

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 15 APRIL 2004 AT 9.30am

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

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

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

In Attendance: Cllr J Rosenstiel, Cambridge City Council, 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 Mr J Leader, Mr C Brown, Mr P Carpenter, Mr G G Anthony, Mr B Higgs, and Mr R H Forte (who signed the attendance record), Mr Craig Darbyshire and three others:

Action Required

By

1. The Chairman welcomed Mr L I Phillips as a Conservator appointed by the City Council and also welcomed Mr Geoff Facer as Engineer and Control Officer. The Chairman thanked the City Council for their help in providing the Engineer and Control Officer for so many years and, more particularly, for their help in the change-over allowing the Service Level Agreement to be terminated in the way that it was.

Apologies for absence had been received from City Councillor B Bradnack, County Councillor R Driver and Mr W Key.

2. Minutes of the meeting held on 15th January 2004 were approved and the Chairman authorised to sign them.
3. Matters Arising from those minutes (not dealt with elsewhere on the agenda):

6.2 The Service Level Agreement with the City Council regarding the supply of the Hon Engineer had been terminated and a fresh Consultative Agreement had been entered into with Mr Geoff Facer to be the Engineer and Control Officer as from 1st April.

6.3 The Conservators confirmed that the River Foreman, Deputy Foreman, Bailiff and River Worker should have the powers of the Engineer and Control Officer in his stead, during his absence for all matters connected with the River under the Byelaws and the Statutes.

6.6 It was noted that the bank mandate had been lodged.

4. Chairman's Report: The Chairman reported that he had been involved in a number of items which would be referred to later in the meeting. However he had attended as a guest a Dinner of the Cambridge Motor Boat Club and had spoken about the Cam and its history. It had been an enjoyable evening.

Mr R Ingersent
arrived.

5. Interchange Agreement proposed amendment:

Clerks
Cllr J Rosenstiel arrived.

- 5.1 The Clerks outlined the current proposals as set out in the paper before the meeting, stressing that it was a matter for resolving the fair division of registration fees between the Environment Agency (EA) and the Conservators. The EA had agreed, in principle, to a small increase not exceeding £6,000/7,000 for 2004/05. The Conservators authorised the Chairman and Clerks to give effect to the arrangements for putting the necessary paperwork in hand to allow the additional sums to be collected, the availability of which was confirmed by Mr Adams.

- 5.2 It was agreed in principle that the Conservators would continue to seek changes in line with what was set out in the report and to circulate a questionnaire, limited to registration matters, to all boats in their area so that both parties could see what the boaters perceived as their use of the two waters. It was accepted that this survey might result in letters being placed on boats which might not be attended to within the time limit specified; but that was an acceptable risk that had to be taken. In any resulting arrangements, care would be needed to make sure that boat categories were aligned for both the Conservators and the EA insofar as they may not be at the present.

- 5.3 The draft questionnaire and accompanying letter tabled for discussion were approved subject to final redrafting by the Clerks and the Chairman, with approval for a prize draw for a bottle of champagne for the first three drawn from the returns.

- 5.4 The timings set out in the report allowing for initial reporting to the July meeting and, if approved there, formal consultation to be made later in July with a view to a formal decision at the September meeting was agreed.

- 5.5 The Clerks asked the Conservators to consider the length of stay permitted for visitors bearing in mind the small number of visitor moorings and those being limited to 48 hours.

Clerks

- 5.6 On the question of possible introduction surcharges for late payment or reduction in charges for prompt payment there was a consensus that the Clerks should look into what was done elsewhere, particularly on British Waterways which had a prompt payment tariff and a standard tariff.

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6. City Mooring Policy:

- 6.1 The Chairman's paper on the proposed City Council Mooring Policy for Midsummer Common and Stourbridge Common was discussed at length. There were references to the fact that the way in which it was presented looked as though the Conservators were leading the concept of the mooring policy when this was not the case and that it was a City Mooring Policy. Nonetheless, it was accepted that the comments set out in the report would assist the City Council in addressing the issue. One had to remember that it was not only boat owners but also those enjoying the other amenities of the river who would have to be consulted.
- 6.2 The question of a "Vision for the River" was mentioned; but because the Conservators could only deal with the navigational aspects, any such Vision was felt to be the prerogative of the City Council.
- Engineer 6.3 It was accepted that the City Council could not make any progress until the ban on moorings from a navigational point of view had been re-examined and confirmed at a meeting of the Conservators. However, the paper before the Conservators would allow the whole question of mooring to be advanced at the City Council end knowing that the Conservators had considered it; accordingly the paper was accepted on that basis before transmission to the City Council.
- Chairman
- 6.4 In view of the comments on the part of the Conservators it was agreed that the appointment of Paul Wagstaffe should come from the City Council rather than the Conservators. It was agreed that his details should be transferred to the City Council for them to contact him.
- Chairman
7. Engineer and Control Officer's Report:
- 7.1 Baitsbite Lock: The Conservators noted the problem with the gearbox and also the seized link in one of the chains (all picked up by the insurers' engineer) and also a hydraulic pipe problem operating the vee doors at the other end of the lock. It was confirmed that the Engineer should proceed with all these matters at the same time so that the lock would be closed for the minimum period of time possible. Health and safety matters were discussed for the high level working on the guillotine door. It might be appropriate for a proper working platform to be erected around the gearbox. The Engineer would look at the cost of this and compare it with the hire of cherry pickers etc.
- Engineer
- 7.2 Craft above Jesus Lock: The Engineer confirmed that all the craft had now moved below Jesus Lock. At this point Mr Craig Darbyshire raised the question as to whether or not it was appropriate for the Conservators to continue with the ban on navigation above the lock for boats being moored there. It was agreed that this would be dealt with by the Engineer in his recommendations, if any, for changes to the navigational mooring ban which he would be considering shortly.
- Engineer

- 7.3 Rolling Piling and Pollarding Programme: The Conservators noted the rolling, piling and pollarding programme and the work programme.

