant policy that considered new HMRC rates and how best to reflect different volunteer roles and responsibilities.

It was proposed that Business mileage terms to remain as per existing policy but to increase the rate, from 1st July 2026, to match the HMRC maximum of 55p per mile.

The group had also discussed the introduction of volunteer mileage reimbursement whilst considering the administrative impact on processing claims. The mileage of 31 DVB volunteers was analysed ('Mileage without names') which led to a proposal to reimburse mileage at a rate of 30p for each mile travelled above 25 miles for each volunteer duty.

Mileage claims need to be submitted to the office by the 5th working day of the following month in which they are incurred. There remains the option to not claim at all.

CS noted that the policy currently required all mileage claims to be "authorised by the Treasurer, or another Trustee in the absence of the treasurer" but this was not practical for small journeys.

It was felt that absent Trustees should be given the opportunity to comment on the proposal.

- ii) **Dedham water quality testing** – KT mentioned that the BBC had reported on Dedham CofE primary school Year 4 children investigating water pollution at Dedham using riverfly monitoring. The pupils are planning to write to the Conservative MP for the area, Bernard Jenkin, asking for a storm drain to be installed on the nearby A12 to stop chemicals draining into the river.
- iii) **Trip from Dedham** – AR said that they were getting visitors to board the boat at Dedham which causes problems, particularly with parking at Boatyard due to the ANPR system. It was unclear where this was promoted as it was not on RST website nor suggested by the office.

- i) **Date and time of next meeting:** Tuesday 11th August 2026, 2pm – online via Zoom.