

**CONSERVATORS OF THE RIVER CAM**

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CONSERVATORS HELD IN COMMITTEE ROOM 1 (THE HEIDELBERG ROOM) AT THE GUILDHALL, CAMBRIDGE ON THURSDAY 7 JULY 2005 AT 9.30am

Present: Dr R D Walker (in the chair)

Conservators: Dr P Convey, Mr R C Hardingham, Mr R Ingersent, Dr R Laws, County Councillor R Sales, and Mr R Wakeford.

Observers: Mr R T Bryant, Mr D Bradley and Cllr H Smith.

In Attendance: Mr R B Bamford and Mr J R Wakefield (from Archer and Archer - the Clerks), Mr G Facer (Engineer and Control Officer) and Mr C Sparkes (River Foreman).

And of the general public (who signed the attendance record): Mr John Leader, and Mr James Macnaghten.

Action Required  
By

1. In the absence of Professor Chisholm and Cllr Nimmo Smith, Dr R D Walker was elected Chairman of the meeting. Apologies for absence had been received from Professor M D I Chisholm, Mr J Adams, Mr L Anderson, Cllr B Bradnack, Cllr I Nimmo Smith and Mr W Key.

The Chairman welcomed Cllr P Sales to the meeting he having been appointed in the place of Cllr R Driver. Cllr Sales represents the Abbey Ward one side of which abuts the river.

2. Minutes of the Meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> April 2005: These were approved and the Chairman authorised to sign the same.
3. Matters Arising from those minutes as reported (not dealt with elsewhere on the agenda):
  4. Delegation of Power: It was noted that Mr R B Bamford had been included as a signatory on the bank and building society accounts.
  - 8.4 Computer: It was noted that the Conservators' new computer had been connected to the internet via the Clerks' system and that Jonathan Wakefield could be contacted direct on [jrw@archerandarcher.co.uk](mailto:jrw@archerandarcher.co.uk).
  - 8.6 Pontoons: It was noted that pontoon fees for the current year had been agreed and paid by Scudamores and Huntingdon Marine. It was also noted that Mr Facer was in discussion with other pontoon users and potential users.

Mr R Ingersent arrived.

4. Chairman's Report:

Professor Chisholm submitted a written report in which he stated that:-

- 4.1 He had spoken to the Cambridge Women's Luncheon Club on 3<sup>rd</sup> June about the river and the role of the Conservators.
- 4.2 He reported also on the Cambridge City Council's Local Plan Omission Sites and the Conservators' proposal for an off-river mooring facility at their field in Chesterton to which the Clerks added that the Local Plan Inquiry Programme listed the Conservators for 26<sup>th</sup> October at 2 o'clock with papers being lodged by 13<sup>th</sup> September.

Dr P Convey arrived.

5. The Future of the Administration:

At the April Meeting of the Conservators, the officers had been asked to put together a costed plan for the future. The Clerks and Engineer had prepared a paper, before the meeting, which set out their recommendations in general terms. Detailed financial aspects should first be considered by the Committee set up, in January, to consider this matter, once the Conservators accept these general principles. (The committee was made-up of Professor Chisholm, Mr Adams, Mr Ingersent and Dr Walker with the two officers.)

The proposals were discussed in two parts:-

- 5.1 That their two posts be amalgamated into one full-time employee to be called the River Manager and a full-time deputy. It was accepted by the Conservators that this was the correct way forward; but there were reservations about putting all the responsibility on one person despite the fact of having a deputy.

It was felt, for this reason, that arrangements with the Environment Agency under the terms of an SLA, should be sought as a possible fall back position; but retaining the ultimate responsibility with the Conservators. It was agreed that this should only be pursued if the Business Plan for the proposals did not stand up to scrutiny in September.

- 5.2 That the River Manager and his deputy should be based at the revamped Lock Keeper's Cottage at Baitsbite. Conservators had widely diverging views on whether this was correct, some thinking Clayhithe and other offices in Cambridge itself. It was agreed, however, that this could be looked at separately once the appointment of a manager had been made when it might be sensible to involve the individual himself in coming to the appropriate conclusion.

6. Cambridge City Council / SCDC Development Plans:

Following the last meeting, the Conservators' field at Chesterton which had been added to the Omission Sites to be considered in the Cambridge City Council Local Plan received the blessing of the City Council who would not object to the proposals. The Chairman's report, above, had covered this aspect.

So far as South Cambridgeshire District Council's Local Development Plan was concerned, representations were required (to cover that part of the field which is in that district) in the form of written representations for inclusion in the first draft of the Plan and had to be returned by the 29<sup>th</sup> July.

Clerks                      The Conservators approved these matters being dealt with by Professor Chisholm in consultation with the officers.

7. Engineer's Report:

Engineer                7.1 Towpath Reconstruction: The towpath reconstruction had been completed and all feedback had been positive and complimentary.

