



# CONSERVATORS OF THE RIVER CAM

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

## MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CONSERVATORS HELD AT THE GUILDHALL, CAMBRIDGE, ON THURSDAY 28<sup>th</sup> JULY 2022 at 9:30AM.

### Present:

**Conservators:** Ms Catherine Hurst (Chair), Mr Clive Brown, Dr May Block, Mr Alistair Storer, Mr Tim Wotherspoon, Cllr Katie Thornburrow, Mr Paul Separovic, Councillor Richard Swift.

**Absent:** Councillor Anna Bradnam

**Officers:** Mrs Helen Cleary (CEO), Mr David Partridge (River Patrol Officer- RPO), Mrs Gillian Elwood (Clerk)

**Observers:** There were no Observers in attendance.

**Members of the public:** There were no members of the public in attendance.

### **1. Welcome and apologies received**

Apologies were received from Mr Steve Morris and Mr Giles Greenfield  
The Chair welcomed the Conservators to the first in person meeting held for over two years. As many were new to the Conservancy, the group introduced themselves.

### **2. Appointments:**

#### **2.1 Appointment of Conservators by City Council**

The Chair asked the Clerk to update the meeting as to the current status of appointments. Following the resignation of Councillor Alan Cox, two new Conservators had been appointed by the City Council, Councillor Richard Swift and Councillor Olaf Hauk. Councillor Swift, being in attendance at the meeting, was welcomed to his new role. Mr Brown reminded the meeting that until papers were duly signed, new Conservators could not vote in the meeting.

#### **2.2 Appointment of Conservator by University Senate.**

The Clerk confirmed that the University Senate have still yet to appoint a Conservator to replace Dr Munday who resigned late last year. They have been reminded of their obligation as an appointing body and have been offered assistance if required. The matter will continue to be pursued as a matter of urgency.

#### **2.3 Regulatory Committee requirement for additional Conservator member.**



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The Clerk confirmed that Mr Steven Morris had stepped down from a direct role on the General Purposes Committee but would continue to assist with specific matters for the Conservancy. This means there is now a vacancy on the General Purposes Committee.

The Clerk stated that currently there were only three Conservators on the Regulatory Committee, leaving a vacancy for one more member, and the Conservators were invited to fill the vacancy. Four Conservators were needed to ensure that meetings were quorate. The working groups and committees are often short on participants, and the same few people respond to the need. The Chair summarised the role of the Regulatory Committee and said that meetings were held approximately quarterly. Cllr Thornburrow confirmed her interest expressed at the April meeting to join the Regulatory Committee and enquired whether meeting dates were published a year in advance. The meeting discussed the timing of committee meetings and whether advance scheduling could be a possibility. Mr Brown stated that the Conservator responsibility extended beyond the meetings, to work with the officers on a variety of matters for the benefit of the Conservancy, drawing on a pool of experience and skills. Mrs Cleary stated that involving the whole body of Conservators and Officers working together was a positive thing. Mr Storer stated that meetings during working hours was an issue for some, who had to use annual leave to attend. Mrs Cleary confirmed that evening and weekend meetings were generally outside the working hours of the officers, some of whom are part-time. The meeting discussed Conservator involvement in committees, policies and other projects involving working with Officers that Clerk confirmed that the intention was that most committee meetings would continue on Teams.

**RESOLVED: Councillor K Thornburrow will join as the fourth Conservator on the Regulatory Committee. Another member of the General Purposes Committee is needed.**

### **3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> April 2022**

The Chairman invited Conservators to comment on the accuracy of the minutes.

**RESOLVED: It was agreed that the minutes were a true and accurate record of the Conservators' meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> April 2022. Agreed unanimously.**

### **4. Matter Arising Not Otherwise on the Agenda**

4.1 Our Place in Space- The Chair confirmed that the installation is starting, and there has been an agreement in principle per previous emails to the Conservators. The Greater Cambridge Planning Authority have confirmed that although permission has not yet been given, the installation will benefit from a month of permitted development rights, which will cover the period up to the planning meeting where it is recommended for approval.

4.2 Mud Barge Purchase- Mrs Cleary stated that earlier in the year the barge used by River and Rural to carry out works required had developed holes and started to sink. It is 30-40 years, and a survey confirmed it is at the end of its useful lifespan. Conservators agreed to an extraordinary spend not in the budget for hiring a



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replacement until a second-hand barge could be purchased. This has now happened and the 'new' barge is in use. We are required to supply River and Rural with the necessary equipment to carry out our works as part of the agreement. The barge will require repainting in the next financial year.

