

MINUTES OF THE PARRETT INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD FULL BOARD MEETING HELD AT BRADBURY HOUSE ON 18 APRIL 2023 AT 14:30

Attendance:			
Elected Members: Tony Bradford (C) Barrie Bryer Stuart Kingham Mark Heywood John Perrin David Vigar Anthony Betty (VC) Roger Barrington Colin Passmore	Appointed Members: Cllr Mike Lewis Cllr Norman Cavill Cllr Mike Stanton Cllr Richard Morgan Cllr Julian Taylor Cllr Richard Wilkins Cllr Gwil Wren	Officers: Iain Sturdy (Clerk/CEO) Matthew Wall Maggie Hammond (RFO) Nicky Cornish Naomi Johnson Phil Brewin Virginie Martin	Public:
Approved Apologies:			
Will Barnard Roger Coombes James Winslade	Cllr Alan Bradford Cllr Mike Caswell Cllr Lance Duddridge Cllr Liz Leavey		
Non-Approved Apologies:			
Rebecca Horsington	Cllr Hilary Bruce		

Agenda Item:	Detail:	Action:
1. Attendance and Apologies	1.1 As per the register	
2. Items Additional to the Agenda	2.1. Maggie Hammond (MH) would like to talk about the postal service in Highbridge and the energy contract for Podimore Pumping Station.	
3. Declarations of Interest	3.1. As per the register of Members interest.	
4. Members of the Public to address the Meeting	4.1 None	
5. Approval of Minutes	5.1. It was agreed unanimously to approve the minutes of the meeting of 31 January 2023	

<p>6. Matters Arising and Review of Actions</p>	<p>6.1. Item 6 - the previous minutes noted that Cllr Stuart Kingham had not received a letter of thanks for his contribution to the Board. Iain Sturdy (IDS) acknowledged that other Members who had left the Board had received their letters but Stuart Kingham had not ceased to become a Member so this action was complete.</p> <p>6.2. Item 10 - IDS gave an update on the trees in the River Parrett saying he had spoken to the Environment Agency again who have started work on the Tone and are committed to removing all the trees but were beaten by high flows and weather so have not yet managed to complete the work. Roger Barrington queried whether any trees had a trunk diameter of 6 inches and if so how many years growth that was. Tony Bradford said they had been growing since the initial dredge in 2015 and the trees would be pulled out so they cannot regrow.</p> <p>6.3. Item 12 - Cllr Julian Taylor asked what the implications are of the EA not being awarded the full amount they bid for Maintenance in Wessex. IDS said the EA have been asked what work will not be done because of the shortfall in funding but they have not yet said. He said the Chair of the RFCC has written to all other RFCC Chairs and the Head of the EA to voice his concern about the ongoing trend of reduced maintenance but increased capital.</p> <p>6.4. Item 13 – Cllr Julian Taylor queried what the Board’s response was to David Jenkins letter. IDS said the Board would continue to engage with the EA saying there had already been an initial meeting with the new Manager for Incident Recovery, Andrea Summers. Cllr Julian Taylor added he had to move his furniture upstairs and they were warned if there had been another 1-2 days of rain they would have been evacuated. Tony Bradford added there was a de-brief after the flooding event regarding what went well and what went wrong but said there was no point in discussing it with no action so he would like another meeting. IDS said he would arrange another meeting as soon as possible</p>	<p>P/20230418-01 Arrange another meeting with the EA to discuss the flooding</p>
<p>7. Health & Safety Report</p>	<p>7.1. Naomi Johnson asked if there were any questions about the report and Stuart Kingham asked if the contractors are trained in any way. NJ advised that as part of the contractor’s risk assessment they must be responsible for their own first aid requirements and the Board carry out regular PPE checks on contractors.</p> <p>7.2. There was a question about the Solo Protect devices used by the Area Supervisors and NJ informed members how the devices were used and their different capabilities.</p> <p>7.3. NJ went on the advised members that the Board had recently purchased a defibrillator to keep in the Office. It was designed to be used by people who have had no training.</p>	
<p>8. Governance and Staff Update</p>	<p>8.1. IDS gave a staff update saying there was little change since the last meeting. The new Deputy Area Supervisors are doing very well and provide a good resilience for the future but engineering recruitment is a struggle and is</p>	

