

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 14 APRIL 2005 AT 9.30am

Present: Professor M D I Chisholm (in the chair)

Conservators: Mr J Adams, Mr L Anderson, City Councillor B Bradnack, Dr P Convey, Mr R C Hardingham, Mr R Ingersent, Dr R Laws, City Cllr I Nimmo-Smith, Mr L Phillips and Dr R D Walker.

Observers: Mr R T Bryant, Mr W Key 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 C Brown, Mr John Leader, Mr James Macnaghten (and two others).

Action Required

By

1. Apologies for absence had been received from Mr R Wakeford who was going to be delayed in Kuwait and was unable to attend.
2. Mr Michael Garroway of Cambridge Sport Lakes (formerly Cambridge Rowing Lake) spoke to the meeting by invitation. He had previously provided booklets which had been circulated to the Conservators showing a map of the intended phases and description of how Cambridge Sport Lakes (CSL) were going to operate. They hoped that the project would be completed by 2009 but that the connection to the Cam and the 1,000m rowing lake would be completed by the end of 2007. However, unfortunately the archaeological survey had found a Roman Settlement and this would have to be looked at carefully before further steps were taken. He circulated a plan, seen before by many people, of the proposed connection to the Cam. He described how a towpath would circle the entire length of the bank of the lake, the overall cost was a concern in that the bridge under the railway was likely to cost £3M on its own. CSL had, through Mott MacDonald, approached construction companies and they believed that they now had one who had a reasonable operating record with British Rail in the hope that matters could proceed.

The Chairman drew his attention to the effect of silt on the flow in the cut and asked how he saw the impact on the rowing use of the river. Mr Garroway answered this by indicating that while he was not a rowing man but his view was that several of the Clubs and Colleges might keep one or two sculls at the Lake that we would not see a large reduction of use of the river.

(Mr Ingersent arrived.)

Dr Walker asked for clarification on the other sports involved. There were five principal sports involved: rowing, canoeing, cycling, triathlon and BMX. The 330m outdoor BMX circuit would be the principal one in the country. Other questions included use of the lakes for swimming which would be accommodated for training purposes but not as a recreational beach type situation; and another on pedestrian use which would require the walker to keep dogs on a lead. This was to be a privately owned estate and specific conditions would have to be applied to all those using it. In addition, doubts were thrown on whether the ownership of the land was safe by Mr Leader but he was asked to speak about his concerns to Mr Garroway after the meeting.

Finally, the question of security was raised. The reply was that they were very safety conscious and that therefore there would be patrols at all times particularly when people were on the water. The site was to be an international competition venue for the five sports and each of the national associations for those sports said it would provide a regional base for them.

3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 13th January 2005: These were approved and the Chairman authorised to sign the same.
4. Matters Arising from those minutes as reported (not dealt with elsewhere on the agenda):
 - 6.6. Delegation of Power: Following the retirement, with effect from 5th April, of Mr R B Bamford as a partner of Archer & Archer, the firm of solicitors appointed as Clerks, the Conservators agreed to amend their delegated instructions to include Mr Bamford, while he is a consultant with Archer & Archer, as one of the authorised officers of the Conservators where any decision has to be taken by the Clerks not only under the specific delegated powers set out in this minute but also under the statutes and byelaws. Messrs Archer & Archer's present partners had confirmed their approval of this suggestion and on the proposition of Dr P Convey seconded by Cllr I Nimmo Smith it was resolved that where the Clerks have any delegated powers from the Conservators under either their statutes and byelaws or any previous resolution or minute of the Conservators that such delegated powers should be given as well to Mr R B Bamford as to the Clerks for him or them to exercise their discretion on behalf of the Conservators with effect from the 14th April 2005 and that he be an authorised signatory on the bank and building society accounts whenever Archer & Archer are needed to sign the same. The resolution was agreed unanimously.

5. Chairman's Report:

- 5.1 He submitted his Off-river Mooring paper and with regard to paragraph 3 of that paper, he had attended a meeting of the Development Plan Steering Group for Cambridge City Council which had decided to amend their ideas and to recommend to the Local Plan Inspector that he amend the plan to include that part of the Conservators' field in the Council's district as suitable for an off-river mooring facility. There was still a question to be decided which would be decided at a meeting on 25th April on site as to whether or not the recommendation would be that this site be an off-site mooring facility within the green belt or that the green belt status would be lifted. As he could not attend the meeting on the 25th, it was agreed, that Dr Convey and Cllr Ian Nimmo Smith would attend that meeting of the Committee at 5pm on the 25th April.