**The Chair announced that item 7 would be dealt with before item 5.**

### **5. Matters for Decision and Ratification (item 7)**

- 1.1 Ratification of the GPC decision regarding building works at Conservators House-  
The Chair stated that this building, formerly in the ownership of the Conservancy, is located next to the Clayhithe office and was sold to a private owner who has had planning permission granted for an extension to the non-river facing side of the building. Under the terms of the purchase the Conservators are required to grant consent for the relief of a clause limiting development without our consent. Having taken legal advice and considered the matter, the General Purposes Committee were minded that consent be given, as a matter of urgency as work was due to commence on site.

**Resolved: That the decision of the General Purposes Committee be ratified.  
Agreed unanimously.**

- 1.2 Ratification of the Reg Comm decision re sailing vessel auxiliary engine fees-  
The Chair stated that as we are now a considerable way through the licensing year, the Regulatory Committee felt a decision was needed on several licensing issues. One of these was that under the new fees the cost of an auxiliary engine used by sailing vessels for safety manoeuvring rather than propulsion had increased significantly. A decision was taken that for this year, until fees are reviewed, a 50% discount would be granted. The sailing club has been notified in writing. Mr Brown asked if the club was happy with the decision, and the Chair confirmed they were.

**Resolved: That the decision of the Regulatory Committee be ratified.  
Agreed unanimously**

- 1.3 Ratification of Reg Comm decision re Category and fees for unique Steam powered vessel- The licence fee for this vessel had to be examined, as its engine is less than 4bhp, and it does not fall into any of our existing categories, so falls under Category 51 in licensing terms. The fee and category will be reviewed for next year.

**Resolved: That the decision of the Regulatory Committee be ratified.  
Agreed unanimously.**

- 1.4 Ratification of Reg Comm decision re Sailing Club Intermediary event fees – The Chair stated that event fees for sailing events were more complicated than those for rowing events, as a sailing event often constitutes a small group of boats on a weekend morning simply sailing on the river. It is desirable that all groups are brought into line for parity, but the differences between events for different clubs



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needs further investigation. For this year it is proposed that the CPI figure of 4.6% be added to their fees. Councillor Thornburrow stated that the club is popular with children and such outdoor activities should be supported.

**Resolved: That the decision of the Regulatory Committee be ratified.**

**Agreed unanimously.**

### **6. Health and Safety Report**

The Chair confirmed that this document needed to be read and considered by the Conservators, and that it was a very comprehensive document particularly relating to staff Health and Safety. It was required to be inspected by and brought to the Full Body Meeting for agreement before receiving the Chair's signature. Mrs Cleary confirmed that the document had been worked on with an outside company and a Health and Safety advisor had structured the document specifically, so the compliance requirements are met.

**Resolved: that the Health and Safety Policy be adopted and signed off by the Chair of the Conservators.**

**Agreed unanimously.**

### **7. Reports (Item 5)**

- 5.1 General Purposes Committee, Regulatory Committee and Chair's Reports.- The Chair gave an oral report on matters including the opening of the Our Place in Space installation and its activities. She reported that the process of their application had not been easy, but hopefully the outcome would be worthwhile. A river inspection had taken place with the Chair, Mrs Cleary and River and Rural, focussing on weeds and weed cutting. There have been a few stakeholder comments, but the best job possible is being done under the current weather circumstances. There had been a starter motor issue with one of the vessels which had now been resolved. Thornburrow raised the matter of the wall at Jesus Green Lock. The Chair confirmed the land belonged to the City Council and was their responsibility, and that she has written to them in April, but no response had been received. Councillor Thornburrow requested that the Conservancy write again, copying her in. River and Rural have also been clearing the river of other items. A vehicle that rolled into the river recently was a hazard to navigation but was extracted by the owner under his insurance. The Chair stated she meets regularly with Mrs Cleary and the Clerk to discuss issues, most recently the working documents for policies, updating existing and new ones. Conservators were invited to contact her or the Officers if they had any input or queries. The Chair stated she also wished to update the way in which Observers are selected each year, reflecting a more balanced and representative group. Mr Brown confirmed that the role of Observer is not an official or statutory one, and their selection has been ad hoc on a verbal invite and acceptance. They have no voting rights, but their views and input are very useful in the decision-making process. It is proposed that anyone who wishes to be selected as an Observer in January submits a



