



# CONSERVATORS OF THE RIVER CAM

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

## Minutes of the Conservators Quarterly Meeting on

25 January 2024 from 10.00 hours to 13.00 hours held at the  
Guildhall, Cambridge.

<b>Conservators in attendance:</b> Miss Kate Hurst, Cllr Anna Bradnam, Mr Giles Greenfield, Mr Simon Judge, Dr May Block, Father David Goode, Jessica Tearney-Pearce
<b>Observers in attendance:</b> Dr Christine Heath, Mr Roland Beevor, Mr John Leighton
<b>Officers in attendance:</b> Helen Clearly (CEO), Tracy Yarrow (Clerk), David Partridge (RPO)
<b>Apologies received:</b> Mr Paul Separovic, Cllr David Levien, Cllr Katie Thornburrow, Cllr Richard Swift, Mr Tim Wotherspoon, Mr Alistair Storer, Mr Bill Key,
<b>Members of public in attendance:</b> Rod Ingersent, Peter Watson, James Barton- Williams

### Agenda Item 1 – Welcome and Apologies

The Clerk undertook the Chair role and 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 – Appointments

#### 2.1 Election and Appointment of Chair

The Clerk confirmed that Cllr Anna Bradnam had expressed their interest in standing as Chair. CH nominated Cllr Bradnam, which was seconded by Mr Greenfield and Mr Judge. There were no further nominations.

**DECISION: The Conservators voted unanimously to elect Cllr Bradnam as Chair for 2024 and the meeting the Clerk handed the Chairing responsibility to Cllr Bradnam.**

#### 2.2 Election and Appointment of Deputy Chair

The new Chair Cllr Bradnam invited nominations for the post of Deputy Chair. AB proposed Mr Simon Judge and this was seconded by Kate Hurst.

**DECISION: The Conservators voted unanimously to elect Mr Simon Judge as Deputy Chair for 2024.**

#### 2.3 Welcome to the newly appointed Conservators.

The Chair welcomed the new Conservators from the University Senate:

- Father David Goode – who was previously an Observer.
- Jessica Tearney – Pearce
- Giles Greenfield – who has been reappointed.

It was noted that the agenda stated Mr Greenfield as Mr Greenwood and apologies were given.

#### 2.4 Farewell to Conservators from the University Senate

It was noted the end of tenure for Stephen Morris and Richard Turnill and thanked the Conservators for their support.

#### 2.5 Appointment of Committees

The Chair highlighted that there are to be two new committees; funding and communications and asked the Conservators to express their interest in being members of the current and new committees;

##### Regulatory Committee

Giles Greenfield (to continue as Chair)

May Block  
Kate Hurst  
Cllr Katie Thornburrow  
Dr Christine Heath  
Rod Ingersent  
General Purposes Committee  
Cllr Anna Bradnam ( Chair)  
Simon Judge  
Cllr David Levien  
Jessica Tearney – Pearce  
Father David Goode  
Funding Committee  
Father David Goode  
John Leighton  
James Barton – Williams

Communications Working Group

It was agreed that this group should be delegated to the General Purposes Committee to focus on a scope.

**ACTION: Add Communications Working Group to the General Purposes Committee to review and scope out.**

2.6 Observer nominations

At the last quarterly meeting it was agreed that the Observers positions should be extended to a two-year term and those in post already would be offered an extension. However, it was also agreed that any Observer not attending 3 meetings consecutively may be removed as an Observer to the Conservancy. The Clerk informed that Conservators that 2 of the Observers were not offered an extension. The expressions of interest were circulated before the Christmas break and two nominations were received from Rod Ingersent from a Punting Company and James Barton- Williams live on Board boat owner.

The Conservators were asked to agree the nominations.

**DECISION: The Conservators agreed unanimously to appoint Rod Ingersent and James Barton – Williams as Observers to the Conservancy and welcomed them to the Conservancy.**

The Clerk also highlighted that there are 2 vacant Conservator positions and is working with the appointing bodies to resolve this issue.

**Agenda Item 3 – Minutes of the Previous meeting**

DP asked that page 6 item 7.2 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph be reworded to say” The 1922 Act and Conservancy byelaws only gives the Conservancy restricted powers of enforcement”.

**DECISION: It was agreed unanimously once the proposed change had been made the minutes can be signed off.**

**Agenda Item 4 – Actions arising from previous meeting**

The actions were noted, and the Clerk confirmed that all actions were up to date.

The Conservators welcomed the action update and asked that they be reported on a quarterly basis.

**Agenda Item 5 – Matters arising (not otherwise on the agenda)**

5.1 Application for commercial registration and new punt station

DP informed the Conservators that a proposed application from St Johns College Punt Society had been received seeking commercial registration for 1-2 punts and registration of a new punt station.

An official application has yet to be received but DP asked the Conservators that any decision required is referred to the Regulatory Committee for formal approval.