Dr Walker drew attention to the fact that the water dripping from the A14 bridge was causing havoc with the surface. Apparently this had been reported to the County. Mr Leader drew attention to the fact that the limestone coming through the surface was dusting and being blown not only in people's faces but also onto boats where if wiped off would scratch the windscreens. The County had also indicated that they were aware of this fact; but that the surface would bed down shortly. Cllr Smith raised three points, one about the edging where the light soil which had been placed by the contractors had been blown away leaving a dangerous edge, the fact that at one point below Baitsbite Lock on one of the corners the path dipped dangerously towards the river. (This piece of bank was to be piled later in the year; but this would have no effect on the level of the path.) Thirdly, that the willows should now be cut back further to allow cyclists to be able to see ahead through the fronds. The River Foreman indicated that this work would be carried out in due course.

Engineer                7.2 Sheeps Green Footbridge: The County Council had sought comments about its intention to replace the above bridge with a wider one which would be more user friendly. The work was due to start in August for 14 weeks. The bridge would be 900mm higher than its predecessor; but whether the service pipes would be raised as well was unknown. The Engineer agreed to look into this further (subsequently found out by the Engineer that they are no longer needed). Concerns were expressed about whether there was any preventative measures being taken with the new bridgework to reduce the number of people jumping from it.

- 7.3 Conver Weedboat: The Conver Weedboat had not been used since the purchase of the new weedcutter and after consultation with Professor Chisholm had been sold to Buckden Marina.
- 7.4 Bicycle: A bicycle had been purchased for the use of the river crew.
- Engineer 7.5 Dragon Boat Festival: The details of this were noted and the Conservators decided after a considerable discussion that a straight fee of £250 would be sought. None of the relevant boats were registered with the Conservators and therefore what had been put in their letter was strictly untrue. This fee would also cover the two safety boats.
- 7.6 Cyril C: It was noted that the Cyril C required considerable work to bring it up to present day standards. Conservators agreed that the Engineer should be able to use between £15,000 and £17,000 on either refurbishing the Cyril C or obtaining a secondhand boat; but only after a full assessment has been made, if refurbishment is to occur, that a full survey of the Cyril C's existing hull should be carried out. This was agreed despite the fact that only £5,000 had been earmarked for this purpose in the five year plan.
- Engineer
- Dr P Convey left the meeting.
- 7.7 Clayhithe - Messing Facility: The Engineer's proposals for the messing facility at Clayhithe were noted. Conservators approved the revised layout and authorised the Engineer to seek planning permission accordingly; but to obtain costings for this and the previous proposals so that they could be considered together, before going further.
- Engineer
8. Finance Report:
- Income and Expenditure:
- Clerks 8.1 The Statement of Accounts for 2004/05 as presented was approved on the proposition of Mr Hardingham, seconded by Mr Ingersent who included in their resolution that Dr Walker and Dr Laws should not only sign those accounts and that Dr Walker should sign the letter of engagement but the Clerks the letter of representation.
- 8.2 It was noted that registration income for the current year had been forthcoming and that the Conservators were able to add a further £10,000 to their deposit account until it was needed for expenditure.
- 8.3 It was noted that no abnormal payments (not covered in the Clerks' or Engineer's Reports) had been made in the first quarter.
- 8.4 Capital: £290,000 was invested with Barclays London Treasurers providing 3.805% interest until 7.7.05 when new rates would be agreed and £250,000 on a Hallmark Account at Cambridge Building Society bringing in 3.9% at present.

- 8.5 It was noted that there had been a problem with the drive chains at the lock at Baitsbite and that repair costs from the R&R Fund would be required.

9. Clerks' Report:

9.1 Administration

The Clerks had provided details to Cambridge City Council who were in the process of preparing a database of organisations involved with proposed traffic management schemes in Cambridge.

9.2 AINA

The officers had not met Philip Burgess, the Chief Executive, due to other pressures. The invoice in respect of the annual membership subscription was expected to arrive in the near future. Last year, the subscription was £250 up from £50 previously. Dr Laws, the Conservators' representative to AINA, had questioned the need for membership to be continued as very little of its output concerned the Conservators directly. The Conservators had an indirect link to AINA through Mr Adams but he did not attend their meetings. His view was that for £250 the Conservators were likely to hear of things that affect them on the safety issues of their business which might otherwise pass them by. It was agreed to continue the subscription and to accept Mr R Ingersent's offer to attend meetings on behalf of the Conservators. The Clerks were instructed to write to AINA drawing their attention to the dates of our meetings so that no future clash occurred.

Clerks

9.3 Baitsbite Cottages

When the former tenants, Mr and Mrs D Clarke, moved out of No 2 Baitsbite Cottages, they requested that costs incurred by them in re-namelling the bath should be off-set against some plasterwork which was needed to be carried out. The agents recommended acceptance of this, which was agreed by the Clerks.

