

**MINUTES OF THE AXE BRUE FULL BOARD MEETING HELD AT BRADBURY HOUSE ON
MONDAY 17 APRIL 2023 AT 10.30**

Attendance:			
Elected Members: Mr B Clapp Mr J Fear (C) Mr A Franks Mr A Gilling (VC) Ms L Scott Mr J Stradling Mrs W Welland Mr M Watts Mr T Whitcombe	Appointed Members: Cllr A Hendry Cllr R Keen Cllr M Martin Mr C Riches	Officers: Mr I Sturdy Clerk/CEO Mrs M Hammond RFO Mr P Brewin Mr A Dowden Mrs K Kingston Mrs V Martin Mrs N Johnson	Public:
Approved Apologies:			
Mr M Lunnon Mr D Tratt	Cllr R Filmer Cllr M Healey		
Non-Approved Apologies:			
Mr N Lukins	Mr D Bridge Cllr P Clayton Cllr N Cottle Cllr J Cousins Cllr S Hart Cllr M Healey Cllr M Murphy		

Agenda Item:	Detail:	Action:
1. Attendance & Apologies	1.1. Apologies as per the above Attendance List. Members were reminded to ensure they had the updated parking permits in their vehicles	
2. Items additional to the Agenda	Maggie Hammond – postal service Martin Watts – employees criminal record Alan Franks – Panborough Drain and Dog Leg Ditch	
3. Declarations of Interest	Martin Watts – As a supplier to contractors and Mr Attwell issue Alan Franks – Dog Leg Ditch	

4. Members of the public to address the Meeting	4.1. None	
5. Minutes of Axe Brue Full Board 30 January 2023	<p>5.1. Martin Watts stated that the issue regarding Mr Attwell was not in the minutes of the last meeting. Iain Sturdy said it had not been discussed but he would listen to the audio and add the notes if applicable</p> <p>5.2. Andrew Gilling and Liz Scott reported that they are not councillors and are now elected members. With this amendment the minutes were signed as a true and accurate reflection of the meeting.</p>	
6. Matters Arising	<p>6.1. Matthew Wall asked for his name to be added to the list of staff members who attended.</p> <p>6.2. Martin Watts had a query on the financial report figures – Maggie Hammond confirmed that this was due to rounding, figures are shown to the nearest 1k.</p> <p>Iain Sturdy discussed outstanding actions with the Members as follows :</p> <p>AB/20220411 – 1 – The investment sub committee meeting was held at the end of March and was well attended with good discussions and an overall feeling that risks should be low.</p> <p>AB/20221109-02 – Regarding Stoke Moor Pumping Station . It is potentially complicated and so Iain Sturdy has asked Ashfords Solicitors to brief the sub committee regarding the covenant on the property when a convenient date can be fixed</p> <p>AB/20230130-01 – Phil Brewin reported that he had received a request from Defra seeking clarification on expenditure specific items, ie budget for Biodiversity Action Plans and eel passes.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Complete</p>
7. Health & Safety	<p>7.1. Roger Keen referred to item 3 and asked if other businesses had been informed that a defibrillator is available in the board's offices. Naomi Johnson reported that this is in progress. The device is available to anyone who would like to inspect it after the meeting and a short video is available to show how it is used. The cost was approximately £900. Members were very pleased the device had been provided</p> <p>7.2. Martin Watts asked if staff should be wearing an hi-viz jacket at all times. Iain Sturdy confirmed that hi-viz jackets are not necessary at all times. All staff wear corporate clothing to identify them to members of the public and PPE should be worn when there is a hazard.</p> <p>7.3. NJ reported that the H&S sub committee will review the Safe Systems of Work at the meeting in May.</p>	

