

MINUTES OF THE NORTH SOMERSET LEVELS INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD FULL BOARD MEETING HELD ON 19 APRIL 2023 AT 14.30 IN KINGSTON SEYMOUR VILLAGE HALL

Attendance:			
Elected Members: Mr N Cole Mr P Kingcott Mr A Mead Mr R Parsons Mr C Pyke Mr C Redding Mr R Mitchell Mr J Harris	Appointed Members: Mr P Burden Cllr J Cato Cllr K Haverson Cllr S Hearne Cllr J Tonkin Cllr R Westwood Mrs D Yamanaka	Officers: Iain Sturdy Phil Brewin Giles Oliver Kay White Anthony Brinson Maggie Hammond Matthew Wall Rob King Virginie Martin	Public:
Approved Apologies:			
Mr T Bush (C)	Cllr M Crosby Mr D Dash Mr P Harris	David Crossman Dan Alsop Naomi Johnson	
Non-Approved Apologies:			
Mr E Adams Mr O Matthews Mr B Letts Mr G Plaister	Cllr M Pepperall Mr R Garner Cllr C Gibbons Mr C Webb Cllr A Harley Cllr S Hogg		

Agenda Item:	Detail:	Action:
1. Attendance and Apologies	1.1. Apologies as per the above Attendance List.	
2. Items Additional to the Agenda	2.1 One item additional to the agenda was notified to the Board by M Hammond; the issue of postal service delays, covered later in the meeting.	
3. Declarations of Interest	3.1 A declaration of interest was made Cllr J Tonkin as Council representative regarding the Banwell Bypass.	
4. Opportunity for Members of the	4.1 No members of the public wished to speak	

Public to address the Meeting		
5. Approval of Minutes	<p>5.1 The Minutes of the NSLIDB Full Board Meeting held 09 February 2023 had been provided to the Board in advance and were taken as read.</p> <p>5.2 Corrections advised: Mr P Harris and Mr R Garner were listed in error as Councillors on the attendance list. Cllr M Crosby although marked as such, was not in attendance on 09 February.</p> <p>5.3 Page 4 point 10 spelling error corrected iradicating replaced with eradicating.</p> <p>The minutes were accepted as correct by all present</p>	
6. Matters Arising	<p>6.1 The Board reviewed the table of outstanding actions</p> <p>6.2 P Brewin provided feedback regarding the progress of the Consortium Environment Committee in the Environment Report, later in the meeting.</p> <p>6.3 I Sturdy reported that, following the inspection of Sampsons Sluice, there has been a reduction of the financial risk associated with the structure. He is continuing work on preparation of the Risk Register and will report to the next meeting.</p> <p>6.4 I Sturdy reported that the Board continue to engage with Ashfords Solicitors and North Somerset Council regarding public access for the footpath at Sampsons Sluice. The legal agreement is almost concluded.</p> <p>6.5 P Brewin covered details of his increased involvement in the NSL area later in the meeting.</p> <p>6.6 M Hammond covered the instigation of a Consortium wide investment group later in the meeting.</p> <p>6.7 D Alsop was not available to report to the Board regarding progress of installing the penning device at Claverham Drove. An update will be provided at the next meeting.</p> <p>6.8 I Sturdy advised that the report due from ADA on managing peat resource is still unavailable, he will provide this once it is.</p> <p>6.9 The Board discussed that G Attwell is in a position where he could be co-opted onto the Board. P Burden moved that an</p>	<p>ACTION NSL20220413 - 1 Complete</p> <p>ACTION NSL20220622 - 1 Complete</p> <p>ACTION NSL20220622 - 2 ONGOING</p> <p>ACTION NSL20220622 - 3 Complete</p> <p>ACTION NSL20221116 - 2 Ongoing</p> <p>ACTION NSL20221116 - 3 ONGOING</p> <p>ACTION NSL20221116 - 4 Ongoing</p>