9.4 Baitsbite Lock

The annual increase in rental had been calculated for housing electronic equipment in the Conservators' premises at Baitsbite Lock and had been received in the sum of £281.03 from the Environment Agency.

9.5 Bishop's Mill

Cambridge City Council had confirmed that the revised charges for the Service Level Agreement in the current year were acceptable to them but were continuing to explore the feasibility of mechanising Bishop's Mill.

9.6 Byelaws

A complaint had been received about the use of a megaphone from a punt on the Backs by Cambridge University students (in breach of Byelaw 15.11) during the general election campaign. The Clerks had written to the Secretary of Cambridge University Students' Union whose members had been identified by the complainant. No reply had been forthcoming as yet. It was not intended to take any further action.

9.7 Cambridge City Council Mooring Policy

The officers had been invited to a meeting with the City Council's officers on 13<sup>th</sup> June when it was agreed that a broad draft proposal would be prepared in conjunction with the Conservancy, for submission to all the City departments who might want some input. This would be revisited in the light of comments received and prepared for submission to the relevant Council Committee for adoption and the Conservators (hopefully at the September meeting) for confirmation. There was nothing new about the arrangements. The officers had backed off from the proposals that the Conservators would collect the mooring fees as they did not want the possibility of Conservancy staff carrying large sums of money on their person. There also has to be some careful consideration given to the need for mooring licences to be granted only in respect of boats which are registered with the Conservators or the Environment Agency. This caused a slight problem where the City might want to collect their mooring fee by instalments.

A further round of discussions, in committee, would be made with the City before anything further happens. A press release from the City was due to be published within the next few days, which had been approved by Professor Chisholm, subject to grammatical corrections and was tabled.

9.8 Cam Boaters

An open day was planned by Cam Boaters for 7 August 2005. They were hoping to be able to use the basin below Jesus Lock, as well as Jesus Green and Jubilee Gardens.

9.9 Clayhithe Field

The tenant, D R Smart, had requested an extension of his tenancy, which had been agreed for a further six years to 9 May 2011 with a suitable rent review clause inserted in the new agreement. This was to allow the land to be registered for the Single Payment Grant under the European Agricultural Policy. This was for the Conservators' long term benefit; but it was for the occupier to deal with the registration and for that he had to have the extra security of tenure.

9.10 Environment Agency SLA

The Environment Agency had indicated that they wished to renegotiate the current Service Level Agreement in respect of the works that we carried out for them at the end of this year. The Engineer and Clerks were to meet their representative on 6<sup>th</sup> September.

9.11 Jesus Lock Keeper's Cottage:

This was about to be let through Carter Jonas to a group of students, as five joint tenants. Basic furniture had been provided (some of which had been left by the outgoing College tenant). Carter Jonas would manage this let on behalf of the Conservators which would mean that although there is an increased rent the bulk of this will be swallowed up in their management fees. It was a relief to have this gap in our rental income closed after nearly 10 months.

## Clerks

9.12.1 Membership

As reported earlier, Cllr. P Sales had been appointed a Conservator by Cambridgeshire County Council in place of Robin Driver who lost his seat on the Council. The Conservators confirmed that the Clerks should write to Mr Driver thanking him for his input during the course of his membership. His contacts at the County were very much appreciated.

9.12.2 RNLI had notified the Clerks that the annual charity collection was scheduled for 18<sup>th</sup> June 2005. This had been approved by the Engineer.

9.12.3 Following an enquiry from the owner of a radio controlled boat, the Clerks had advised the Engineer that he had power to withhold/grant consent for the use of all powered boats, toy or otherwise! The Engineer gave qualified consent provided that the boat was used out of others' way, near Baitsbite.

9.13 Registration

9.13.1 All of the College Boat Clubs completed registration of their boats for the current year, in time for the Mays.

9.13.2 Scudamores Punting Company applied for registration of 20 additional punts, to come onto the navigation two days during May Week. This was agreed with the Engineer at a fee of £25 per punt which was invoiced prior to the meeting.

9.13.3 An enquiry had been received in respect of registration for a safety boat, to be used as cover for scuba diving. The Clerks had indicated that the permission of the Conservators was required before scuba diving may be undertaken. The applicant had yet to advise of the location of the intended diving as well as the size of the boat.

9.13.4 An enquiry about boat ownership in connection with a claim against someone where the Crown Prosecution Service were trying to establish ownership to confiscate the boat was reported. Details of registration of the boat in a third party's name had been provided and it is possible that further evidence may be required. Where possible, the Clerks would reclaim the costs of this matter direct, so that it does not fall on the Conservators.