**DECISION: It was agreed unanimously that the any formal application from St Johns for a commercial registration of punts and a new punt station be referred to the Regulatory Committee for formal approval.**

**Agenda Item 6 – Annual General Meeting (AGM)**

The Clerk introduced the paper highlighting the decision required to take the project forward. It was agreed an AGM was not a legal requirement for the Conservancy but a public facing meeting would be an ideal opportunity to showcase Conservancy projects and an ideal opportunity for stakeholders and the public to meet the Conservators and Officers. It was proposed a better title for the public event would be "Meet the Conservators".

It was proposed the event would be held on 25 April 2024 from 17.30 and GG offered Darwin College as a venue.

GG and the Chair agreed to lead on the project with the support of the Clerk and a small Task and Finish Group. MB, SJ, AB RI and GG agreed they would form the Task and Finish Group.

#### **DECISIONS**

**It was agreed unanimously:**

- **That GG and the Chair would be the lead Conservators for the management and coordination of the event with the support of the Clerk.**
- **The proposed timetable and to set up a task and finish group to take the project forward.**
- **The start time of the event would be 5.30pm and would be held at Darwin College.**
- **The quarterly meeting would be held in the afternoon starting from 14.00 at Darwin College and the website be updated to reflect the changed start time and location of the quarterly meeting.**
- **The event would be called "Meet the Conservancy"**

#### **Agenda Item 7 – Operational budget**

HC highlighted the current financial position of the operational budget and the projected costs for next financial year and asked the Conservators to approve the proposed 24/25 budget.

HC highlighted that none of the current income is guaranteed for the following year except for the pontoon licences and the Halingway drawdown from the ring-fenced Permissive Pathway account. It is not anticipated that the income received from licence fees will increase much for 24/25 and the income received from Consent 15 applications will be very much the same as the previous year.

Any rental income received will hopefully change to investment income but there is no current proposal to move the monies earned into the operational budget.

HC highlighted that the monies received from EA to subcontract work to River and Rural is no longer a guaranteed income stream.

The majority of the operational budget is from licence fees and needs to support staffing, revetment management, towpath maintenance etc.

HC highlighted her growing concern over towpath ownership and the increasing resource to maintain.

There is also a concern that Jesus Lock cost £500,000 to refurbish this financial year and there is no contingency to cover a further large project in 24/25.

**DECISION: The Conservators agreed unanimously to the proposed budget for 24/25.**

#### **Agenda Item 8 – Regulatory Committee Report – Recommendations for decision**

The report highlighted the agenda items discussed at the Regulatory Committee held on 12 December 2023:

- Memorial Policy was updated following the suggestions at the previous Full Conservators Quarterly meeting and the committee unanimously approved the revised policy and recommended the policy be put in place.
- River Etiquette Advice– a pictorial guidance was submitted to the committee and endorsed. The posters will be created and added to notice boards.
- A paper was presented to the Committee outlining the engagement with vulnerable clients and signposting support that is available. The committee suggested adding the information to the website as a news article.
- Registration forms are unchanged from last year and fees will be uplifted in line with CPI + 2.5% as agreed at the previous committee meeting. DP highlighted that the Conservancy will be issuing registration licence stickers to all powered vessels who will be expected to adhere to their vessels.
- A Section 15 application from Magdalene College was received and the committee were asked to consider the application as a major request. The request was received from the Bursar of the College who is also an active Conservator and at no time has his position within the Conservancy

had any bearing on the decision made. There is no significant disruption to navigation due to the position of the scaffolding to the bridge. The applicant has also been asked to consult with the punt companies along the River. The committee agreed to endorse the recommendation.

- The Committee agreed to the request to begin prosecutions with cases of non-payment clients.
- A request has been received to consider work experience placements with the Conservancy. The H&S policy and subsequent risk assessments will need to be updated to reflect work experience placements. The committee supported the recommendation.

No decisions were required from the full body of Conservators.

#### **Agenda item 9 – General Purposes Committee Report – Recommendations for decision**

The report highlighted the agenda items discussed at the General Purposes Committee held on 15 January 2024 and the decisions required from the Full body of Conservators.

- There have been a number of hearings held in January 2024 in regard to the Anglian Waste Water Treatment relocation project. The Conservancy are still in negotiations with Anglian Water regarding the proposed compulsory acquisition of permanent rights and will be attending further Specific Issue Hearings in the coming months and will continue to update the Conservators.
- A discussion was held with River Cam/Can and Divers/Tree Project to determine if our tree management programme had any impact on their project of preserving veteran trees. Officers were invited to a workshop on 11 January but were unable to attend. Officers agreed to pass on their details to the Conservancy contractors so that they could refer to them for further information in the tree management process.

The Conservators highlighted their dismay that the Conservancy had not been approached or engaged with before the project commenced.

- The committee were updated on the Tree Management programme to date. Work has commenced between Grassy Corner and Baits Bite Lock and notified that the towpath would be closed from 9am – 5pm Monday to Friday giving the opportunity for cycle commuters to access the towpath. There have been a minority of complaints received and efforts to alleviate their concerns have been put in place.
- Recommendations and Decisions
  1. It was recommended to the committee to retain the document as is and recommend a refined and clearer delegated authority policy be created and submitted to the Full Conservator meeting in April.