	<p>invitation was extended to Mr Attwell to invite him to attend the next Board meeting.</p> <p>Proposed: C Redding Second: A Mead</p> <p>Vote : To invite G Attwell to attend the next Board meeting - approved unanimously.</p> <p>6.10 J Tonkin asked for the minutes to reflect that there has been residential flooding at Four Gables off Netherton Wood Lane. This has necessitated the use of pumps, since the arrival of piles of soil and surplus on the Taylor Wimpey Site. G Oliver will raise this with the Area Supervisor and request he make a site inspection.</p> <p>6.11 M Hammond informed the Board that invitations have been sent out to the Task & Finish Group to discuss the future of the Cider House/Hewish Operational Hub. This has been arranged to take place on 27th April, prior to the Local Council elections as Appointed Board membership may be subject to change. The T&F Group to feed back to the Board at the next full meeting.</p> <p>6.12 There were no other matters arising.</p>	<p>ACTION NSL20230209 - 1 ONGOING and RESOLUTION 2</p> <p>ACTION NSL20230209 - 2 ONGOING</p> <p>ACTION NSL20230209 - 3 ONGOING</p>
<p>7. Health & Safety</p>	<p>7.1 The Health and Safety Report was taken as read.</p> <p>7.2 In addition to points covered in the report I Sturdy advised that the Consortium use of Solo Protect devices is under review, due to improvements in the new generation of devices available.</p> <p>7.3 I Sturdy advised the Board that there is now a defibrillator in the office at Bradbury House, Highbridge. There was some discussion about having the device added to a national register. This will be investigated by the H&S officer.</p> <p>7.4 I Sturdy reported to the Board that an Area Supervisor had fallen into a watercourse within an attenuation area during routine maintenance. The investigation found that cuttings from the maintenance had camouflaged the body of water. This incident also brought into question ownership and responsibility for maintenance of the attenuation lagoon. Clarification on the terms of the agreement, with the developer for the commuted sum, is being sought due to concern for public safety.</p>	
<p>8. Governance & Correspondence Update</p>	<p>8.1 I Sturdy reported that Mr O Matthews has resigned, leaving one elected Board member position available. Suggestions were invited from those present for possible new members who could be co-opted to the Board as elections are not due yet.</p>	

	<p>8.2 Councillors were reminded that they could offer to serve on the Board as appointed members if they were no longer councillors after the May 2023 Council elections. This should be done by making representation to both I Sturdy and the Democratic Services Officer at the local authority.</p> <p>8.3 I Sturdy welcomed Michelle Crossman as the new Deputy Area Supervisor for the area.</p> <p>8.4 I Sturdy reported that the consortium are still trying to recruit for two Engineer posts and that advertisements will be placed in New Civil Engineer Magazine. There was discussion regarding whether the remuneration being offered was attractive enough, and the Board were assured that the difficulty in attracting Engineering staff was common and being experienced by other public bodies.</p>	
<p>9. Finance Report (RFO)</p>	<p>9.1 M Hammond reported that the reconciliations have been completed up to the end of the financial year.</p> <p>9.2 M Hammond reported that a dedicated group of board members met in March to debate investments across the consortium of Boards and develop a policy for investment. The policy is currently under development.</p> <p>9.3 The drainage rate update was reported to the Board as follows: Balance outstanding £6334.53, 15 accounts with Credit Balance, the credit balance is £1282.07, 701 accounts have a zero balance, 53 accounts with a balance of £7,616.60, of this balance the amount outstanding from previous years (arrears) equals £2426.32, £3908.21 from 22/23. A large payment made in April 2023 of £3174.61 took the balance outstanding to £3174.69 with only £858.86 outstanding from previous years. No court action was taken.</p> <p>9.4 The internal audit report had been sent out in advance of the meeting and was taken as read. M Hammond drew the Board's attention to Page 5 onwards to help the members when completing the Annual Governance Return.</p> <p>9.5 Correction to Axe Brue rate noted.</p>	
<p>10. Engineering & Operational Report</p>	<p>10.1 The Engineering & Operational Report had been sent out in advance of the meeting and was taken as read. Supplemental to the report the following items were raised by Operational and Engineering officers:</p> <p>10.2 R King reported some tampering with the Northfield Rhyne structure at Kewstoke, Warning signs stating that the site is under surveillance have been erected and replacement padlocks fitted. I Sturdy added that the Consortium have purchased a drone which can be used for many applications which could include surveillance. Wet weather has delayed summer penning; North Area is at full penn, South Area to be at full penn next week.</p>	

