

Minutes of the Somerset Drainage Boards Consortium Annual Meeting, held at the Huntworth Suite, Sedgemoor Market Centre, Bridgwater on Tuesday 17 November 2015 at 19.00hrs
Chairman: Mr Peter Maltby

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| <p>1 Attendance and Apologies: as per register appended</p> | |
| <p>2 Items additional to the agenda: None</p> | |
| <p>3 Opportunity for any member of the public to address the meeting: Mr R Graham, Stawell – Q: Why was Aller Moor spillway lowered in 2013?
 A: N Stevens (NWS) advised that the Environment Agency (the Agency) intention was to undertake bank strengthening works however the scheme was amended. The works were undertaken in consultation with the Board and an environment impact statement was completed.
 Q: Is anything being done to the King Sedgemoor Drain (KSD), as no dredging has taken place for approx. 20 years?
 A: Information on a proposed scheme will be available in 2016, funding for the scheme may be made available by Somerset Enterprise Scheme.
 Mr Graham was informed that this question had been raised by members of the public at a Parrett IDB Full Board meeting on 10 November, at that time it was agreed local ratepayers would receive correspondence from the Board by way of explanation, to which Mr Graham will be included.</p> | |
| <p>4 Minutes of the meeting 21 October 2014: amendments: Item 7 SUDS: ‘submissive powers’ should read ‘permissive powers’. Item 10 SRA: ‘a new precepting authority’ should read ‘a new funding option can be set up for April 2016’. With these two amendments the minutes as previously circulated were signed by the Chairman as a true and correct record of the meeting held.</p> | |
| <p>5 Matters arising: Item 10 SRA: T Bradford (AB) asked why the 2014 minute detailed the SRA as a precepting authority when this was not the chosen option until September 2015. The Chairman apologised to the meeting and advised that this was an erroneous error, as at the time six options were being discussed, and Mr Bradford was correct that the preferred option was not chosen until September 2015.
 Item 12 PSCA: AB asked why the IDB has not yet signed a PSCA when other Boards nationally had signed up. NWS advised that the Boards insurers had responded unfavourably to the PSCA as submitted. NWS further advised that he has produced a paper for insurance indemnity and liabilities for members. Officers have discussed an updated version with the Agency and a new model will be championed nationally. It was agreed, not voted, that the Boards can now sign the new PSCA agreement.
 Item 6 (10) Bleadon Sluice: IDS updated members on progress – the refurbishment scheme is due to commence in 2016; the delay has been due to funding transfer of power for the works to proceed.</p> | |
| <p>6 Chairman’s Report: Mr Maltby addressed the meeting (this list is not exhaustive):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • during the year a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed by the two drainage boards to allow funding for the SRA; the District Councils and County Council also signed the MoU • Numerous workshop meetings have taken place to get the SRA up and running, through which the IDB representatives have worked closely • Tony Bradford has taken on the role of Vice-Chairman of the SRA • A work has taken place including dredging a section of the River Parrett, creating barriers on the Sowy and King Sedgemoor Drain, increased pumping capacity, enhanced maintenance, ring banks at Muchelney and Muchelney Pottery and a road raising scheme at Muchelney. • The south west audit partnership recently reported on the administration costs of the consortium which identified SDBC costs are mid-range of those nationally | |
| <p>7 Chief Executive Officer’s Report: NWS addressed the meeting with the use of a presentation of slides:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SDBC: offering staffing resources to the Axe Brue & Parrett Boards • Risks: staff succession; consideration to be given to providing in-house training in the form of an apprenticeship*¹ • SWAP: report concludes that SDBC provides value for money; report available to members upon request | |

- Bradbury House: provision of meeting room is cost effective, and it is encouraging that other bodies utilise the facilities
- SDBC aim to get common standards across the Boards; full range of Governance policies are now in place
- Slabgate Sluice prosecution: following a partially successful prosecution, staff training for evidence gathering has been undertaken
- Health & Safety policy has been reviewed and amended to support current regulations and guidance
- Mobile Works: staff training will take place in December to ensure compliance of Mobile Works Operatives
- Vulnerability of IT: a review of IT procedures and policy will be undertaken to ensure protection of the Board. Staff will be consulted and provided with a new IT policy

*1 general consensus was that apprenticeships should be pursued; level 4 NVQ Civil engineering. It was agreed to investigate apprenticeships and sponsorship, with consideration to providing training proficiencies and support material.

