



CONSERVATORS OF THE RIVER CAM

Navigation authority for the River Cam, between Cambridge and Bottisham Lock

Minutes of the Conservators Quarterly Meeting on

26 October 2023 from 10.00 hours to 13.00 hours held at the
Guildhall, Cambridge.

Conservators in attendance: Miss Kate Hurst (Chair), Cllr Anna Bradnam (VC), Mr Giles Greenfield, Mr Simon Judge, Cllr Katie Thornburrow, Cllr Richard Swift, Dr May Block, Mr Tim Wotherspoon, Mr Alistair Storer.

Observers in attendance: Mr Bill Key, Dr Christine Heath, Father David Goode,

Officers in attendance: Helen Clearly (CEO), Tracy Yarrow (Clerk), David Partridge (RPO)

Apologies received: Mr Paul Separovic, Cllr David Levien, Mr Roland Beevor, Mr John Leighton, Richard Turnill, James McNaughton, Steven Morris, Ms Clara Todd,

Members of public in attendance: Rod Ingersent, Satinder Gill, Karamjit Gill, Peter Watson

Agenda Item 1 – Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed the Conservators, Observers, and members of the public to the Conservators of the River Cam Quarterly meeting and noted the apologies received above.

It was acknowledged that the meeting was quorate.

Agenda Item 2 – Minutes of previous meeting of the full body of Conservators – 27 July 2023

It was agreed unanimously the minutes of the previous meeting held on 27 July were an accurate record.

Agenda Item 3 – Appointment of Clerk

The Chair extended her thanks to Cllr Anna Bradnam for undertaking the Clerk role during the process of appointing a new Clerk.

A full recruitment and selection process was undertaken, and Tracy Yarrow was appointed as Clerk and commenced the position on 14 August 2023. The Conservators were asked to ratify the appointment.

DECISION: It was unanimously agreed to formally appoint Tracy Yarrow as Clerk.

Agenda Item 4 - Any Matters Arising, not otherwise on the agenda

4.1 Conservators update

The Chair highlighted the process and progress of appointing Conservators in 2024. The University Senate term comes to an end on 31 December 2023. Of the three Conservators appointment by the University Senate, only one has expressed their interest in extending their term. The Clerk has already started conversations with the University Senate to recruit and appoint two further Conservators commencing on 1 January 2024. Cllr Richard Swift, nominated by the City Council has also informed the Conservancy that he is no longer able to attend meetings held on a Wednesday and Thursday due to other commitments and has been asked what his thoughts are on continuing as a Conservator moving forward.

It was also highlighted that the term of the Chair will conclude on 31 December and the selection of a new Chair is undertaken at the January Quarterly meeting on 26 January 2024. The Conservators were asked to acknowledge that there will be a gap between the appointment, which will temporarily leave the Conservancy without a formal Delegation of Authority and were asked to consider establishing an effective process to address and mitigate this issue.

Discussions took place and it was highlighted:

- Cllr Swift stated he would be able to continue his Conservancy role if he was able to vote on decisions virtually. It was felt that this would not be possible. However,

ACTION:

1. **The Clerk agreed to review the 1922 Act for confirmation and report back to the Chair.**
 - It was suggested the Deputy Chair would be the delegated authority during the gap between the appointments of Chair, but the Conservancy were informed that the Deputy Chair role is not in the 1922 Act and therefore according to the Act does not have delegated authority.
 - It was also suggested the GPC hold the delegated authority during the three-week period of no formal Chair in post, however, it was also felt this would not be feasible.
 - **DECISION: It was agreed that Conservators vote/nominate an incumbent Chair at the annual October quarterly meeting with the caveat that the Conservancy Officer check for any legalities.**
 - It was proposed Kate Hurst continue her role as Chair for the three-week period before Chair appointments are made at the January meeting.
 - **DECISION. It was unanimously agreed that Kate Hurst would continue her role as Chair for the three-week period until new appointments are made.**

ACTIONS:

2. **Check the legalities of appointing an incumbent Chair for the three-week period before new Chair is appointed at the January Quarterly Meeting.**
3. **Add the process of appointing an incumbent Chair for the period until the January Quarterly Meeting, at future October meetings, to the Standard Operating procedures.**
 - The Conservators asked what the process is for appointing new Conservators. Are there any particular interests or specific expertise the Conservancy require? It was suggested prospective appointees could be invited to attend a meeting to observe the role and possibly create a new specification for Conservators. The Conservators were informed that this is already being undertaken and it was agreed to share with them for feedback.

