

Great Ouse Valley Trust

Notes of Trustees and Partner Members Meeting

Tuesday 30th June 2020

Held by Zoom due to COVID emergency

Present:

Trustees:

Graham Campbell (GC) (Chairman), Helen Boothman (HB), Peter Downes (PD),
Bridget Flanagan (BF), Ian Jackson (IJ)

Partner Members:

Basil Belcher (BB) Friends of Holt Island
Paul Boothman (PB) Houghton & Wyton PC
Lois Dale (LD) Clerk H&W PC
Helen Dye (HD) St Ives Eco Action Group
Colin Hyams (CH) Godmanchester TC & Ouse Valley River Club
Alan Marnes (AM) Southoe & Midloe PC
Roger Mitchell (RM)
Mike Humphrey (MH) Hartford Conservation Group
John Peters (JP) Hemingford Abbots PC
Caroline Underwood (CU) Buckden PC
Robin Waters (RW) Hemingford Grey PC
Ian Weitzel (IW) Offords PC
Sarah Wilson (SW) HDC Cllr

1. Apologies: Phil Rothwell, Trustee, Zoe Ryall, Hemingford Abbots PC, Sue Rogers & Tina Yates, Swavesey and District Bridleways Assoc (SDBA), Lynda Warth, British Horse Society.

2. GC welcomed everyone to the meeting and organised introductions.

He summarised that the GOV Trust was now c 18 months old. The inaugural conference had been held in Autumn 2018 with over 80 attendees. The GOVT is a coalition of communities and groups along the valley, and the numbers continue to grow. The key aim is to increase recognition of the river and valley and improve its status to provide greater protection for the landscape, environment and habitats. The AONB application remains current, although 'pending' by NE. A GOVT Workshop for Partner Members with invited speakers was held in Nov 2019 – again very successfully.

The eight Trustees of GOVT have worked hard and the organisation is now well known. The web site, Facebook page and increased publicity are proving effective in raising the public perception and profile of the GOV.

The GOVT, and previously the original AONB group, have campaigned relentlessly against the proposals for a Third River Crossing. The news on 23rd June from the Combined Authority (CPCA) that this proposal has been scrapped was fantastic! It was crucial for the GOV. GC thanked everyone who had helped achieve this outcome.

3. GOVT Strategy document

A Strategy document with Action Plan had been circulated to Partner Members. HB described its formulation – largely built from feedback from the workshop and discussions in

the Partners' Meeting in November 2019. She stressed that this was an iterative document, and would be reviewed at least annually, and amended when necessary. HB asked Partner Members to continue to 'feed back' information to GOVT.

BF described the Strategy document as an essential framework for the organisation. She hoped it would help Partner Members work more closely and identify with each other as communities and groups 'along the river' – a distinct place - rather than just part of the wider County of Cambridgeshire.

4. Discussion of GOVT Strategy

GC invited comments and discussion. (N.B. For clarity of recording, the points arising are grouped rather than in order of the meeting)

4.1 The River: CH wished to see more emphasis in the document for users of the river – boating clubs, marinas and boatyards, visiting boats and necessary signing for moorings. RW concurred – it would be helpful if organisations such as GOBA were Partner Members. IJ described the links made by GOVT with the Inland Waterways Association. RM felt that there was insufficient mention of the river and its ecology in comparison to that of the meadows.

4.2 Making connections: RM stressed the importance of relating to other environmental and natural initiatives within the County and Region. GOVT must not be isolated, but build and demonstrate connections. HD agreed that GOVT should be an outwards-looking organisation and aware of opportunities to 'join the dots'. Her St Ives Eco Action Group has found a ground swell of enthusiasm in local environmental issues.

GC explained GOVT's continuing work with CCC and Parishes to improve the Ouse Valley Way – an example of joint working which was achieving results. CU said that Buckden PC had already installed an interpretation board along the OVW in their parish.

PD asked if each PC and TC could have a nominated representative, and that GOVT be a regular agenda item, so that information could be better shared. It was vital to be touch with Grass roots and sustain enthusiasm. RW commented that this is happening in some PCs as in HGPC. HB suggested regular open Zoom meetings, and to use all opportunities for media coverage /publicity especially in current times with emphasis on health and mental health benefits of the GOV and environment

SDBA had sent comments by email. Their aims are for safe off-road links for horse riders, connecting villages and places of interest throughout the local area. (They cover the GOV area from Alconbury to Earith, east to Cambridge and south to the A428 area). SDBA reported their recent volunteer work in clearing overgrowth on the riverside section of the Bridleway at Fen Drayton (with RSPB permission) between Holywell Ferry Road and Oxholme Brook. The route now has a good width for people to pass each other comfortably whether on foot, cycle or hooves.

4.3: A Strategic Approach. PB stressed the importance of a Strategic Approach. He warned that GOVT risked getting lost in detail, particularly with initiative overload. GOVT should stick to the higher level objectives and leadership, and it was for the Partners (largely) to deliver the projects. HB suggested a 'Big Vision' that contained the smaller projects. RM agreed but still felt that GOVT should be more ambitious.

BF described an 'Ouse Valley Strategy for Countryside management' that had been run by HDC in 1994. With continuing cutbacks, such work has not been done by the CCC or HDC for decades, so the formulation of such strategy and co-ordination now rests with GOVT and its Partners.

4.4: Evaluating the environment: JP thought that GOVT could place more emphasis on the need to enhance the environment of the GOV, particularly with restoration of hedgerows and trees. GC reported the tree planting project along the river in Godmanchester, and HB the same by the anglers and EA in Houghton. GC said there was a need to gather available data on the GOV so as to inform where work needed to be done. (GOVT has so far been unsuccessful with grant applications to fund such work). HD asked for more maps of the GOV – visual images are excellent tools to convey information to the public – and with Google Drive this would be relatively easy to do. RW explained that Magic Maps already facilitated this.

IJ described the ongoing project with Imrays of St Ives re the production of a GOV map and leaflet and website information.

RM agreed that mapping will show baseline information. He will send through a 2019 document from Natural Capital Solutions on 'Mapping natural capital, and opportunities for habitat creation in Cambridgeshire'.

4.5: Supporters of GOV: RW asked what was being done to widen the reach of GOVT to members of the public. He suggested a Friends group which would bring individuals and their enthusiasm to help GOV. HB and IJ announced that a Supporters' Group is now ready to go live. This is being organised and there will be a regular newsletter or series of updating emails.

5. Conclusion

GC thanked everyone for joining the meeting and for their contributions to such a stimulating and informed discussion. GOVT has much to do! GC asked everyone to continue to be in touch; a 2-way conversation – for GOVT to feed back more to Partner Members as well as them keeping GOVT abreast of what is happening in their area.

Feedback and Feed in.....