

**MINUTES OF THE SDBC ANNUAL MEETING HELD AT THE CANALSIDE ON 08 MAR 22**

<b>Attendance:</b>			
<b>Elected Members:</b> Mr R Barrington Mr T Bradford (Chair) Mr P Betty Mr B Bryer Mr T Bush Mr A Franks Mr J Fear Mr J Harris T Munt Mr R Parsons Mr C Redding Mr D Tratt Mr D Vigar Mrs W Welland	<b>Appointed Members</b> Cllr A Betty Cllr A Bradford Mr P Burden Cllr J Cato Cllr J Cousins Cllr B Filmer Cllr A Gilling Cllr K Haverson Cllr M Healey Cllr S Hearne Cllr S Hogg Cllr J Keen Cllr R Keen Cllr S Kingham Cllr L Leavy Cllr M Martin Mr R Mitchell Cllr M Murphy Cllr L Scott	<b>Officers:</b> Mr I Sturdy Mrs M Hammond Mr P Brewin Mr M Wall Mr R King Mr A Dowden Mr A Sherwood Ms S Purchase Mr L Durston	<b>Public:</b> Bridget Petty Graham Quarrier Simon Bunn
<b>Apologies:</b>			
Mr B Clapp Mr N Cole Ms R Horsington Mr P Kingcott Mr A Mead Mr C Passmore Mr C Rowe Mrs P Thorne Mr M Wall	Cllr C Gibbons Cllr P Harris Cllr W Human Cllr M Lewis Cllr A Matthews Cllr J Pay Cllr K Pearce Cllr J Tonkin Cllr R Westwood Mrs D Yamanaka		
<b>Non-Attendance:</b>			
Mr E Adams Mr W M Britten Mr N Cole Mr R Coombes Mr C Durston Mr B Gray Mr M Heywood Mr B Letts Mr N Lukins Mr A Mead Mr G Plaister Mr C Pyke Mr R Stitch	Cllr S Bridger Cllr M Caswell Cllr P Clayton Cllr N Cottle Cllr M Crosby Cllr P Costello Cllr C Cronnelly Cllr D Dash Cllr D Durdan Cllr I Dyer Cllr A Harley Cllr A Hendry Cllr A Hendry		

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Mr R Triggol Mr M Watts Mr J Winslade	Mr R Garner Cllr L Gibson Cllr M Lewis Cllr L Perry Cllr C Riches Mr C Webb Cllr J Woodman		
<b>Agenda Item:</b>	<b>Detail:</b>	<b>Action:</b>	
1. Attendance and Apologies	1.1. Tony Bradford welcomed everybody to the meeting saying it was nice to meet face to face.  1.2. Attendance & Apologies as per the above.		
2. Items additional to the Agenda	2.1. No additional items requested.		
3. Declarations of Interest	3.1. Cllr Andrew Gilling – anything relating to Ashfords LLP.		
4. Members of the Public	4.1. No members of the public were in attendance to address the meeting.		
5. Approval of Minutes	5.1. The minutes were shown on the screen.  5.2. Iain Sturdy (Acting CEO and Clerk) confirmed that the Action regarding Bleadon Sluice had been superceeded and we have met with Bristol Water and the EA and the current position is that Bristol Water have accepted that it is their structure but they are currently promoting a scheme to undertake works to the downstream structure at Brean Cross rather than to replace Bleadon Sluice.  5.3. The Minutes of the SDBC AGM of 12 Mar 21 were accepted as a true and accurate reflection of the Meeting.		
6. Matters Arising	6.1. No matters were raised.  6.2. There were no outstanding Actions.		
7. Chairman's Report	7.1. Tony Bradford (The Chair) reported: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It was lovely to meet in person. It has been a difficult couple of years (Brexit, Covid and issues in Europe) and over the last year we have lost some members of staff, which we have not yet replaced. We should thank the remaining staff for their hard work and</li> </ul>		