8 Finance Report – overview: (appended) in the absence of S Gee, NWS provided an overview of the report and notes to the accounts, advising that the Axe Brue and Parrett Boards had approved the SDBC 2016/17 budget at the latest Full Board meetings. The report was duly noted by members.

9 Engineering Works – overview: I Sturdy (IDS) advised that overall there are 52 schemes/items of work underway or waiting to be undertaken with resources available – 33 Axe Brue and 19 Parrett.

Urban drainage works – investigations have been undertaken which identified six schemes to which the Board has raised funds, however substantial balances remain to be sourced by Grant in Aid (GiA) or other funding streams, therefore these projects will be ring fenced until partnership funding becomes available.

SRA schemes - £188k estimated cost of delivering schemes. Currently tenders are due for a £100k project (approx. value), which will attract substantial GiA or other funding sources. The identified schemes are to be prioritised.

SRA Enhanced Maintenance Programme (EMP) – funded by the SRA, the IDB manages maintenance dredging on main river, however the Board does not have power to enter, serve entry or dispose of material; these tasks would require a Section 30 agreement in line with the Agency.

The IDB is in receipt of a purchase order number for dredging works, for which the contract will be awarded on 18 November, subject to notice. There will be an IDB presence on site, mobilisation work is due to commence 23 November.

IDS advised that dredging needs to be maintained:

- Continued monitoring
- Understanding impacts of dredging
- Placement of deposits
- Strategy for future dredging/maintenance

Resources for delivering the Boards work - Engineer - one full time and two part time. Development Control – IDS and one part time planning engineer; the Board monitor approx. 15 planning applications and approx. 5-10 Land Drainage Consents (LDC) per month, including large applications such as North East Bridgwater and National Grid/Hinckley Point.

National Grid – initial LDC discussions have taken place regarding road amendments and off-site works. Ashford Solicitors have assisted in producing an agreement which NG will sign to agree costs for regulating their work, however IDS advised that concern remains with regard to Byelaw 3 – provision of increased flow.

Recruitment - IDS advised that an advertisement for a permanent, full time Planning Engineer has been posted for approx. three months however no suitable candidates have applied. The position has been advertised in the Western Daily Press, the Board's website and a recruitment website (Indeed). Members were advised that South Somerset DC has also advertised a similar position/salary with no responses to date. It was agreed to continue efforts to recruit.

North Somerset Levels IDB - The Board continues to deliver the day to day input and schemes programme, and planning service which is 100% recharged to NSL.

Brue Farm Development – Hallam Land Management (HLM) have received outline planning permission for a development and have requested pre-application advice to ensure a smooth

RK/IDS

IDS

IDS/CAP

development process. Members requested that previous HLM experience is taken into consideration during negotiations.

10 Somerset Rivers Authority – update: NWS advised that the SRA has taken responsibility for the 20 year Flood Action Plan, for which there are six work streams (this list is not exhaustive):

- Economics – this section has been completed
- Land Management – this scheme continues funded by grant contributions. Almost 300 landowners/residents have been visited with 40/50 small schemes designed for flood alleviation works, which are intended to provide benefits in upper and lower catchments
- River Management – the IDB is involved with the EMP as stated in item 9
- 5 year plan – the plan is in preparation to consider what does the future need. All organisations would like to see different projects, therefore prioritisation is important. The process will include prioritising works and arranging funding with assistance from the Government. Concern has been expressed that a precepting body will incur overheads, however all partners (IDB, EA, local authorities and SCC) provide staff resource and claim accordingly from central funds. Precepting will provide additional funding for Somerset.

Local Enterprise Funding (LEP) was a capital decision for LEP funding for the Thorney ring bank projects.

J Osman and A Bradford (AB), as SRA Chair and Vice Chair respectively, are due to meet with the Secretary of State to discuss funding and agricultural land charge as a mechanism for funding and interim funding.

AB expressed concern for the working and funding of the SRA as well as meeting the SoS; he felt that the Board had not provided a defined understanding of its wishes. He requested an SRA joint working group meeting prior to the meeting. It was agreed that the SRA representatives and deputies present would meet at the conclusion of this meeting to review the 5 year plan and contract for dredging.

