River Stour Trust Council Meeting

Tuesday 15th September 2026 at 2:00pm

[virtual via Zoom - meeting was recorded]

Present – Trustees: Paul Brewerton (PB – Chair), Richard Blay (RB), Alan Ryan (AR), Kevin Taylor (KT) Steve Durham (SD), Jane Rogers (JR - Company Secretary)

Other attendees: Chris Parsons (CP)

1. **Declaration of Interest:** None

2. **Apologies for absence:** Carol Shakespeare (CS - Treasurer), Catherine Burrows (CB – Manager), Jim Lunn (JL)

3. **Minutes of the last meeting**:

PROPOSED KT/ SECONDED AR "to accept 11.08.26 Council minutes as a true record; with amendment as below and no redaction for the online version of the minutes.'

- Amendment to Item 9-ii – remove reference to KT as taking action

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

i. **EA additional weedcutting –** An additional 4 days weed cutting on the lower river took place in September which was appreciated although it was felt that this stretch should have been included during July works. There was also disappointment that the EA did not arrange for the contractors to cut the entire stretch down to Cattawade (finished at nearby Constable Park). The weed and river conditions have impacted on our trip boat operation (wear on boat batteries and volunteers' reluctance to take the boats out due to problems) as well as this year's S2C being limited to 1-day only. It was **NOTED** that RST needs to pressure EA to take more responsibility for ensuring the river remains navigable and not deteriorating to the extent that even a canoe cannot achieve safe passage. An additional issue is the ongoing delays to complete works within an agreed timeframe e.g. Cornard portage replacement expected in April 2026 but portage diversion across VEC site still in place.

5. **Notification of Any Other Business –** none

i. RB – see item 9iii

6. **Reports**

A. **Governance**

i. **Appointment of Chairman of Council -** As per the RST Memorandum & Articles of Association "at its first meeting every year after the Annual General Meeting, a Chairman of the Council is appointed from and by the Council." Attendees were invited to propose nominations. **PROPOSED JR/ SECONDED SD** that 'Paul Brewerton is elected as Chairman of Council' **AGREED**

B. **Financial** *(document 'Carol Shakespeare - email 'Finance overview CS 14.09.26])*

CS had emailed earlier that afternoon with a brief overview of planned tasks. PB added that the Annual Accounts had been signed ready for submission to Companies House and Charity Commission.

C. **Membership** *(Document: "Membership Report - Sep26")*

The report detailed new, lapsed and archived members (the latter excluded from software plan cost). It was **AGREED** to accept all new members. AR in discussion with a member interested in Membership Secretary role.

D. Management 2026 – *no report*

E. SBOC *(Documents x 3 'sboc and granary reports sept 2026', 'SBOC minutes July 2026' and 'SBOC minutes August 2026')*

The report was accepted requiring no additional debate, changes, or written follow-up, subject to following:

- JL fixed EL's steering issue and the affected passengers had been fully refunded.
- CP said JC now requires 4 volunteers. An open invitation to all boat skippers at both ends of the river to undertake training. **ACTION: CP is initial point of contact for those interested in training board JC next year.**
- SBOC are considering how best to manage charter and volunteer availability for next season. In response to RB's query about upper-river volunteer recruitment, SBOC have already taken advantage of multiple recruitment opportunities.

F. DVB *(Document x 1: 'DVB report by email 14.09.26 09.54)*

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

i. **Langham Barn valuation** – It was **AGREED** to arrange for Stanfords to carry out the valuation at their estimate of £500 plus vat (based on hourly rate of £200).
ii. **Dedham Penstocks Repair** – The ordered parts had arrived and work has started.
iii. **Trainees** – KT expected to get 12 new trainees passed for assessment this season which will be helpful with an increase in charters for all 3 DVB boats.