	<p>ongoing. The next step is to advertise in the 'New Civil Engineering' magazine, which most registered civil engineers receive, but this may be expensive.</p> <p>8.2. IDS told members he would like to arrange a visit during the summer months for all members, which will also be used for an induction session for the new members.</p> <p>8.3. IDS moved on to request new members for the sub-committees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SDBC Management Committee.- Current members are Tony Bradford, Barrie Bryer, Roger Coombes and Colin Passmore. <p>Proposed by Anthony Betty and seconded by Barrie Bryer for Stuart Kingham and Richard Wilkins to join the SDBC Management Committee. All in favour</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finance & Works Committee - Current members are Anthony Betty, Tony Bradford, James Winslade and Colin Passmore, Mike Caswell and Stuart Kingham. TB asked for three appointed Members to join. <p>Proposed by Anthony Betty and seconded by David Vigar 'for Cllrs' Mike Stanton, Norman Cavill and Gwil Wren to join the Finance & Works Committee'. All in favour</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health & Safety Committee - Current Members are Charlie Riches, Roger Keen, Noel Lukins, Dave Durdan, Will Barnard, Alan Bradford, Peter Harris and Chris Redding. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposed by Cllr Julian Taylor and seconded by Roger Barrington 'for Mark Heywood to join the Health & Safety committee' All in favour <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environment Committee current Members are David Tratt, Peter Clayton, Liz Scott, Will Barnard, Tony Bradford, Ian Dyer, Peter Burden, John Harris and Richard Westwood. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposed by Anthony Betty and seconded by Stuart Kingham 'that Cllr Julian Taylor and Gwil Wren join the Environment Committee. Tony Bradford will leave the committee but attend as needed as Chairman of the Board' All in favour. 	<p>RESOLUTION 01</p> <p>RESOLUTION 02</p> <p>RESOLUTION 03</p> <p>RESOLUTION 04</p>
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	<p>8.4. Tony Bradford (Chairman) discussed with members his thoughts on sub committees, saying since the Boards' Members have been reduced from 50 to 25 some of the Full Board meetings have nearly as many members turn up as the sub committees. Anthony Betty said that sub-committee meetings were okay if they were quorate and if members didn't attend or give their apologies they should be asked to leave. IDS added H&S and Environment Committees' do good work outside of the meetings and it is useful to have members to help feedback to the Full Board meetings. He also said if everything from these committees was discussed in one full Board meeting, it would end up being a much longer meeting.</p>	
<p>9. Finance Report</p>	<p>9.1. Maggie Hammond (MH) ran through the Finance report saying the bank statements have been fully reconciled up to the 31 March and everything was as it should be. She went on to discuss the Investment Group task & finish meeting saying members had been given a draft investment policy and there had been a lengthy discussion about it. There were some good ideas to come out of the meeting and she will get together with IDS and draft policy for the Board to consider further.</p> <p>9.2. MH updated members on the drainage rates saying the outstanding balance was £5297.11. She added that letters sent out in January to outstanding rate payers resulted in a further £3444.79 being paid which has left the Parrett Board in the best position of all the Boards. Richard Morgan asked how this compared to other Boards, MH said the Boards where different sizes so the income generated is different, but the Axe Brue had about 2% outstanding compared to 1.35% on the Parrett.</p> <p>9.3 MH went on to discuss the internal audit report saying the Auditors had given the Board a substantial assurance which is the highest assurance they can give. The report gives information about what the auditors have found which will help the members with the annual return in June when they will need to answer some questions.</p>	
<p>10.Engineering & Operational Report</p>	<p>10.1. Rob King updated members on summer penn saying it had been delayed due to an extremely wet March and asked members to contact him if there were any issues in their areas.</p> <p>10.2. Regarding maintenance RK said Dunwear Ponds has had a second desilt to prevent water from overflowing into local gardens.</p> <p>10.3. David Vigar said some landowners were not keeping up with their riparian maintenance. IDS added some land owners needed to keep water at a certain level due to their management agreements so it is difficult to get it right for everyone.</p> <p>Closed session for the consideration of the tenders</p> <p>10.4. MSW handed out tender papers to all Members and talked them through the tender process. He said there was</p>	

plenty of interest initially but only tenders for 3 areas were returned. They use a "Quality/Cost" scoring system to be fair based on price, capability and delivery. Bridgwater and Pawlett, RW15 & RW16, was recommended to be awarded to John Tucker & Son based on previous work in the area. West Sedgemoor, RW10, was recommended to be awarded to Bernard G Perry.

