

Minutes of the Parrett Management Sub Committee Meeting held at Bradbury House, 33-34 Market Street, Highbridge on Tuesday 21 April 2015 at 14.15pm. Chairman: Mr P Maltby

- 1 **Attendance & Apologies for Absence:** as per register appended.
- 2 **Items Additional to the Agenda:** Item 14 Any Other Business – Notices of Entry
- 3 **Declarations of interest:** None at this time
- 4 **Minutes of the Meeting held on 06 January 2015:** (appended) incorrect minutes were disseminated to members; the correct minutes were tabled at the meeting.
Amendment: Item 7 Engineering Report N Locker should read N Lockyer.
With this one amendment the Chairman signed the minutes as a true and correct record of the meeting held. All in favour.
- 5 **Matters Arising: (1) Item 7 Thorney Pump:** members were advised that a pump has been ordered for delivery in April 2015.
Item 8 Hallam Land Management: members were advised that the Principal Contractor seeking to discharge defects has appointed Sedgemoor District Council (SDC) as an agent for undertaking channel maintenance work.
Negotiations for a commuted sum option for the Board to undertake maintenance has not progressed as the developer is undertaking maintenance at this time, however the Board has not amended its stance on the amount due or the refusal to take a land transfer.
Item 7 Elsons Clyse: Members were advised that the Environment Agency (the Agency) are to apply for a road closure.
Item 14 Car Parking: S Gee (SMG) is negotiating with SDC. An initial offer of a block of 'Reserved' spaces at a reduced annual sum will be returned by SMG with a request for a greater number of spaces at the same annual sum. Cllr Fraser expressed regret that this matter has been pro-longed and expressed concern for the forthcoming election which may result in newly appointed staff unaware of the previous dialogue. The Chairman thanked Cllr Fraser and officer for their efforts in connection with this matter.
- 6 **Finance Overview of expenditure and budget:** S Gee (SMG) provided a summary of cost of works for the year 2014/15 advising that maintenance is under budget by 2.4% as schemes are uncompleted due to work at Thorney and Thorney Pottery ring banks.
Health & Safety schemes have been completed within budget, however the Minehead work has yet to be undertaken.
The current indication is that the year-end will produce a surplus of approx. £17k.
All works not yet completed will be carried forward.
The report was duly noted by members.
- 7 **Engineering Report: Maintenance Report** (appended) P Ham (PSH) advised that some maintenance had been completed later than normal with agreement of landowners. The report was duly noted by members.
SRA Enhanced Maintenance Programme - Parrett dredging - EA managed : I Sturdy (IDS) advised that invitations to tender for the section of the River Parrett downstream of Northmoor PS on a design and construct basis have been sent out to contactors with a view to commence works August 2015, working from one bank.
SRA Enhanced Maintenance Programme - Parrett dredging – IDB managed - a contractor has been appointed to provide services to identify returned silt and recommend how to remove it. On visual inspection some silt is the result of slippage where the banks are stabilising. 42 cross sections will be considered with methods of moving material and for the results to be monitored. The SRA will fund this Early Contractor Involvement (ECI) work from its budgets. IDS advised that aerial photography from small drones will be given consideration as well as cross section data collection. Members did not agree that sediment should remain in the watercourse, nor that dredging should only be undertaken from one bank.
Environmental assessment and consents: P Brewin (PAB) provided a synopsis of the report (appended), advising that the Enhanced Maintenance Programme will be an annual undertaking that must be financially and environmentally sustainable. Members were asked to consider water vole management plan and flow diagram as a guide for planning works, water vole surveys and mitigation. Members opined that long term management of the system would provide better

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habitats and re-vegetation. Natural England has requested a copy of the report; it was agreed to meet with NE to seek permission to promote the work in an efficient manner.

It was agreed during the forthcoming visit to the Lincolnshire Boards to ask how they work with water voles.

PAB advised that this document relating to the Water Framework Directive (WFD) is 'work in progress' and is for discussion rather than recommendations. IDS advised that deposition could be on the inside of corners, etc. and that working from one side of the river will enable one side to remain undisturbed.

The Parrett Management committee did not vote however supported the work detailed within the paper.