7.4 Other Matters:

Engineer

Mr Leader raised the concern of a residue of wood which had been left at Baitsbite Lock, several tonnes of it. The River Foreman commented that he had been asked to leave this for collection by a particular group at the request of the previous Hon Engineer and Control Officer. Mr Facer confirmed that he would look into the matter and have the wood cleared as soon as possible.

Engineer

- 7.5.1 Dr Convey raised the question of fencing along the towpath which was originally designed to keep the cattle in the field but had now been removed to allow access to the towpath by the local youths on their quad bikes. The fencing responsibility had always been for the farmers to fence those fields to keep their cattle in and it was not the responsibility of the Conservators; but the Engineer agreed to look into it.

8. Finance Report:

8.1 Income and Expenditure:

The Conservators note the “cash basis” statement and were pleased that the revenue deficit had been reduced from the budget by nearly £9,000. It was accepted that this was prior to the accountants making any necessary changes to the figures.

8.2 Capital Position:

- 8.2.1 The Conservators confirmed that the capital repair to the weed harvester at £534.37 should be allocated to the R&R Fund.

- 8.2.2 The Clerks reported that the capital cash at Barclays was now on deposit at 3.26% until 28th May.

8.3 Registration Arrangements:

Clerks

The Clerks outlined the position about arrangements as set out in their report for a computer and software package for running the Conservators’ registration matters and their accounts, so that this could be separated from Archer & Archer’s accounting system which was of some age. They reported that £490 of the Arden Knowledge Management Quotation was of an annual maintenance aspect and that insurance cover was £525 to cover all software and hardware. After due consideration the Conservators agreed that this proposal should proceed and the Clerks were instructed to arrange matters.

Mr R Wakeford left the meeting.

Clerks

The Clerks were requested to make sure that there were proper back-up facilities for the computer and to check what would happen if those back-up facilities were available should the computer be stolen or break down so the question of insurance could be properly examined.

Dr P Convey left the meeting.

8.4 Visa/Barclaycard:

The question of Visa/Barclaycard was put on hold until after the results of the questionnaire were known under the Interchange Agreement. One of the questions in the survey could ask boat owners whether they would consider making payment via credit cards.

9. Clerks' Report:

9.1 Boat Registrations: The Clerks referred to the list of registration breakdown for 2003/04 and drew attention to the fact that they had received £27,305.78 up to the present time, that they were expecting to more than double that by the end of the month and thereafter would be starting proceedings against those not paying. The Conservators confirmed the action of the Clerk in chasing late payers for registration fees.

9.2 Baitsbite Lock: The details of this had been reported in the Engineer's Report and had been approved.

9.3 Baitsbite Lock Switchgear: The additional switch was noted.

9.4 Baitsbite Cottage No 1: The work of the electrician was noted and at Baitsbite No 2 the Clerks reported that the tenants had requested to remain there for a further 12 months. The agents had been told that this was acceptable providing the tenants realised that they would have to pay the rent for the 12 month period if they left early; because the Conservators would not wish to see the house empty over the winter months. A new rental would be agreed in December.

9.5 Boat Safety: Conservators noted the consultations with the Marine Coastguard Agency (MCA) and AINA. It was agreed that Mr Ingersent should attend the meeting on 6th May on behalf of the Conservators as well as in his own interest. It was agreed that references to the recommendation from the MCA would be drawn to the attention of all boat owners who were affected and that the punt safety guidelines might be amended next year to take these into account.

Mr Hardingham left the meeting.

9.6 Insurance: The Conservators noted that the principal insurance premium was just under £14,000, that they would ask the Engineer and River Foreman to consider what goods in transit insurance might be necessary. Otherwise they would not require it.

Engineer

9.7 Jesus Lock Keeper's Cottage: The Conservators noted the position of repairs there. They noted the Bursar of Emmanuel College's interest in extending the lease; but told the Clerks to refer the matter to Carter

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Clerks

Jonas to deal with on their behalf.

- 9.8 Planning: The Clerks reported that they had received South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Consultations which they would consult with the Chairman about.
Clerks/Chairman
- 9.9 Property - Asbestos registers: The Clerks reported that Walker and Turpin had quoted £575 on 15 samples being taken which allowing for everybody else was the same was the lowest and it was agreed that that would be an officers' responsibility to deal with.
Clerks/Engineer
- 9.10 Easements on the Halingway: The Conservators noted that the pumped sewer easement appeared no longer to be required; and advised the Clerks that any further approach for the electricity easement should be referred to Carter Jonas for valuation purposes.
Clerks
- 9.11 River Incidents: The Clerks reported that Mr Middleton's case was due to be heard at the end of April, that a number of registration cases including some who may have paid the relevant fees but not provided boat safety certificates were also being considered at the end of May.
- 9.12 Litter Clearance: The Conservators noted the ongoing discussions with regard to payment for these.
- 9.13 The Clerks reported that they had received:-

Cambridge Sustainable City Newsletters No 26 and 27.
Cambridge Building Society AGM Papers.
Home Office Report on Employment of Foreigners.
- 9.14 The website www.camconservators.org.uk went public on 1st April. The Conservators thanked Councillor Nimmo Smith who had masterminded this. The Conservators were asked to let the Clerks know of any inaccuracies, which can be passed to Cllr Nimmo Smith for amendment.
10. Dates of Next Meetings:

The meetings for Thursday 1 July 2004 and Thursday 23rd September 2004, 13th January 2005 were confirmed and Thursday 14th April 2005 was agreed.

The meeting closed at 12.05pm.