	<p>7.4. Martin Watts asked for clarification regarding staff taking their dogs in their works vehicle. Iain Sturdy confirmed that the board's policy says that no domestic animals are to be carried in board owned vehicles. There is no policy on carrying a dog in a private vehicle. Martin Watts had spoken to the EA who said the vehicle is not allowed on people's property. If the dog gets out of the vehicle and causes damage the Board would be liable. Iain Sturdy has already drafted instructions to staff regarding taking an animal onto private land. It will state that if the animal is in the vehicle it should stay in the vehicle. A domestic animal cannot be allowed onto private land without the permission of the landowner.</p> <p>7.5. Liz Scott asked that if the Board knew the location of concrete posts in flailing areas who should advise the contractor. Matthew Wall reported that if the location of the hazards/concrete posts are reported to the Boards they are marked on the maintenance plans, and that information is then shared with the contractors.</p>	
<p>8. Governance & Staff Update</p>	<p>8.1. Iain Sturdy reported that advertisements have been placed for 2 engineers and 1 senior engineer but currently there is no interest. An advert will be placed in the professional publication – New Civil Engineer.</p> <p>The vacancies are also on ADA website.</p> <p>8.2. The deputy area supervisors are doing well.</p> <p>8.3 New members induction had been put off until the new local authority has been set up. Nick Stevens has been working on the members pack and will arrange an induction session, which we will try to combine with a site visit or pre Board meeting.</p> <p>8.4. Sub committees – The only losses of membership due to the change of authority are Alan Matthews and Will Human who were on the Finance and Works and SDBC Management Committee. Matt Martin volunteered to sit on the Finance and Works committee but added that he does have planning commitments.</p> <p>Proposed: Charlie Rich, Seconded: Martin Watts “that Matthew Martin is appointed to the Finance & Works committee”. All in favour</p> <p>Iain Sturdy suggested that he would ask the new appointed members if they were interested/willing to sit on any of the sub committees.</p> <p>Alan Franks volunteered to join the SDBC Management Committee.</p> <p>Proposed: Andrew Gilling, seconded: Wendy Welland “that Alan Franks is appointed to the SDBC Management Committee”. All in favour</p>	<p>Resolution 1</p> <p>Resolution 2</p>

	<p>Alan Franks asked to be removed from the scrutiny panel for the SRA. Liz Scott volunteered to take his place. Proposed: Wendy Welland, Seconded: Martin Watts “that Liz Scott is appointed to the SRA Scrutiny Panel”. All in favour</p>	<p>Resolution 3</p>
<p>9. Finance Report</p>	<p>9.1. Maggie Hammond reported that the bank reconciliations had been successfully carried out up to the end of March 2023.</p> <p>9.2. At the end of the financial year the amount still due was £9800.34. 71 of these accounts are in credit for £1024.72 and 1779 accounts with a zero balance.</p> <p>In total there are 154 accounts due totalling £10,825.06. One of the overdue accounts has a total of £2057.98 outstanding. At the end of the previous year the total due was £4613.44 of which £3690.65 is still outstanding.</p> <p>The £4613.44 of 22/23 balance outstanding represents just under 2% of amount to be collected. One account is a constant non payer and has been taken to court but still not paying. Maggie Hammond praised the team for their hard work.</p> <p>Bob Clapp asked what happens with the person who is still not paying their bill. Maggie Hammond replied that it may be possible to get a county court judgement. But there are costs and time involved in this process. Bob Clapp mentioned that failure to pursue payment may send the wrong message to other rate payers. Alistair Hendry asked if it was cost effective to chase the debt if people are still not paying?</p> <p>Maggie Hammond stated that the rate demand does state that any ratepayer who is experiencing difficulties with paying their rates can contact the office and agree a payment plan. Members queried whether it would be possible to sell the debt or escalate to debt recovery, it should not be left outstanding. Maggie Hammond replied that the bailiffs that we have used in the past are very good at collecting outstanding debts but they are restricted when it comes to anyone mentioning mental health issues for example and they will not cross the line. Charlie Riches asked if a report with options could be brought to the next meeting. Maggie Hammond would do so when time allowed.</p> <p>Iain Sturdy added that write offs had previously been discussed and it was agreed to leave all accounts as live and keep the debts on the books. Andrew Gilling pointed out that the Board is a statutory body and wondered if the Councils Enforcement Team might be able to assist. This was noted.</p> <p>9.3 Regarding the Internal Audit Report Maggie Hammond asked that the report be taken as read. Substantial</p>	