G. RMG - *no written report*

i. **River clearance** – plans for river clearance sessions up towards Boxted, which will work in conjunction with RHG coming from upper river direction. More consideration will be required for the Nayland to Boxted section.
ii. **Dedham Shallows** – Environment Agency have confirmed their intention to proceed with the works in November. This is put forward as a more extensive project to give the best long-term solution.
iii. **Flatford bank repairs and revetments** – Suffolk County Council are overseeing the transportation and storage arrangements for the two sources of clay.
iv. **Boat jetty rebuilds** – DVB are discussing repair and 2 metre extension of Flatford jetty to accommodate a two-boat operation at a cost of circa £5,000-£6,000 as well as Dedham Boatyard jetty rebuild to cost circa £10,000. These are approximate figures and the projects are to be designed and costed for Council approval.
v. **Tree pollarding grant** – These have been identified as potential hazards without intervention. RST (via RB) liaised with the landowner, Guy Lennox (GL), following discussion with Dedham Vale National Landscapes (DVNL). GL is supporting RST application for £2,000 grant to carry out the works which will require Dedham Vale Tree Surgery pollarding three trees on the Flatford corner with RMG support. A second stage grant application will follow in November to potentially attend to all willows on GL's land along the Flatford to Dedham stretch. The branch break offs are causing problems for all river users.

H. Granary Fire Escape & Balcony *(Document 'sboc and granary reports sept 2026')*

The report was accepted with further discussion as follows:

i. **Health & Safety** – SD plans to undertake a visit to verify health and safety requirements are being met. **ACTION: SD**
ii. **Internal Lift** – Application submitted for Bramford to Twinstead Community Fund grant with a decision expected in October.
iii. **Maintenance** - other tasks have been identified including a new enclosure for tearoom electrical unit and fuse box, tearoom door problems and gents loo refurb.
iv. **Venue promotion** – It was **NOTED** that wedding open day events would be beneficial to promote the venue once the major works and maintenance issues are completed.

I. Events

i. **S2C –** The curtailed event welcomed 115 craft and 170 people, and the participant feedback was positive.
ii. **Winter Socials –** A series of events for members and friends at The Granary is being arranged.
iii. **Santa Boat Rides –** This annual event will again take place over the first two weekends in December. Edwardian Lady remains the preferred boat for this event, rather than John Constable, due to the seasonal conditions and being far easier to operate within the timings.

7. **Health & Safety** *(report: sent by email 14.09.26 Collett - Reportable accident investigation report)*

The report was accepted requiring no additional debate, changes, or written follow-up.

i. **Training Manual revisions**

- DVB and SBOC will adhere to a standard boat handling and training process, but SBOC manual will address variances for Francis J Batten and John Constable.
- There was discussion regarding number of passenger experience trips that trainees need to undertake and how this is achieved at each end of the river.
- There was discussion regarding the role of skipper and crew as the latter is a role only retained by SBOC. CP explained that long-term crew are being encouraged to take Skipper assessment because they have the necessary skills.
- Both ends of the river are working to ensure that training records are maintained and the core training program should facilitate an easy transition between the two ends of the river (and any other Category A waters as a nationally recognised qualification). Volunteers will still need a brief orientation to become familiar with local geography and specific vessels.

ii. **Insurance requirements** – As previously **NOTED** (9 June 2026 Council, item 6-c-iii) "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." SD asserted that skippers and crew are covered by the RST IWA COBM Training Manual. However, safety induction and procedures manual are necessary for various roles and activities for both employees and volunteers. SD has drafted a 'Banksider' (renamed as 'Passenger Liaison') but consultation with other groups is required e.g. tearoom, RMG and RHG. The Risk Management Questionnaire also needs completion (a simple risk management self-assessment activity provided by our insures and IWA). **ACTION: SD**

8. **Environmental** – no report

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

i. **Concession boat trip fares** – SD mentioned that some volunteers queried charging a fare for the carer or the person they are caring for. There is no policy on this, but it was understood that professional carers will be able to claim back fares as expenses. **ACTION: PB to draft a fares policy for RST boat operations.**
ii. **GDPR regulations –** To ensure we are complying with UK GDPR when sharing volunteer information, we must provide clear, specific notice of who and data is shared with and why, and also obtain valid, recorded consent. SD suggested a simple statement "by having your name on the roster and the address list, you agree to being shared" but KT said earlier introduction i.e. during training was necessary. There is a published privacy policy on RST website but this would benefit from an update to factor in more considerations.
iii. ***Confidential* Employees** [REDACTED]

10. **Date and time of next meeting:** Tuesday 13th October 2026, 2:30pm – online via Zoom.