ACTION:

4. **Share the newly created Conservator role specification with the members for feedback**

4.2 Annual General Meeting (AGM)

Chair updated the members with the proposed suggestion of holding an Annual General Meeting (AGM). This item has been discussed previously and it was agreed a decision should be made at this meeting.

It was recommended that the AGM should be held in a meeting room large enough to host the public comfortably and be accessible to all. There was also a suggestion to offer the meeting virtually as well. The AGM should be owned by the Conservators and supported by the Conservancy Officers.

The AGM should highlight the successes of the Conservancy, presentation of accounts and plans for the year ahead.

There was no strong view on a preferred date, but it was suggested holding after the audited accounts have been completed, possibly around April 2024, however

consideration would need to be made if the pre-election period is in force due to the any forthcoming elections.

It was discussed that a meeting in the early evening should be considered as an option. It was agreed that Conservators would be consulted regarding their preference, and that the CEO would discuss this with officers regarding their availability.

In a wider discussion Cllr K Thornburrow expressed her desire to ensure that the Conservators should be as transparent as possible and that she would like to facilitate this by making the quarterly meetings available online.

DECISION: The Chair agreed that this would be a good idea and suggested that this be in place for the January meeting.

DECISION: It was agreed unanimously to look at holding the meeting in the Guildhall and the Conservators would be consulted regarding their preference, possibly in April 2024 and to offer the meeting as virtual event also.

ACTION:

- 5. Conservancy officers to investigate broadcasting the AGM event virtually and to finalise a date and venue and to organise the quarterly meeting online.**

4.3 Conservators Day

HC informed a Conservators Day will be offered next year for all Conservators to attend and to expect communication from Clerk in early 2024.

Agenda Item 5 – Regulatory Committee Report and Recommendations for Decision

GG presented the report to the members highlighting the recommendations for decision required:

5.2 Section 15 Consent applications

The Conservators were asked to endorse the recommendation of the Regulatory Committee having delegated authority for any major and significant Section 15 consent applications.

DECISION: It was agreed unanimously all major and significant Section 15 applications should be authorised by the Regulatory Committee and that any decisions requiring approval/decision outside of the quarterly committee should be agreed by two out of the three designated role-holders , who are the Committee Chair, CEO and the Conservancy Chair

5.3 Memorial Policy

The Conservators were asked to endorse the draft memorial policy presented with the papers and the recommended fee.

GG highlighted the complexities involved in creating a memorial policy along the Conservancy towpath and many fundamental questions needed to be answered before a policy could be written.

A standardised approach has been undertaken and the proposed fee to purchase, install and maintain the memorial bench has been considered in detail. The fee will be ring-fenced to support ongoing maintenance.

The policy will be reviewed on a 5-year basis and which time a financial review will be also undertaken to ensure the costs still reflect inflation.

GG also highlighted the proposed collaboration with the applicant/sponsor and the Conservancy officers to determine the best location for the memorial bench.

Mr Gill and Miss Gill who were present at the meeting, have previously submitted a request for a memorial bench and have been waiting some time for approval. They were

pleased to hear the Conservators are now able to approve the policy and move forward with their application. It was agreed the Conservancy Officers would meet up with the Gills to determine the location and proceed with their application.

DECISION: It was agreed unanimously to endorse the memorial policy and the Regulatory Committee be accountable and approve all applications.

5.4 River Etiquette guidelines

Two versions of the River Etiquette Guidance were presented in the papers to the Conservators and were asked to endorse the proposed policy.