Improvement Works & Favourable Conditions Projects: I Sturdy (IDS) advised that the Board had not requested funding for FC projects this year, and that projects will be completed with funds already drawdown. The challenge for FC this year will be the transition to normal operational status to manage the completed projects.

Alternative sources of income are being sought for Board projects i.e. a submission will be made to the County/SRA for a scheme at Minehead, a possible ring bank at Long Load and investigations to the connection of Park Brook with the canal.

Taking over Raised Water Level Schemes: NWS advised that some structures as part of the Water Level Management Plans (WLMP) have been managed by the Agency, however operation of the complete schemes will require the Board taking over the management of some previously Agency operated structures. Commuted sums for asset transfers from the Agency are no longer possible. Precept return may be a source of funding for the cost of IDB structure operation and maintenance. It was agreed after discussion that the Board should seek funding by way of a Public Sector Co-operation Agreement (PSCA) for the Board to operate necessary structures and undertake routine maintenance with the Agency retaining ownership and structural maintenance. Concern was expressed for the operation of structures and obligations of the WLMP for operational levels; confidence was expressed in the Boards' operators who currently provide a service to the Agency and ratepayers by monitoring water levels and operating structures accordingly, however the financial responsibility of structures remains with the Agency.

Proposed T Bradford, Seconded R Coombes 'that the Parrett IDB undertakes the operation of structures within Raised Water Level Schemes and negotiate financial reimbursement from the Environment Agency for such operation.' **Vote: unanimous RESOLUTION 1**

Ring Banks: Cllr J Taylor declared a personal interest in this item. NWS presented an Agency fact sheet entitled Northmoor Ring Bank Defence Project for information purposes, advising that this is a traditional way of providing defence and reducing risk of flooding to properties. To enable the project to succeed it would require partnership funding as the benefit-cost ratio is modest. Members expressed concern that flood water is to be accommodated rather than evacuated, therefore ring banks might not prove beneficial.

IDS advised that a map highlighting 10 locations with cost benefit information may be available to members; NWS/IDS to confirm with the Agency that the maps can be made available.

It is unknown if household insurance costs have been considered within the benefit-cost analysis, as the national economic loss is calculated rather than individual household loss.

Concern was expressed for local levy which may have one increase for the SRA, if precept is formalised, and partnership funding for ring banks would result in a further increase.

Long Load ring bank: IDS advised that after investigation there is concern for the impact of the bank upstream levels, which outline modelling showed an increase of 300/400mm however further modelling is being considered to refine this information. The expectation of South Somerset District Council and the Agency is that the IDB will undertake the necessary works if the project is commissioned. Members opined that a ring bank in conjunction with recent road works may not prove beneficial to local residents.

8 Development Control: IDS advised that the work programmes are discussed with members at individual Board meetings, and that works are to be prioritised appropriately.

National Grid: IDS advised that construction is now required to be completed by 2022.

A Statement of Common Ground has been agreed between the Axe Brue, Parrett and North Somerset Levels IDB's with National Grid. Proposals have been put forward for NSLIDB's to pay enhanced services costs for Officer time in their agreement.

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Slabgate Prosecution: (appended) NWS advised that following one successful prosecution and one acquittal many lessons were learned; in any future prosecution, police evidence will only be used as corroborating evidence. Ashford Solicitors will provide legal enforcement training for Officers at Bradbury House on 28 April 2015 at no cost to the Board.

9 Revisions to Water Level Management Plans: PAB Water Level Management Plans are due to be reviewed; meetings are being held with Natural England and the Environment Agency to discuss four sites of concern for operational issues as a result of flooding or land owner operations within North Moor, Kings Sedgemoor, West Sedgemoor and Westmoor. It was agreed that local Board representatives will be invited to future meetings; however PAB is in contact with local Board members regularly. The structures need to be operated in accordance with the WLMP to obtain maximum benefits.

10 20 Year Flood Action Plan progress: NWS advised that updates are now available on the Somerset Rivers Authority website.

Beer Wall and Sowy Improvements: Weekly teleconferences are being held to discuss the projects; drawings have been received in preparation of planning application submission (May 2015). Officers expressed preference for members to be involved with meetings to discuss details of culverts.