R Adlam stated that he was concerned for, in his opinion, the lack of influence of the IDB on the SRA and that ADA had not been involved with negotiations and development. NWS advised that, as per IDB instruction, he had discussed matters several times with Innes Thomson, ADA Chief Exec, who was satisfied with the continuing efforts of the Board. Members were further advised that 4 representatives of the Board sit on an SRA Board of 13 which operates as a democratic system, and that the Board positively influences the works being promoted.

The SRA was compared to the Lincolnshire Group Partnership; IDS advised that although the Lincs Group have experience of working in a partnership with the funds available to them, they do not however, have experience in raising additional funds which is the purpose of the SRA.

I Thomson, during several meetings in April 2015, stated that ADA would support a Private Bill, so that the Board can be safeguarded by being able to withdraw the Bill if it appears to go in a direction that is not acceptable.

It was agreed, but not voted upon, that the recommendation of this SDBC meeting is to hold an SRA joint working group meeting.

In response to a question regarding Agency and SRA works, IDS advised that in draft outlines a number of projects are the Agency attempting to gain additional funding for works to be completed more cost effectively i.e. repair and enhancement at pumping stations. The SRA does not have delivery capability.

Concern was expressed for the perceived cost of additional (SRA) dredging; IDS advised that this is a different stretch of river than the original dredge, however the contract did go out to competitive tender.

Concern was expressed for restricted Agency budgets which may affect the level of works undertaken. IDS advised that any member may withdraw from the Memorandum of Understanding, therefore the Agency could withdraw due to lack of funds; the IDB needs to be aware of the risk.

Members were advised for information purposes, that Black Sluice IDB is currently negotiating with the Agency to take responsibility of a pumping station, as the Agency no longer has the funds to maintain and operate it. Discussion of this nature are taking place nationally.

NWS

- 11 Special Correspondence and meetings:** NWS advised members that ADA is hosting a Flood Expo in Peterborough during March 2016; the Assistant Clerk will make arrangements for a local contingent nearer the time.
The Board now holds a Badger Class Licence, to allow movement and works adjacent badger setts.
Eel regulations – new regulations are in place to provide fish friendly pumps, water control structures and flap valves nationally. There is no actions for local IDBs at this stage
Water vole and class licences are to be investigated, to prevent difficulties when undertaking maintenance of watercourses.
- 12 Any Other Business:** Members were reminded that a briefing meeting would be held following the conclusion of this meeting for SRA members and deputies.
- 13 Date of next meeting:** SWADA Wednesday 25 November 2015, 10.30am, Oaktree Arena, Highbridge.
SDBC Management Committee Tuesday 08 December 2015, 10.30am, Bradbury House, Highbridge.

CAP

PAB

There being no other business, the Chairman thanked all for their attendance and closed the meeting at 21.15hrs.

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Chairman Date

Addendum

Following the AGM and as a result of concerns about SRA matters raised by Tony Bradford (AB), the Chairman convened a meeting of SRA Board representatives and reserve representatives to consider the issues that AB wished to express.

In attendance Peter, Jeff, Ray, Tony, David Spicer, and Alan Franks. NWS and IDS.

AB was concerned that he did not feel he had a clear understanding of the wishes or mandate of IDB members when discussing future funding with the Secretaries of State (SoS). He was also concerned that he did not have a full and agreed (by IDB members) justification for the size of any settlement of interim funding and that he needed a clear list of the works and activities that would be undertaken in 2016/17 with any interim funding.

All members agreed that AB should be aware of any works programme that could be used in discussion with the SoS.

It was pointed out to AB that his meeting with the SoS was as Vice Chairman to the SRA Board and not as an IDB representative and that he should be expressing the views of the SRA.

Ray Adlam (RA) and AB were also concerned that they had not yet had the opportunity to fully scrutinise the proposed 5 year programme, however it was pointed out that IDB SRA members had recently met with the SRA Project Manager in the presence of the Clerk and Chief Engineer to look through the 5 year programme, feeding in their initial thoughts. A further meeting with all the SRA members present would be held on Wednesday 25 November where the latest version would be discussed. NWS gave an undertaking that members would be supplied with an advance copy before the meeting.

The meeting closed at 22.00 hrs.