	<p>assurance has been given on each item. Page 5 shows everything that has been checked.</p> <p>Martin Watts (MW) queried the 10.9% increase in drainage rates which Maggie Hammond replied it is a typographical error by the auditor and she would ask them for a revised copy.</p> <p>MW also queried the 3 aged debts in the report, Maggie Hammond pointed out that these are not drainage rates but debts owed for other reasons.</p> <p>Martin Watts also queried the £5000 due to be written off. Maggie Hammond said that it has not been written off yet, IDS agreed and said the issue is still with Ashfords Solicitors. Martin Watts insisted that the debt had been written off and was asked at which meeting this would have been agreed. He was not able to remember when. Maggie Hammond agreed to check previous minutes and report back.</p> <p>Matt Martin referred back to the issue of non payment of rates and asked if some kind of marker could be used to liaise with other authorities who are having the same issues. MH said this may cause problems concerning GDPR and she would not be happy to share rating information.</p>	
<p>10. Engineering & Operational Report</p>	<p>10.1 Matthew Wall asked the paper be taken as read. He referred to item 4.3 for the contract award in the Axe area.</p> <p>CLOSED SESSION Item on maintenance contract award</p> <p>OPEN SESSION</p> <p>10.2 Bob Clapp referred to item 6.4 on the report - Rob King updated the meeting – Butleigh Moor needs adjustment and further work will be carried out shortly Structure UA25 has not been completed due to bad weather Item 6.1 In the report Dog Leg Ditch should read Lewis Drove. Summer penning has been delayed due to wet conditions and requests from rate payers and members. It will be taking place in the upper area today and all other areas by the end of April.</p> <p>6.8 Work at Stubbington Rhyne Sluice has been delayed due to the weather conditions.</p> <p>Martin Watts asked who had instructed the work to be carried out at Butleigh Rhyne. RK explained the process. Martin Watts stated that Lester Durston had visited the site and the work had already been done. RK said it has now been taken out again and explained the current situation. IDS confirmed the operations procedure and that the site was unsatisfactory and needed fixing. An engineer was unavailable so the operations team did as much as they could. The system is working at present and will remain until a permanent solution can be arranged. Martin Watts said he had not actually seen the site but had been spoken to by a Mrs Tucker. IDS pointed out that the small fixings are temporarily securing the water levels. RK reminded members that this was a very</p>	<p>Resolution 4</p>

	<p>poor structure which had not been managed well in the last 10 years but our intention is to put a suitable long term solution in place.</p> <p>Bob Clapp said the delay to summer pen needs to be discussed as it normally takes place on 1st April. The Operations Team need to talk to members to agree adjustment dates and if any members have a problem they should speak to either Rob King or Matthew Wall. Liz Scott asked if changes to the normal penning dates could be shared with members.</p> <p>MW said that this year had been particularly difficult due to unseasonable weather conditions.</p> <p>Andrew Gilling added that new residents are often unaware of how the system functions</p> <p>Martin Watts mentioned that Hartlake Bridge Door needed maintenance as it is inaccessible and had not been touched for 2 years. Rob King said he would investigate and make the necessary arrangements.</p> <p>10.3 Development Control – Virginie Martin(VM)</p> <p>Liz Scott declared an interest in Axbridge Moor Drove – 4th item on consents list</p> <p>Martin Watts stated that a lot of trees had been planted on Middle Drove. IDS said the operations meeting would discuss this item. Anthony Dowden had called last Friday to report the tree planting and IDS reiterated that Anthony is following the proper process for them to be moved.</p> <p>VM reminded the members that the process takes time however IDS reinforced the need to act on issues like these and asked that he would be grateful if any problems can be reported to the office.</p> <p>(12:10 Martin Watts left the meeting)</p>	
<p>11. Environment Report</p>	<p>11.1. Phil Brewin provided an update on floating pennywort control in Common Rhyne, near Bleadon. Control and eradication of floating pennywort in Common Rhyne was a priority for the Board as the consequences of it potential spreading through the wider system would be severe and very expensive to remedy. The problems caused by floating pennywort around Weston-super-Mare in North Somerset, showed how quickly it can spread if not controlled. Progress is being made at Bleadon and the IDB were already active on site this year. The aim is to eradicate floating pennywort at this site by 2026.</p> <p>Charlie Riches asked if there was any update on the potential use of a biocontrol. Phil Brewin replied that the test release of a weevil, that has been show to only eat floating pennywort, is progressing well and the results so far are positive. The</p>	