For a more robust policy to be created detailing delegated authority in emergency situations and operational functions.

- In an emergency the Chair of GPC to be delegated authority and in their absence the Deputy Chair
- Expenditure should be approved in conjunction with the business plan, and the CEO should be granted delegated authority for all project spending within the agreed budget.
- Any project overspend to be authorised by GPC Chair/Deputy Chair

**DECISION: It was agreed unanimously to approve and delegate authority to the GPC to review the revised delegated authority policy and submit the final version to the Full Conservators meeting in April 2024.**

2. The CEO report asked that consideration be made to increase the expenditure on ageing vessels, machinery, structures such as the lock islands, locks and banks to include:
  - Agree that Baits Bite Lock Island undergoes an urgent structural survey (costs according to estimates of around £30k)
  - That a cost consideration is made as to whether it would be advisable to survey the Lock itself at the same time to be cost effective. (Estimates of £46k have been received for carrying out the lock drain down and carrying out the full structural inspection of Baits Bite Lock separately).
  - That this consideration is delegated to the General Purposes Committee to ensure a timely decision is made between the Quarterly meetings.

**DECISION: It was agreed unanimously to delegate authority to the General Purposes Committee to make the decision as to which recommendation should be taken forward.**

3. The GPC agreed to recommend postponing the commissioning of a professional land survey on its riverbanks to assess the short to long term requirements for maintenance until the lock islands surveys had been undertaken.

**DECISION: It was agreed unanimously to postpone the commissioning of the riverbank surveys until the outcome of the lock island surveys have been received.**

4. It was proposed that the staffing structure review is brought forward and discussed later in 2024. It was proposed that the Chair and Deputy Chair engage with the CEO in discussions around the staffing structure.

**DECISION: It was agreed unanimously to delegate the staffing review later in 2024 to the Chair, Deputy Chair and CEO.**

The Chair thanked KH the previous Chair of the GPC for all their support in delivering an effective General Purposes Committee.

## **Agenda Item 10 – Officer Reports**

### 10.1 CEO Quarterly Report

10.1.1 HC updated the Conservators on income and expenditure for Q3 stating that the operational team is mindful of any spend and are expected to meet the spend targets at the end of Q4.

10.1.2 The Tree Management Program entails a five-year strategy aimed at the upkeep and supervision of trees along the Halingway, preventing the risk of falling due to decay. Since its initiation, there have been no reported incidents of tree falls, a testament to the effectiveness of both the contractors and the program itself.

10.1.3 There are ongoing discussions with the Cambridgeshire County Council on the Permissive Pathway Agreement and their obligations set out in the agreement. HC highlighted that there is some disagreement in the agreements in its interpretation of the agreement and a swift resolution may not be possible.

There are still ongoing issues with the weed harvester and so far, there have been two contractors looking at resolving the problem. It was identified that last year weed cutting was difficult and caused many problems for the river users and HC informed the Conservators that the aim is to have the harvester in full working order before the beginning of the weed cutting season, but it should be noted that this may not be the case and will need to seek an alternative.

10.1.5 HC highlighted that the officers are working significant overtime to complete the objectives. The officers' roles require a broader than normal skillset and would offer appreciation to the officers for facing the challenges. HC asked that Conservators are mindful of the situation moving forward in looking at the Business Plan and the potential projects within the plan.

### 10.2 RPO and Licensing report

DP highlighted the significant flooding caused by the extreme rain fall and stated that once the flooding waters have subsided a review of any damage to the locks and revetments would be undertaken.

DP highlighted that there have been a number of incidents reported including a number of incidents of rowers striking and colliding with vessels on the river.

It was also highlighted that the tree management programme has commenced, and the contractors are stacking the tree arisings, as advised by Natural England, with the additional benefits that not only will it provide natural habitats, but it will also provide a barrier to vehicles and livestock accessing the towpath from some adjacent fields.

Rural Action Team are also supporting the Conservancy with incidents that have been reported on the towpath.

The Conservators congratulated DP on an extensive report and suggested that this information would be beneficial for the open public meeting in April.

### 10.3 Clerk report

TY updated the Conservators on the work being undertaken by the Clerk. There has been one Consent 15 application received from Magdelene College and categorised as major by the Regulatory Committee and a licence has been issued to commence the work in early March 2024.

The policies are being updated and new ones created and will be submitted to the Regulatory Committee for approval.

The Conservators were asked to endorse the recommendation that the risk register oversight should be delegated to the General Purposes Committee and report back at each of the quarterly meetings.

**Agenda Item 11 - Any other business**

DP highlighted a request had been received to undertake a work experience pupil. Some of the Conservators highlighted their concerns but were assured by others that the school undertake the admin and safeguarding procedures and guidelines.

It was agreed that DP should approach some of the Conservators who have experienced schoolwork placements to understand the Conservancy requirements and take a report to the Regulatory Committee for approval.

The Conservators thanked the previous Chair for all their knowledge and support in delivering the Conservancy objectives.

**Dates of future meetings:**

- 25 April 2024, 10am
- 25 July 2024, 10am
- 24 October 2024, 10am



02/07/2024