	<p>10.3 M Wall reported that tree works have been carried out in the North and South areas. The keetching contractor will be attending a meeting in preparation for annual maintenance, it is hoped that the new deputy rhynes supervisor will attend the meeting. The contractor has made some investment in new equipment, namely replacing the Spearhead.</p> <p>10.4 G Oliver recommended that a short section of Rhyne in Locking be taken into view. Proposal, map and cost estimates were detailed in the report.</p> <p>Proposed: R Mitchell Second: J Cato</p> <p>Vote : To take into view the section as detailed in the report - approved unanimously.</p> <p>10.5 There has been a focus on de-silting within winter maintenance jobs. In addition repairs have been made to Bourton Town Rhyne to prevent leaking.</p> <p>10.6 In terms of engineering schemes; we are waiting for a date from AP Land Surveys to carry out survey work for renewal of gauge boards. We have more information from the Environment Agency about their benchmarks, prior work by D Alsop has identified that the benchmarks done before are quite acceptable. As a result, survey time from external contractors can be reduced by proof checks. In the south area there will still be some work to do on establishing levels.</p> <p>10.7 Merewall tilting weir was leaking so budget for works was moved to make the necessary repairs.</p> <p>10.8 A Sampsons Sluice condition assessment was carried out, an executive summary of the inspection report was circulated at the meeting. Operational safety and mechanicals were considered, the findings were that the main structure is competent and that the penstock is rated at 5-10 years of life. A more detailed report will be presented for the Board meeting in June.</p> <p>10.9 Development control and planning lists were available to Board members in the pack and at the meeting. Current planning works involving the Board's involvement include: Banwell Bypass, which has received outline planning permission and under discussion will require Land Drainage consent for multiple sites. National Grid consultations are ongoing relating to the HPCC project including making arrangements for the removal of the culverts installed.</p> <p>10.10 A Brinson expressed concerns about planning application for a slurry lagoon in the Kewstoke Area and its possible impact on surrounding watercourses. V Martin will liaise with him and make response to the LPA as appropriate as part of the planning process.</p>	<p>RESOLUTION 3</p>
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<p>11. Environment Report</p>	<p>11.1. Phil Brewin provided an update on floating pennywort control in North Somerset. The IDB invasive species team has already started control activities (herbicide application under licence) at critical locations, where there is a significant risk of spread into new areas. This work is being coordinated with EA control work of main rivers and the results so far are encouraging. There is a need to increase capacity to undertake this work in North Somerset and effort is being made to find additional contractor resource. The Board has already allocated additional funding to support the extra work and further funding is available from EA to assist the IDB in controlling floating pennywort in North Somerset.</p> <p>11.2 Phil Brewin provide an update to the Board on the work of the Environment Committee. Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) The Committee had agreed at its last meeting that the existing IDB BAPs should be updated by the end of 2023 to meet the requirements of the Environment Act 2021 for public bodies to undertake a strategic review of their activities to consider what action it can take to further biodiversity and include those actions in their plans. There should be one BAP prepared for the Consortium of three IDBs, which would combine the two existing BAPs that were prepared in 2010 for the North Somerset and West Mendip IDBs and the Axe Brue and Parrett IDBs. The updated IDB BAP will include an audit of environmental features in the Boards' areas that are dependent on water management and develop a series of thematic action plans that can be used to track and report progress. The new BAP should also be aligned with the forthcoming Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) that are being prepared by Somerset Council and North Somerset Council. It is a requirement of the Environment Act 2021 for IDBs to have regard for the LNRS in their plans. Themes for inclusion in a new BAP include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Water Level Management Plans 2. Watercourse Maintenance 3. Development and Consenting 4. Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation 5. Eel Passage Improvement 6. Invasive Non-Native Species <p>11.3. Best Practice Operations Manual: The Environment Committee agreed to prepare a Best Practice Operations Manual in line with the advice in the ADA Environmental Good Governance Guide. The Manual will set out in detail how each IDB watercourse should be routinely managed to ensure that the required water levels and flows can be maintained, and how the biodiversity value of each watercourse can be maximised. A Best Practice Operations Manual is considered one of the primary mechanisms to help an IDB to demonstrate how it complies with environmental and wildlife legislation. It will also help the Boards develop a more consistent approach and application of environmental sensitive specifications and</p>	
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	<p>provide greater clarity and confidence to officers and contractors of the standards and methods required in each area.</p> <p>11.4. The Committee also approved a set of criteria for prioritising updates to Water Level Management Plans.</p> <p>11.5. Phil Brewin presented a talk to the Board updating them on the work of the Environment Committee including progress on Water Level Management Plans the and development of a consortium wide Biodiversity Action Plan.</p> <p>11.6. The Committee have suggested that an open meeting or ‘Environment Day’ could be held to educate and update interested parties and invite presentations from external partners such as Natural England. Likely to be late September.</p> <p>11.7. Phil Brewin highlighted that improvements could be made to the impacts of regular maintenance ‘keetching’ on biodiversity. The regularity, methods and timing of maintenance can have differing impacts on wildlife across the district and more ‘sensitive’ cuts could be of benefit. The officers will monitor this; reviewing best practice, what possible changes to maintenance are required and balancing this against the impact on biodiversity.</p> <p>11.7. Phil Brewin observed that as a consequence of removing all native vegetation, Floating Pennywort can become embedded into banks. From observing other areas, P Brewin advised that allowing native vegetation such as reeds to grow can inhibit FP growth and delay it’s spread. Care and time needs to be taken to thoroughly and fully remove FP. The EA will be upscaling their work on removing FP in Main Rivers.</p> <p>11.8. Defra’s 25 year plan mentions net zero land management and soils form a large part of that. In the region there are organic rich soils which are vulnerable to drying and emitting CO2. Defra are interested in promoting sustainable farming on peat soils; as part of their effort funding may become available for initiatives for improvements, for which the Boards could apply.</p>	
<p>7. Policy review programme</p>	<p>a. A copy of the Policy review programme was included in the meeting papers and was taken as read.</p> <p>b. I Sturdy provided some thinking behind the programme and explained its function, that it is a summary of policies already in place and what needs to be updated or introduced. I Sturdy invited the Board to approve the Policy review table (number 1) and plans for updating them.</p>	