Reservations were expressed as to whether or not the Conservators had decided to create the off-river mooring; but the Chairman confirmed that we were taking matters stage by stage and that there was no point in going to the expense of preparing a business plan if there was no possible chance of the scheme being approved from a planning point of view. Thus once this hurdle had been overcome, the Conservators would have to consider the next hurdle as to what arrangements, if any, were to take place. This was especially relevant if the land was taken out of green belt, as perhaps it could be used for other purposes.

A Conservator raised a question as to whether the Conservancy should be seen to be seeking to take land out of the Green Belt. This was likened to the problem of a village seeking a bypass and in this particular instance, the land to be taken out of the Green Belt was hardly land which was adding a great deal to it.

Cllr H Smith from South Cambridgeshire District Council drew attention to the fact that part of the Conservators' field was in their district. She indicated that approaches would be welcomed by South Cambridgeshire to consider this matter further, depending on the City Council's approach.

Conservators confirmed that at this stage they were not agreeing to enter into the development; that was another matter which would have to be costed and very carefully so because the returns were never going to be particularly great from a low cost mooring facility. The Conservators were pleased with the arrangement and with the fact that the Chairman was to attend the Local Plan Inquiry on their behalf later in the year to assist the Inspector in coming to a decision.

- 5.2 Future Administration: The Chairman referred to the report of the meeting held on the 14th February at Queens College. It was generally approved that the officers should put together a recommendation of how matters should progress in the future. Any such proposals should

be costed so far as is possible so that the Conservators could make a formal decision at the next meeting, if that report was available.

6. Cambridge City Council's Mooring Consultation and Proposals:

The Conservators welcomed the introduction of this mooring policy and considered that the City Council had acted wisely in their consultations. It was agreed that the officers should now consult with Cambridge City Council to ensure that the operation of the policy would not impose too great a strain on the Conservators' staff nor on the relationships between our staff and the river users. The Chairman confirmed that the basic principle is that both parties, that is the Conservancy and the Council, would calculate and agree their costs and these would be deducted from revenues; any net revenue would then be divided equally between the two bodies. It was agreed that the Clerks would write to the City Council officer concerned, Alistair Wilson, to set up an initial meeting.

The Chairman pointed out that with the introduction of this mooring policy there was a consequential matter which was raised in the Chair's report which could well be discussed now as to whether the Conservators' own seasonal ban on Midsummer Common should be deferred to now become operative from 1st October 2007 but that a further review be undertaken before then. This was agreed unanimously.

Mr Luther Phillips raised the question of our own mooring policy and insofar as it affected the width of boats on Stourbridge Common. There were two wider boats currently moored there which were apparently illegally moored and he considered that having rowed around them this last weekend there was adequate room for two rowing V8s to pass.

The Chairman suggested that it was inappropriate to try to adjust our mooring policy on a motion at this stage and that it should be referred to the Engineer for consideration and action as appropriate. Mr Key pointed out that the number of boats involved had increased and that more might come if no action were formally taken.

It was agreed that the Engineer would look again at these matters but, in the meantime, the current rules would be enforced.

Dr Walker referred back to the City's recommendations and was concerned that if the Conservators were going to be responsible for administering the scheme, they had to be careful to make sure that all the "flak" did not come to them!

7. Hon Engineer and Control Officer's Report:

The Conservators noted:-

- 7.1 Cutter Ferry Bridge: The Engineer reported that the bridge would be replaced on 28th April. All interested parties had been notified and Cllr Nimmo Smith agreed that he would put a note on the website.

- 7.2 Towpath Reconstruction: The towpath contractors were 3 ½ days behind but he was very pleased with the work being carried out. This was echoed by Mr Brown and others.

The Chairman referred to a letter received from Alistair Frost of the County dealing with the question of gates to prevent motor cycles or quad bikes. The Engineer indicated that it was virtually impossible to have anything that prevented motor cycles or other inappropriate machines going through if we were going to permit disabled people and it was felt that it was more appropriate that disabled people would be allowed. It was agreed that nothing could be done with regard to this letter.

- 7.3 Pollarding: The Engineer reported on the pollarding which had been very successful and indicated that he would contact the Trees Officer at South Cambridgeshire District Council to see whether or not there would be funds available to cut the trees which they had requested should be omitted in this programme.

Engineer

The City's Mooring Policy had been discussed earlier and it was agreed that the Chairman, Engineer and Clerks should be involved with the final negotiations.