larvae of the weevil burrows into the stem of the plant, which will kill floating pennywort and suppress its growth.

11.2 PAB 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:

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

11.2. **Best Practice Operations Manual:** The Environment Committee had supported Phil Brewin's recommendation 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 for its maintenance work and provide greater clarity and confidence to officers and contractors of the standards and methods required in each area.

11.3. The Environment Committee also approved a set of criteria for prioritising updates to Water Level Management Plans. Trevor Whitcombe commented on the quality of the water that had been let into the South Drain. PAB asked him to have a discussion with him after the meeting.

<p>12. SRA Update</p>	<p>12.1 Iain Sturdy reported that the SRA had been mostly focused on the Parrett particularly the Soway project. Boards representatives have recently contributed to various meetings to investigate the best way to complete the project, whilst managing risk and cost.</p> <p>SRA have now decided that the EA will NOT be awarded funds to finish the Soway project and they will investigate other options to complete the work. This is not applicable to the Axe Brue but members should be aware of all risks associated with doing SRA funded work.</p> <p>The SRA budget has been approved for this year and their flood action plan is being reviewed and due to consult and be completed by the end of the year. Iain Sturdy advised members that it would be beneficial to members to attend any workshops they may be invited to.</p> <p>Wendy Welland asked how to get information regarding the workshops. Iain Sturdy advised that the SRA website has further information, which will also be available at the board's office.</p>	
<p>13. Policy Review</p>	<p>The Boards have a comprehensive set of Policies which help set the framework within which the Boards operate.</p> <p>Nick Stevens has prepared a paper with input from Maggie Hammond and Iain Sturdy which listed all governance and business Policies. Some of these policies have been in place for a long time and are overdue for review with members. Some more recent Policies have review periods which are unnecessarily short.</p> <p>The presented paper recommends revised review periods and proposes a timescale to prioritise and review the Policies. The paper was proposed for acceptance by the Board.</p> <p>Proposed: Liz Scott, seconded : Andrew Gilling “that the proposal is accepted” All in favour</p>	<p>Resolution 5</p>
<p>14. Correspondence</p>	<p>Iain Sturdy had been working with the EA regarding the recent flood recovery, an EA Flood Recovery Team was formed who attended a meeting in the office. Members found this helpful but are keen that improvements are put in place before autumn 2023.</p> <p>Iain Sturdy and Tony Bradford (Chairman of the Consortium and the Parrett Board) were invited to attend the Norfolk Flood alliance, to share their experience of the January 2023 flooding. They gave a presentation and listened to other presenters. There was much common ground with those present recognising the many challenges to be overcome.</p> <p>Through ADA, Iain Sturdy is being appointed to their Technical and Environmental Committee</p> <p>Jeff Fear (Chairman) reported that a SWADA meeting will be held at the Canalside on 18 May in the evening. He</p>	