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statement by the previous October setting out why. Mrs Cleary stated that the Regulatory Committee has Observers in attendance, and that selection might enable a broader range of expertise to draw on. The Clerk confirmed that the committee should be composed of three Observers and four Conservators under the Terms of Reference. Mr Separovic asked how the range of Observers would be sought. The Chair stated that further discussion with the Regulatory Committee was required, and further information brought to the next Full Body meeting. Dr Block asked whether the general public would still be invited, to ensure the meetings were not too formalised. The meeting discussed how the desired variety of applicants might be reached. Mrs Cleary confirmed that the intention was not to exclude the general public from attending Full Body meetings.

**Resolved: That the Conservators consent to the Chair implementing the proposed change to the selection of Observers. Approved unanimously.**

- 5.2 Regulatory Committee Report- The Chair presented the report, in the absence of Mr Greenfield, Chair of the Regulatory Committee. The committee had met once in the quarter, and was unfortunately not quorate, meaning some decisions could not be made. The Block Licenses and Pontoon Licenses have been sorted, so the invoices can now be sent out. A number of licence issues had been looked at, which had been ratified earlier in this meeting. The Block Licenses for the Cambridge Canoe Club and The Cambridge University Canoe Club are to be reviewed for the 2023/24 season. The RPO is to contact the clubs to make visits. Events management is under review by the committee as has been the Health and Safety document. One of the policies to be worked on is Enforcement, which needs consideration and further input.
- 5.3 CEO and Finance Report- Mrs Cleary reported that the annual audit is currently ongoing, a time consuming but statutory annual requirement. It will take several months and require input from most of the Officers. The auditors, PEM were unable to start in June due to staff issues, and we have a new audit manager and team, together with a new accountant. Draft accounts have been drawn up for audit scrutiny. It is anticipated they will be ready by the end of August. Management accounts show that we have our highest income stream at the beginning of the year, with the registration due date being 1<sup>st</sup> April. March is a busy month, as is April. There are two officers dealing with the registrations, one full time one part time. This year there has been a good response in prompt payment. Any reminders are sent by the end of April, then again in May and June, after which the RPO approaches any outstanding unregistered vessels on the river. This year there have been far fewer. There have been fewer issues with those paying by instalments. There has been proactive work on licensing by the Officers. There are outstanding fees, much of which is from instalments, e.g. punt companies. In recent times there has been little income from events, due to Covid, but this year there has been an increase and they should be back to normal levels. In income terms things are satisfactory. The only uncertain income source is Section 15 agreements. The Chair queried the terms



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of work carried out by River and Rural for the Environment Agency, and the percentage fee, which Mrs Cleary confirmed was 10%. Mr Brown asked if the income from hiring equipment to River and Rural for other works would be shown separately in the accounts. Mrs Cleary confirmed that due to the small amount it would not. This could be reviewed under the terms of the agreement. With regards to expenditure, most was as expected. However, the budget for the rental properties at Baits Bite had been exceeded due to a variety of works required, under our obligations as landlords. The river maintenance review has taken place, with discussion about river banks and saplings, which could be included in the Tree Contract. There have apparently been problems with the harvester, which are being looked at. The hydraulics are an issue, including the bilge pump and loss of power. The Chair and Mr Brown queried whether there was any recourse via the warranty on works already carried out. Mrs Cleary confirmed the same company was looking at the issue, but that the hydraulics had not been part of their refurbishment. The Chair asked that the GPC be kept informed of the situation. The capital works due will be on the bank near the A14 bridge. Other capital works will include the refurbishment of the MC and the Conver. Mr Brown suggested that capital costs need to be looked at with regards to the use of the equipment for various purposes, and property maintenance. Mrs Cleary will be meeting with Mr Larnach to discuss further. The Officers will seek quotes for the work required. The survey work on the lock at Jesus Green is due, which will give an indication of the amount required for repairs in the next year's budget. Mrs Elwood was extended thanks for her new role as Clerk, with its current requirement for full time work in what should be part time hours, and familiarisation with statutes, communications, the Board etc. at a very busy time of year. Thanks were extended to the whole team for their adjustments to the restructuring. The Chair echoed these sentiments, and included the CEO in her thanks.