8. Finance Report:

- 8.1 Income and Expenditure: A "cash basis" account had been forwarded to all Conservators prior to the meeting. Contrary to the report this showed a marginal profit of £6,000 which is something the Conservators had strived to obtain over the past 12 years. This was on a cash basis but it was hoped that this surplus would still carry through notwithstanding the accountants and auditors applying the proper accounting rules.

8.2 Capital Position:

A further £5,000 had been placed on capital with Barclays London Treasurer's Deposit to make a total of £260,000 at 3.825% until the 4th May. In addition, £250,000 was held on Cambridge Building Society account at 3.9%.

- 8.3 At 31st March we had collected £18,030.97 in registration fees for 2005/06.

- 8.4 Computer: The fact that the new computer was working satisfactorily was welcomed. The Conservators agreed nem con to connecting it to the web at a cost of £120 plus a possible £250 per annum.

Clerks

- 8.5 Staff Pension Contributions: The Conservators noted the steady increase in percentage terms of the employer's contribution required under the County Council's Pension Plan.
- 8.6 Pontoons: Conservators noted that the officers were in the process of rationalising the pontoon fees and agreed that they should have the delegated power to agree any such figures which complied with the criteria of last year's pontoon fees plus RPI increase.
- 8.7 Mileage Allowance: In view of the fact that JNC rates were reported as having increased to just above 50p per mile for cars of 1400cc the Conservators agreed that 50p per mile should be paid where appropriate for the year 2005/06.

9. Clerks' Report

Clerks

- 9.1 The Clerks' Retainer: The letter addressed to the Chairman of 11th March was approved.
- 9.2 The City Local Plan: This had been covered in the Chairman's report. The Conservators agreed to support CamToo by writing an appropriate letter indicating that there was no objection to their proposal. There were good reasons why we should not be more enthusiastic.
- 9.3 Punt Touting: The Conservators noted the Clerks' response to Cambridge City Council's approach about a fresh code of conduct on touting and confirmed that the Clerks had taken the correct step.
- 9.4 Sponsorship for CUWBC for the Henley Boat Races on 26th March: This application had been received between meetings and it was considered inappropriate for the Conservators to make a sponsorship payment.
- 9.5 The Conservators approved the Clerks' view of Cambridgeshire's Right of Way Improvement Plan.
- 9.6 AINA: The Conservators agreed that the officers should meet Philip Burgess, the Chief Executive, when he visits the town later in the year; but otherwise there had been no need for anyone to attend a conference on the EU Water Framework Directive. Mr John Adams outlined that it was still in its early stages and had a long way to go in consultation. Its chief concerns were environmental.
- 9.7 It was noted that no action had yet been taken on the Transport and Works Order which was needed to amend the statutes pending the approval of that promoted by the Environment Agency which was still with DEFRA.

- 9.8 Baitsbite Cottages: The tenants of No 1 had asked for a further 12 months tenancy which had been granted. No 2 had now been let on a 6 month tenancy at £875 per month (similar to the previous rent).
- 9.9 Insurance for 2005/06: The Conservators noted that the insurance premiums had rationalised somewhat this year and therefore the premiums would be well within budget. However it was agreed that cover for physical attack to the staff should be in place.
- 9.10 Jesus Green Lock Keeper's Cottage: It was noted that as yet no one had come forward to take this tenancy.
- 9.11 White Elephant: Reported sold at the last meeting for £450 had not been sold at that price but a new tender of £250 had been accepted and the cash received for it.
- 9.12 River Incidents: The Conservators noted the river incident on the 12th February and understood the difficulty of making any headway with any further action. Mr Key confirmed that he had spoken to Mr Middleton who had confirmed that he had had difficulty with the wind that afternoon.
- 9.13 Rubbish Clearance: The Conservators were pleased to see that the steps being taken by the officers to reduce the overall cost of rubbish clearance to the Conservators by the introduction of a skip at Clayhithe.
- 9.14 The SLA for Mr Facer: This had been renewed on the basis of the increase agreed at the January meeting.
- 9.15 Clayhithe House: During the winds on the 8th/9th January storm damage was suffered to the roof of Clayhithe House. On inspection about £1,821.25 of work was authorised to be carried out under the terms of insurance but in addition some other essential works costing some £1,000 had had to be undertaken. There was some additional expense which was covered by insurance of repairs to a large concrete ball which had fallen from the roof. If repairs could be effected reasonably, then this would be carried out under the terms of the insurance but if it proved impractical, then probably the ball would be left off the roof.
10. Dates of Next Meetings:
- The meetings for Thursday 7th July, Thursday 22nd September 2005, 12th January 2006 were confirmed and 13th April 2006 was agreed.
11. There was no other business.

The meeting closed at 11.15am.