	<p>Proposed: J Cato Second: J Tonkin</p> <p>Vote : To approve the policy review programme on Table 1, to adopt the revised review periods shown on the table and to approve the planning for Phases 2 and 3 - approved unanimously.</p>	RESOLUTION 4
8. Correspondence and Engagement with other Authorities	<p>a. I Sturdy expressed the importance as officers and members of the Board that we continue to engage where possible with relevant associations/organisations and authorities to express our views, contribute to debate and help form national policy.</p> <p>b. Consortium Chairman Tony Bradford accompanied I Sturdy to attend the Norfolk Strategic Flood Alliance meeting and gave a presentation.</p> <p>c. I Sturdy advised that he has been engaging with the EA regarding regional shortfalls in funding and how this impacts their commitments to flood risk management, as a result concerns were elevated and brought before EFRA.</p>	
9. Any other business	<p>a. M Hammond reported to the Board that the Highbridge office has been experiencing postal delays, collections have been reduced and collections are now only available at 9am, meaning that it was impossible to post out same day.</p>	
10. Date of Next Meeting	<p>Finance and Works 14 June 2023</p> <p>Full Board Wednesday 21 June 2023</p>	
	Meeting closed at 16.40	

Annex:

A. NSLIDB Board – Table of Outstanding Actions

CHAIR.....DATE

NSLIDB BOARD – TABLE OF OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

Action Number:	Action:	Actionee:
NSL20220413 - 1	The Consortium Environment Committee meet to set measurable standards/objectives in regard to climate change and biodiversity.	Phil Brewin ONGOING
NSL20220622 - 1	The risk register will need to be reviewed before the RFO can investigate what the level of reserves should be.	I Sturdy/M Hammond ONGOING
NSL20220622 - 2	The Board is engaged with Ashfords Solicitors and North Somerset Council regarding public access. The legal agreement is almost concluded.	I Sturdy/ Giles Oliver ONGOING
NSL20220622 - 3	Spend more time in the NSL area over the summer to check processes, make sure we have the right specifications for watercourses and report back to the Board at the next meeting	P Brewin COMPLETE
NSL20221116 - 2	Group of Board members to debate investments across the consortium of Boards and develop a policy for investment. The policy is currently under development.	M Hammond ONGOING
NSL20221116 - 3	New sluice to improve water levels on Claverham Drove; designs have been completed and prices to be sought.	D Alsop ONGOING
NSL20221116 - 4	I Sturdy agreed to make available a copy of a report due from ADA on managing peat resource once available. Still unavailable – with DEFRA	I Sturdy ONGOING
NSL20230209 -1	Letter to be sent to George Attwell to invite him to be co-opted onto the Board. To invite Mr Attwell to the next Board meeting.	I Sturdy ONGOING
NSL20230209 - 2	Ongoing enforcement: Youngwood Lane/Netherton Grange. Area Supervisor to make an inspection of the Taylor Wimpey Site following reports of flooding at Four Gables off Netherton Wood Lane. Continue to keep J Tonkin appraised.	D Crossman ONGOING
NSL20230209 - 3	Formation or reconvening of Hewish Office Sub-committee.	M Hammond Complete.