The purpose of the guidance is to advise river users about their responsibilities when using the River Cam. It was emphasised that the document is not a set of rules but purely guidance aimed at all River users.

Considerable discussions were had by Conservators who felt that further review was required to reduce the content including a continued use of graphics.

DECISION: It was agreed unanimously to defer the guidance until further work had been undertaken in drafting and to report back to Regulatory Committee in December and report back in January 2024.

ACTION:

- 6. Conservators to share their comments with the Clerk to redraft a River Etiquette guidance to present to the Regulatory Committee in December.**

5.5 Licence Fee Review

The Conservators were asked to endorse the recommendation to increase all fees in line with CPI + 2.5% except for event fees which would be increased by CPI only for 2024/35, in future years it would increase along with all other fee increases.

GG commented that it is general practice for organisations to increase fees in line with CPI.

There were some concerns that vulnerable people might struggle to pay the increased fees and was suggested notifying the Councils of the proposed increases. The Conservators were assured that the Councils will be made aware of the proposed increases and all efforts from the Conservancy Officers is in place to support those vulnerable directing them to resources and organisations that could help.

DECISION: It was agreed unanimously to endorse the recommendation to increase the fees in line with CPI + 2.5% except for event fees which would be increased by CPI only for 2024/35, in future years event fees would increase along with all other fee increases.

Agenda Item 6 – General Purpose Committee Report and Recommendations for Decision

Chair presented the report to the members highlighting the recommendations for decision required:

6.2 Recruitment and appointment term of Conservancy Observers

The Chair highlighted that presently Observers serve a one-year term and it was felt that a longer term would benefit both the Conservancy and the Observer. It was suggested the role be extended to a two-year appointment. The Conservators were in favour of the proposed two-year term and agreed this should be put in place. It was asked if current Observers would automatically be awarded the two-year term or should they have to reapply. It was agreed those Observers already in place and wish to, can have their term extended to the two years.

There was some discussion on Observer attendance at meetings and it was suggested the Terms of Reference should also reflect the requirement to attend meetings.

DECISION: It was agreed unanimously that the

- **two-year term be endorsed, and the terms of reference changed to reflect the decision.**
- **Terms of Reference to be changed to any Observer not attending 3 meetings consecutively may be removed as an Observer to the Conservancy.**

ACTION:

- 7. Draft an Observer Terms of Reference to reflect the agreed two-year term and the guidance for non-attendance at meetings.**

6.3 Anglian Pass Partners - Contract Renewal

The Anglian Pass Partners agreement is due to come to an end at the end of March 2024 and the Conservators were asked to endorse the recommendation to adopt the agreement for a further fixed period.

DECISION: It was agreed unanimously to adopt the Anglian Pass Partners agreement for a further fixed period.

6.4 CEO recommendations

6.4.1- The Chair emphasised the major project being undertaken at Jesus Green Lock and the significant cost to the Conservancy. The Conservators were asked to consider the Jesus Green Lock project as a major opportunity to communicating the work of the Conservancy and an ideal opportunity to invite a VIP to open the lock and circulate a press release. The Conservators were in favour of the proposed approach. The Conservators were invited to consider their role in wider communications and raising the profile of the Conservancy, potentially assisting officers with imparting relevant information via social media and other avenues. To this end Conservators were advised that an opportunity to put themselves forward as a Communication Lead will be presented to the Quarterly meeting in January 2024.

DECISION: It was agreed unanimously to approach a VIP to open the Jesus Green Lock and draft a press release.

ACTION:

- 8. Conservancy officer to approach a regional VIP to open the Jesus Green Lock and draft a press release on behalf of the Conservators.**

6.4.2 - The Chair highlighted the funding arrangements in place and the need to address future funding opportunities.

HC asked that the Conservators to consider approaching their appointing bodies to seek funding opportunities and asked the committee to consider forming a funding committee to investigate funding opportunities and to lobby their appointing body for support. The Conservators were advised that an opportunity to put themselves forward as part of the Funding Committee and other working groups associated with the Business Plan will be presented to the Quarterly meeting in January 2024.