5.4 River Patrol Officer & Licensing Report- Mr Partridge referred to the report circulated to Conservators and summarised as follows:

- Income was up on last year, and much of the outstanding fees due are instalments
- There have been no reportable Health and Safety incidents for Officers or Members of the public.
- A power vessel disrupted the Cambridge Spring Regatta and the police have been engaged.
- Incidents of fly-tipping have been reported to the City Council
- Several punting incidents involving the public have been reported but no further input is required by officers.
- A diesel spillage has been reported to the Environment Agency
- A missing punt owner was advised to contact the police.
- A powered vessel sustained damage from a submerged tree branch. Area checked by River and Rural.



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- A canoe has been found, but not reunited with its owner
- RPO has assisted with completion of vessel registration forms and referred some vessel owners to Winter Comfort. He has attended events, including liaison with officials for Commonwealth Games Baton, the Regatta and the Bumps. Other interactions have been with university porters, SAG, Fishing Club Chair and punt companies.
- A sunken vessel had been retrieved and will now be sold.

With regard to licencing, Mr Partridge said that there were 11 unregistered vessels, out of which 7 had not paid their licence fees. Overall, it was a positive position wherein the unregistered and unpaid vessels are slightly less than 1%. Mrs Cleary stated that it is pleasing that the RPO has established himself in the role with very good ideas and has been very proactive in his approach to what can be very frustrating circumstances, with often ineffective enforcement powers. Mr Brown stated that some of this may be redressed in the Business Plan.

**8. Cambridge Waste Water Treatment Plant Proposals (CWWTPR)-** The Chair reported that this was briefly reported in April, being works in 2025 by Anglian Water to relocate their works which affect the Conservancy with regards to their outflow. Officers and Conservators had met with Anglian Water representatives on site to discuss the proposals, in the area of the A14 bridge. The relevant works would take 6-8 weeks, during August and September 2025, traditionally the quieter months on the river. Some drawings need clarification re the river narrowing, but we are to be kept updated. Councillor Thornburrow stated that the council were part of the DCO process for the works, and the outcome will be known around 18 months after submission. Mr Brown confirmed the Conservancy has taken legal advice on its involvement in the DCO (Development Consent Order) process, which overrides the requirements of Section 15 Agreements. The costs pertaining to the work done and legal fees spent, are being pursued with Anglian Water for their consideration under their due process, as are any Health and Safety requirements that would normally form part of our agreement.

### **9. Dates of future meetings:**

27<sup>th</sup> Oct 2022 - Guildhall  
26<sup>th</sup> January 2023 – Guildhall  
27<sup>th</sup> of April 2023 – Guildhall  
26<sup>th</sup> October 2023- Guildhall

### **9. Any Other Business**

Councillor Thornburrow stated that at recent planning meetings the Cam Valley Forum and public had expressed concern about water flow and sewage. She has arranged to hold two public meetings to address concerns with expert agencies invited to comment. The meeting discussed water quality along the river, and Mr Brown commented on members of the public swimming in the river. Mrs Cleary stated that the By-Laws state swimming is not permitted, at certain times, so it is a contravention of those laws. However, other actions are not, and the Conservancy has



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no power to act. Mr Brown stated that water quality is not part of the Conservators remit, it is for the Environment Agency to deal with. Mr Separovic asked whether a drop in water levels was currently being noted, and the Chair confirmed that it was several inches within the town. The meeting discussed the lack of water in the area, and Councillor Thornburrow stated that this information would be useful for the proposed meetings. At the November meeting the Cam Valley Forum will present details of a river pollution survey they are carrying out. The Chair stated that attending the meeting would be interesting, but as a navigation authority, the Conservancy had no statutory influence in water quality or levels. Councillor Thornburrow was asked to forward the dates of the meeting to the Clerk for circulation.

Mr Storer raised the matter of the towpath not generating income and stated that the rowing community would not be able to function without it. Mr Brown stated that this would be part of the Business plan, together with the costs the towpath generates e.g., tree maintenance and revetements, which are a large proportion of the Conservancy outgoings. Generating income from the towpath is a matter for consideration. The meeting discussed generally the current income, benefits and usage of the towpath.

*Meeting concluded at 11.25am*