**Proposed by Colin Passmore and seconded by Roger Barrington 'to award RW15 & RW16 to John Tucker & Son and RW10 to Bernard G Perry'
All in favour.**

10.5. MSW moved on to the areas without tenders and reported that the previous contractor had declined to tender this time and no other contractors had submitted a tender for these areas. MSW advised that these areas needed to be re-tendered and advised that the Works Committee had agreed to extend the preferred working window by bringing forward the start time to June and extending the finish date to the end of February. The Committee believed this would make the work more attractive and encourage other contractors to tender for the work.

10.6. Tony Bradford said he was worried the Board was struggling to do core maintenance. Tony Bradford added that if the maintenance was done earlier, they might have to come back to do an extra cut later in the year. MSW agreed that this was a risk and added that starting in June could be unpopular with farmers who had uncut hay crops, especially in SSSIs where hay cutting cannot start until July. Colin Passmore supported pushing back the end date as well as allowing an earlier start. Gwil Wren asked if extending the maintenance dates would be consistent with the Board's obligations under the Habitat Regulations. Phil Brewin (PAB) expressed concern that extending the maintenance dates could have adverse ecological effects. Where there is a need to start channel maintenance early, it should be carefully planned and supervised, and methods need to be sensitive to habitats and wildlife. Working in winter can leave banks bare for many months, depriving protected species of habitat and cover. It can also cause disturbance to SPA water birds and damage soft ground. PAB advised the Board of the need to undertake an appraisal of the proposed changes and the requirement on the Board to consult Natural England in regard to protected species and SSSIs. PAB also mentioned some areas, like Stockland, are sensitive to autumn rainfall and maintenance should be programmed before catchments become wet at the end of the summer. Colin Passmore remarked that the main issue in Stockland was EA tidal outfalls blocked with silt.

**Colin Passmore proposed and Stuart Kingham seconded 'to re-tender and open the maintenance window by a month either end from June to February and to give the Finance & Works Committee delegated powers to award the tender'
All in favour**

RESOLUTION 05

RESOLUTION 06

<p>11. Environmental Report</p>	<p>11.1. Phil Brewin updated members on the action from the previous minutes which was to draw up a programme for problem areas of water flow in the King's Sedgemoor area. A map has been prepared by Nick Lockyer the Area's Supervisor and a site meeting with Board Members had been held. The outcome of the site meeting was agreement to develop a desilting programme for viewed rhynes in the area and to arrange a meeting with Natural England to show them the problem, gain their support for the work and also their help in encouraging much needed work on the private ditch network. John Perrin asked how is it decided when to do a desilt. PAB replied that the need for desilting was determined by the local Area Supervisors and reported that Bernard Perry had last year removed silt from problem areas on West Sedgemoor. John Perrin agreed there had been a big improvement in the standard of maintenance on West Sedgemoor compared to the previous contractor.</p> <p>11.2. PAB provided an update on floating pennywort control in Parrett area. Control activities at three pennywort sites under IDB management in the Parrett have already started this season. The aim is to eradicate floating pennywort at all of these sites by 2026. Control and eradication of floating pennywort is a priority for the Board as the consequences of its 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. Julian Taylor asked about if the use of a biocontrol control weevil was safe. Phil Brewin replied that there had been 10 years of lab tests to make sure the weevil would only eat floating pennywort. The test release of a weevil in 2022 was progressing well and the results so far are positive. The larvae of the weevil burrows into the stem of the plant, which will kill floating pennywort and suppress its growth.</p> <p>11.3. PAB provided 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</p>	
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	<p>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>11.4. Best Practice Operations Manual: The 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 provide greater clarity and confidence to officers and contractors of the standards and methods required in each area.</p> <p>11.5. The Committee also approved a set of criteria for prioritising updates to Water Level Management Plans.</p> <p>11.6. Richard Morgan left the meeting at 16:15.</p>	
<p>12. Somerset Rivers Authority Update</p>	<p>12.1. IDS gave an update on the SRA saying the Sowey project will now not be finished this year by the Environment Agency. He said the SRA and partners are extracting information from the EA and they are looking at other ways of procuring work and hopefully provide some savings. IDS said the Phase one project will be finished but it needs to be done in the most cost effective way. Mark Heywood queried what the reason was for them not finishing the work. IDS said the EA and their delivery partner have exceeded the budget several times and to date the SRA has funded the overspends. The estimate for the last piece of work which is 1.8km of bank work on the King Sedgemoor Drain was in region of £1.35 million and it was decided that this was not a good use of public money. An audit of the project accounts has been requested to understand how the overspends have occurred and with a view to learn lessons going forward.</p> <p>12.2 IDS said the SRA Enhanced Works Program has been approved and funding is in place for the year. He added that within the Enhanced Works Program there is further funding for maintenance dredging and water injection dredging on the Parrett. Although the five year contract with Van Oord has completed IDS will negotiate with them to see if its possible to extend the contact for at least another year. Roger Barrington asked whether the river Tone will be dredged. IDS said the Tone will be done when necessary but will have to be completed from the river bank with a long reach excavator. This will probably</p>	