	<p>hopes that tour can be arranged later in the year with the Lower Severn board</p> <p>EA plan to hold a meeting regarding the Bleadon Sluice but the date is still to be agreed.</p>	
<p>15. Any Other Business</p>	<p>Maggie Hammond advised members that the postal service in Highbridge has now changed to a collection at 9am each morning only and this will have an impact on correspondence times.</p> <p>The service provided currently is not good as there is no delivery every day. If members need anything posted they will need to advise the office in plenty of time. If email is at all possible it would be advisable to use it.</p> <p>Andrew Gilling formally proposed that all information concerning references to an employee's criminal record is removed from the minutes, approved by all.</p> <p>Regarding Mr Watts earlier query about infilling of ditches and unconsented work in Queens Sedgemoor. Iain Sturdy read a letter which had been sent regarding the unconsented work and asked if any other unconsented work is spotted please could members report it to the office.</p> <p>Alan Franks reported problems with Panborough Drain Main River maintenance and had noticed this was causing flows to go in the wrong direction towards Lewis's Drove. Could officers please raise this with Environment Agency. Iain Sturdy agreed to do so.</p> <p>Alan also advised that The Dog Leg Ditch issue is ongoing. Godwins will not pump water in a flood and the Board should have power to open the new sluices installed several years ago to help alleviate flooding. He also said that he thought it would be helpful if a non return valve could be put on the new outlet into North Drain. This was generally agreed to be correct and Iain Sturdy would add it to the work programme. Iain Sturdy asked Anthony Dowden to see Andrew Rowlands as soon as possible to arrange a meeting so the above matters could be discussed/agreed. Anthony will chase this up.</p> <p>Liz Scott raised a query about the water being pumped from the Axe which is keeping the Yeo high, this has been overtopping in places and running back into Bailiffs Wall. IDS will have a discussion after the meeting. Matthew Wall will investigate with Liz</p> <p>Charlie Riches commented that the attendance at the meeting was extremely disappointing. Iain Sturdy agreed that it is a problem and hoped when the new Council and appointed members are in place there would be better</p>	<p>ACTION AB/20230417/1</p>

	<p>attendance, it could be that information has not been passed to the right people. It will be monitored.</p> <p>Roger Keen queried the possibility of a hearing loop in the meeting room. Iain Sturdy agreed to investigate.</p> <p>Alistair Hendry confirmed that he had agreed to stay on the Board but had not yet received any details from the council. Iain Sturdy said that they had contact at the new Authority and expected all would be clear by the next meeting.</p> <p>Matt Martin added apologies for not attending previous meetings and queried whether the email addresses were correct? He asked whether the agenda could be electronically numbered to assist with navigating documents.</p> <p>Virginie Martin reiterated the previous point that if there are any issues to be brought to the boards attention you do not need to wait for the next meeting, please phone into the office or email directly LDC@somersetdbbs.co.uk with as much detail as possible.</p>	<p>ACTION AB/20230417/2</p> <p>ACTION AB/20230417/3</p> <p>ACTION AB/20230417/4</p>
Date of Next meeting	19 June 2023	
	The chairman closed the meeting at 13.10pm	

Annex:

A. Axe Brue Board – Table of Outstanding Actions

CHAIR.....DATE

AXE BRUE BOARD – TABLE OF OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

Action Number:	Action:	Actionee:
AB/20220411 - 1	To carry forward to a later date the investment group meeting	Clerk & RFO Ongoing
AB/20221109-02	To set up a meeting to discuss Stoke Moor Pumping Station.	Mr M Wall & Mr A Dowden and Mr Sturdy Ongoing
AB/20230130-01	To get advice from ADA about environmental expenditure and other environmental matters for the IDB1 form.	Mr P Brewin COMPLETE
AB/20230417/1	To raise a query with the Environment Agency concerning the maintenance of Panborough Drain	Clerk
AB/20230417/2	To contact Mr Andrew Rowlands to discuss changes to the engineering and operation of Dog Leg Ditch	Clerk/ Operations Manager
AB/20230417/3	To investigate the very high levels in the Yeo.	Matthew Wall/ Operations Manager
AB/20230417/4	To investigate the installation of a hearing loop in the Boardroom	Clerk/Health and Safety Officer