Agenda Item 7 - Officer reports

7.1 CEO report

HC highlighted to the Conservators the increasing rise in costs and the concerns on the financial impact on the Conservancy. The additional work required to bank revetments, not already covered by the contractor SLA, would cost a minimum of £80,000 per 50 yards per revetment.

A recent visit to Baits Bite Lock has identified significant cracks on the lock island. Due to the location of the outer wall connected to the Environment Agency Weir, the Environment

Agency were invited to inspect the wall and any assistance they could contribute to dealing with the situation. The Environment agency agreed to undertake a survey to assess the damage. No commitment to financial support has been forthcoming.

The recent underwater survey at Jesus Green Lock has also identified some cracks that will need to be addressed soon.

Operationally the Conservancy is satisfactory although long term asset strategy is a concern.

It was acknowledged that weed cutting this year has been a struggle, but HC highlighted that the Contractors River and Rural have worked extremely hard to address the weed cutting issues. Measures will be taken to ensure that the weed harvester is operational for the next season or suitable alternative measures are put in place.

The towpath tree maintenance will take place during the period of November 2023 to March 2024 and the Conservators asked that adequate measures were put in place to use the chippings/arisings efficiently and not be placed in ditches.

Mr Watson who attended as a member of public acknowledged the CEO report and the hard work that has been undertaken however raised his concerns over the lack of weed management on the River Cam this season. Mr Watson highlighted he has three boats, and all had experienced engine problems as a result of the weed. Other river users have reported incidents related to the weed and observed that rowers had also experienced issues and felt that 7.2a in the report understated the weed cutting programme.

KH challenged the statement from Mr Watson and stated that the contractors have worked extremely hard this season in difficult circumstances to control the weeds and to recognise that the river is a wild environment and therefore unpredictable.

AB also added that the Conservancy had undertaken every effort to ensure weed management on the River Cam was kept under control and rely on the public, Observers and Conservators to report any weed issues using the correct process.

DP responded to Mr Watson's comments stating that collision incidents, which should be handled by informing the correct authorities and insurance companies as would happen with a road collision.

7.2 River Patrol Officer report

DP highlighted to Conservators some of the rowing incidents that had taken place over the previous month and suggested that specific training sessions could be held addressing these issues. A long-term solution is being sought.

DP highlighted the issue of enforcement on the river Cam. The 1922 Act and Conservancy byelaws only gives the Conservancy restricted powers of enforcement. DP has been liaising with the Police and other authorities to determine the definition of abandonment. DP highlighted that as a Conservancy we do not have the power to deal with minor disputes which should be resolved between both parties. Any incidents that are deemed threatening should be reported to the Police.

DP highlighted that it is the responsibility of Conservators, Observers, and boating communities to communicate the Conservancy byelaws to users and communicate the processes for reporting incidents using the Conservancy website and any infringements to be reported to the appropriate authority.

It was also commented on that a review of the current Byelaws would be beneficial.

7.3 Clerk report

The quarterly meeting exceeded its scheduled finish time, and this item was not discussed but the report was made available to the Conservators before the meeting.

The report highlighted the ongoing work of the Clerk including:


- Governance – current policies reviewed, new templates created and drafting the memorial policy and River Guidance Policy
- Section 15 Consent applications – three applications have been received.
- Secretariat functions – Actions and Decisions log created, risk register created, and risks have been identified. Standard Operating Procedures are being put in place.
- Business Plan and Project Management – Project plan submitted to the General-Purpose Committee, and it was agreed to focus on 4 priority areas. A full project plan identifying these 4 priorities will be submitted to the January Quarterly meeting.

Any other business

No other business was raised.

Dates of future quarterly meetings:

- **25 January 2024, 10 am, Guildhall, Cambridge**
- **25 April 2024, 10am**
- **25 July 2024, 10am**
- **31 October 2024, 10am**


02/08/2024