Common Works Programme and Enhanced Maintenance Works: IDS advised that the Board is to lead the programme including dredging works. The Board, through the SRA Governance Body will be involved with the formation of a 5 year programme of works. The Board will inform the SRA of projects within the Boards budget whereas the EMP will be the Boards opportunity to request funding for new flood defence/relief projects.

Land Management: NWS advised the Royal Bath and West Society has been successful in an application to receive £750k from a lottery fund. This award will be used to finance the Hills to Levels project. IDS advised that a proposal has been submitted to the SRA to jointly fund a study into the Sowy improvement scheme to understand if spreading water would be beneficial or palatable to landowners (this is not an IDB initiative).

Trigger Points: (appended) NWS advised the paper had been submitted by the Environment Agency for information purposes.

Community Resilience: for information this item can be found on the SRA website.

SRA meetings progress: it was agreed by members that meetings of the SRA Joint Working Group are necessary to update Board members on a regular basis. A meeting will be arranged to discuss working options which will be held following the forthcoming Lincolnshire visit. NWS advised that the aim of the SRA funding review is to review all options and prepare a report in conjunction with Defra and DCLG for consideration of the new Minister after election in May 2015. The current proposal for future funding is to precept, however investigations continue.

17:25 Cllrs A Fraser and J Taylor left the meeting

Recruitment: IDS advised that following advertising for an Engineer, 12 responses were received and 4 interviews held. One candidate expressed experience with the area; references are being sought with a view to recruit on an annual fixed term contract to commence asap. The contract will be solely funded by the SRA, with all costs and other officers to be re-charged accordingly.

17:30 Cllr Hamlin left the meeting

Members were further advised that the SRA has a budget of £40k for one year to cover staff backfilling costs in the SDBC which, at present, is considered appropriate; other bodies cover their own costs for staff involvement in the SRA project. It was also noted by members that if IDB officers had not been involved with the formation of the SRA, the set up may have been completely different and not focused on maintenance matters.

17:40 D Spicer left the meeting

Members expressed concern that £40k was not sufficient for Board costs; it was suggested but not agreed, that the Board through the 2016/17 budgets should include additional staff costs for dealing with SRA matters

NWS advised that a Development Control Officer, full time position, may be required in the near future; the Chairman instructed NWS and IDS to prepare a staffing paper for the SDBC Management meeting 25 August 2015.

Following a question regarding indemnity of Public Sector Cooperation Agreement's NWS advised that SMG and NWS will prepare a paper for a future meeting to identify the risks and how they are managed.

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- 11 **Upcoming Wessex Water Schemes in Somerset 2015-2020:** (appended) the report provided for information purposes was noted by members.
- 12 **Update on policies:** (appended) members noted the list of policies currently available, and agreed that they should be reviewed and/or updated in due course.
- 13 **Special Correspondence:** (appended) NWS advised that a letter from Dan Rogerson MP makes reference to an annual statutory IDB1 form which confirms whether the Board has adopted a members' code of conduct, financial regulations and register of members' interests, therefore reminding Board members of their responsibilities. The letter also highlights flood risk policy. The letter was duly noted by members.
- 14 **Any Other Business: Notice of Entry:** NWS advised that a generic Notice of Entry was included with the annual rate demands; the Environment Agency has requested the Board give consideration to include their annual Notice of Entry from next year. The Clerk and Chairman recommended members consider this request favourably. Members did not vote but did agree to support the request to include the Environment Agency Notice of Entry with the rate demands from April 2016.
A303: IDS advised that work has been undertaken with the Highways Agency and Skanska to review modelling and proposals to protect A303 from flooding. Landowners outside of defended area who remain unhappy with the proposals have requested a meeting to which the local Board member will be invited – R Coombes.
- 15 **Date of Next Meeting:** F&G 19 May 2015, Full Board 16 June 2015, Full Board 21 July 2015 (if required), Inspection Tour 21 July 2015, F&G 01 September 2015 and E&M 08 September 2015. Unless stated all meetings will be held at Bradbury House, 33-34 Market Street, Highbridge.

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There being no other business the Chairman thanked members and officers for attending and closed the meeting at 18.00pm

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