9.14 River Incidents

On Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> June, a visiting boat pulled towards the Riverside wall to avoid an VIII and found its screw entangled in a supermarket trolley. Despite the efforts of the River Foreman, who was called to the scene in diving-in, he had been unable to free this screw and the visitor was left to obtain third party help from elsewhere when a diver would have been required with substantial sized bolt cutters. With litigation very much in the forefront of most people's minds at this stage, we have notified our insurers of this incident.

Mr Hardingham wished to record his thanks on behalf of the visitor who had been impressed by the Foreman's efforts on his behalf.

9.15.1 Staff

Now that the Conservators had no direct link with the City Council and the staff salary schemes run by them, it seems to be more appropriate to consider some other basis on which to pay our staff. They have drawn our attention to the continued inequalities of the call-out fees as paid to the Environment Agency.

With the Chairman's authority, a review of staff salaries with particular regard to comparisons with the EA had been put in hand. The review was being carried out by Geoff Beel Consultants. Mr Beel was a former employee of the National Rivers Authority and as their Area Manager, was an appointed Conservator. The staff had accepted that his experience and contacts were an appropriate qualification for carrying out this review and seemed happy to provide him with such information as may be necessary. His report will be received before the September meeting, when it may be necessary to back-date any arrangements.

9.15.2 Staff - Superannuation with Local Government Pensions Scheme

Changes to the administrative paperwork, based on the 2005 regulations, came into force on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2005. The Union's negotiations with John Prescott indicated that he intended to revoke the 2005 changes (given statutory power and government time). Because decisions on levels of contribution were made on the understanding that the 2005 regulations would be in force, if they are revoked, actuarial calculations will have to be implemented to see what changes are necessary. This may require alterations for the Conservators' staff.

Independent Disputes Resolution Procedure introduced last year, requires an appointed person to be identified and nominated. It was highly unlikely that there would be a dispute with a decision of the Conservators; but only with the County, who administer the scheme. Thus such an appointment may be unnecessary; but to comply with the request, it was agreed to nominate the Chairman for the time being. (Professor Chisholm had indicated that he had no objection to this course of action!)



9.16.1 Insurance

While the bulk of our insurance contracts were in place, the Clerks had been following up with the agents (formerly Becketts, now renamed “Country Mutual”) one or two suggestions about additional cover on which, now, the Conservators input was required:-

(a) It was agreed to add “terrorism” to the risks currently for which the Conservators were covered at a cost of £109.26. This was agreed on the proposition of Councillor Sales.

(b) The Conservators did not want subsidence cover for the contents of the various properties at £24.95.

(c) Nor did they consider it necessary to increase Directors’ and officers’ liability above £1m cover.

Finally, while Conservators had “sudden and unforeseen” cover on the engineering policy, the Clerks had investigated whether the chain repairs (see below) at Baitsbite, now needed, could possibly come under this umbrella but the Engineer had confirmed that these were caused by wear and tear.

9.17 Baitsbite Lock

Problems had occurred with chains coming off the sprockets thereby jamming the guillotine door. Contractors had visited the site and advised that the chains need replacing; but the supply of the specially plated chains would take 6 weeks and require closure of the lock during fitting. Because of danger to the public, it had been necessary to switch off the power to the lock gates, preventing the use of the lock except when a member of staff was present. This had caused some difficulty. In the absence of the Engineer, the Clerks had approved an arrangement suggested by Colin Sparkes, the River Foreman, that Mr and Mrs Jim Russell (who live over the river in the cottage next door to it) would act as the Lock Keepers and work the lock 7 days per week between the hours of 10am to 1pm and 3pm to 8pm (a total of 8 hours). For this they were to deliver an invoice for the hours worked at a suitably agreed figure. Mr and Mrs Russell had dealt with this, in the past. The River Foreman has explained the mechanics to them so that all safety measures were in place. In addition, because Georgina goes through at times outside those listed above, the skipper had been shown how to operate the lock, himself.

Mr Leader drew attention to the age of Mr and Mrs Russell and questioned the wisdom of relying on such people doing so many hours work in the week. It was agreed that the Engineer would consult with them to be absolutely certain that they were happy with the arrangement and to agree the figure. The Clerks agreed to notify the insurers of the appointment.

Clerks and  
Engineer

Clerks            9.18    No further progress had been reported with the County over their responsibility for the Halingway. The Clerks had had no response from the Legal Department in providing any assistance but would follow this up.

Clerks            9.19    The Bridge Hotel at Clayhithe was applying for extra licensing hours to 2am every day. Conservators agreed to object to this proposal for loss of sleep of their Foreman, for safety reasons.

10.    Dates of Next Meetings:

The meetings for Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2005, 12<sup>th</sup> January 2006 and 13<sup>th</sup> April 2006 were confirmed and 6<sup>th</sup> July 2006 was agreed.