	<p>have to be separate work to the work the IDB do for the SRA</p> <p>12.3 IDS said the SRA Flood Action Plan is being updated this year and there will be a series of workshops available for people to attend.</p>	
13. Policy Review programme	<p>13.1 IDS asked Members to take the Policy Review Programme paper as read and said in summary the Management Team feel it is very important to have the necessary policies in place for the Board and Staff to operate to and for them to be reviewed periodically.</p> <p>Proposed Anthony Betty and seconded by Stuart Kingham ‘to accept the recommendations set out in the paper’</p> <p>All in favour</p>	RESOLUTION 07
14. Correspondence & engagement with other authorities	<p>14.1. IDS said he feels it is important to remain active and engage with other organisations. He has recently been involved with ADA and has applied to be appointed onto the Technical and Environmental Committee at ADA.</p> <p>14.2. IDS said Tony Bradford and himself had recently spoken to the Norfolk Strategic Flood Alliance where they gave a presentation on the lessons learned from the recent flooding. This was well received.</p> <p>14.3. Tony Bradford told Members he went to Warwick for a ‘Keep the Rivers Flowing’ summit.</p>	
15. AOB	<p>15.1 MH advised Members the post box in Highbridge now only collected post at 9am so an item requested one day would not be in collected until the following day.</p> <p>15.2. MH also told Members the standing charge for electricity at Podimore had risen to £15.76 per month.</p> <p>15.3. TB asked Members if they would prefer evening meetings. He asked them to think about it and report back at the next meeting. He added most Drainage Boards supply food instead of a fuel allowance.</p>	
16. Date of next meeting	<p>16.1. Dates of the next meetings are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health & Safety – 2 May • Environment – 6 June • Finance & Works – 13 June • Full Board - 20 June. <p>The Meeting closed at 17.00</p>	

Annex:

A. Parrett Board – Table of Outstanding Actions

CHAIR.....DATE

**ANNEX A TO
PARRETT BOARD MINUTES
DATED 18 APRIL 2023**

PARRETT BOARD – TABLE OF OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

Action Number:	Action:	Actionee:
P/20191105-2	To convene a Task & Finish Group Meeting to review Electoral Districts. IDS has asked Nick Stevens if he could arrange this meeting as soon as possible and he has already drawn up draft papers with options.	Special Advisor – Ongoing, Had been arranged but was cancelled due to members availability
P/20211026-02	To complete a review of the Strategic Review of Plant Machinery and Manpower. This is a long-term action.	CEO – Ongoing
P/20230131-01	To draw up a programme for problem areas of water flow. To be discussed in PAB's Environmental report.	Clerk, Contracts Manager & Ecologist COMPLETE
P/20230418 - 01	Arrange another meeting with the EA to discuss the flooding	Clerk COMPLETE