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	<p>commitment to keep us functioning as a public body in water level management.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Across all Boards there seems to be 'tittle tattle' between members which is not pleasant for officers and staff and even some Board Members.If you have a problem or question, Iain is always available and I am available and the chairs from the other boards who are available. All things can be resolved and we can work in a more harmonious place. Please talk with the Acting CEO or chairmen.</li> <li>• We have lost our CEO, Roger Burge and this matter is highly confidential. Please have trust in the Chairmen and Acting CEO and please do not keep asking questions that we cannot answer because of the confidential nature of this matter.</li> <li>• This year was the first year we outsourced all of our maintenance to outside contractors and the Chair was pleased to say this has gone very well. The review of plant, machinery and workforce has gone well but there are a few tweaks that are needed and we shall be consulting with staff to allow them to express their views to see if we can improve things going forward.</li> <li>• We are going to have to embrace other ways of working going forward and work in a more holistic way.</li> <li>• The red/white diesel issue has been resolved, however with the cost of fuel at the present time the price differential may not have been so much. It is not known when prices will stabilise however our budgets were based on the possibility of needing to use white diesel so we are adequately funded for the coming year. Further clarifications from ADA are being received. At the current time any works that has any elements of agricultural benefit can use red diesel. Matthew Wall agreed to share with Board Members the latest letters from ADA/ Defra.</li> <li>• The other thing that will change next year is the coming of the Unitary Authority. This should not affect the work of the IDB's</li> </ul>	<p><b>New Action: SDBC/20220302- 01 Contracts Manager</b></p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Chair said he was please to hear the proposed tidal barrier is moving in the right direction, which will greatly improve Bridgwater and the surrounding districts flood protection. We should congratulate Sedgemoor DC and the EA and all the parties involved for realising the project that we never thought would happen.</li> <li>• The Chair mentioned an article within The Farmers Weekly about malaria and the impact of having too much stagnant water within the summer and it is something to bear in mind going forward</li> <li>• Matt Martin asked if the Consortium had considered entering a buying group with any other large organisation to mitigate the impact of the current crisis in Europe. The Chair replied that this would be up to the individual contractors to get together.</li> <li>• Chris Redding wants to introduce fairness for all of our contractors and mentioned the NSLIDB fuel escalator. With the increased cost of a barrel of oil and no fuel escalator our contractors could be out of pocket by tens of thousand of pounds. The Acting CEO said we need to be working with our contractors and our contracts allow us to be flexible. He didn't know the answer at present but we would work to get the best for all concerned. Matt Wall (Contracts Manager) further confirmed that we are not in the business of putting contractors out of business and there will be some negotiation in the near future. The maintenance doesn't start until May and we are mindful of the rising costs and managing the impact on the Boards. John Cato suggested that an action was recorded to investigate possible resolutions to this issue rather than continue the debate at the meeting.</li> <li>• Janet Keen asked if there had been any thoughts about the future structure of the Internal Drainage Board as after 01 April 23 there would be 2 precepting bodies. Had any thought been made to their structure or if there should be one body with a wider remit. The Acting CEO said that most people</li> </ul>	<p><b>New Action:</b>  <b>SDBC/20220302-02 Acting CEO/Chairman</b></p>
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	<p>involved in the local authority were more concerned about the May elections at the present time. Somerset County Council was given permission to set up a shadow precept and the SRA is not set up under law the same way that the Drainage Boards are but it is a permission from Defra that allows the County to raise that precept. At this point there are bigger concerns for the new council to work through.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Barry Bryer said that last year we had the highest rainfall for a number of years and we had very little flooding. Everyone involved in it; EA, SRA or Drainage Board should be congratulated.</li> <li>• In response to further questions the Chair asked all Members to have trust in the Chairs and officers that the best had been done for the Drainage Boards in relation to the departure of the CEO. The Acting CEO added the following three points; The best interest of the Boards has been satisfied, we are fully legally compliant and we are within our salaries budget for the year.</li> </ul>	
<p>8. Climate Emergency, adaptation and future strategy.</p>	<p>8.1. Bridgett Petty (NSC Portfolio Lead) gave a presentation sharing some of the work NSC have been doing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A committee report on climate change from the previous summer covered 61 risks and opportunities.</li> <li>• Some of the high priorities are, risk to soil health, risk to crops, livestock and commercial trees, risk to supply of foods and goods, and risks to failure of the power system.</li> <li>• In February 2019 the Council declared a climate emergency</li> <li>• NSC looked to see where they have an influence.</li> <li>• Some actions have already been taken to reduce CO2 emissions.</li> <li>• Transport is one of the highest emitters of CO2 for North Somerset and this figure has not been reducing over the past 3 years.</li> <li>• Getting to zero emissions is very hard.</li> <li>• Working with communities to share ideas.</li> </ul>	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The IDB's will be a crucial part of the local flood risk management policy as well as part of the Peatland Partnership.</li> </ul> <p>8.2. Questions were invited from the floor.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• David Vigar – this country will need to produce more food of its own in the current crisis. Bridget agreed that there are lots of things broken in our food chains.</li> <li>• Bridget confirmed that the change to LED street lights had made a significant difference to energy consumption.</li> <li>• Steve Hogg with the expansion of Bristol Airport we know how little we can rely on Government Policy keeping pace with the environmental change – what should the IDB's be doing collectively and individually? Bridget confirmed IDB's do have a part to play by reviewing their behaviours, changing where we spend our money. The Acting CEO said the IDB's need to look at how they operate and what our function is around business efficiency. Our services on the ground are harder to change and we need to engage with Defra and other partners.</li> <li>• Phil Betty – the information supplied was NSC only, have NSC been working with the Consortium? Bridget could only talk about NSC work but understands that the Environment Committee is across all 3 boards and ADA is there to help all IDB's</li> <li>• Alan Bradford – It is a good idea to plant trees and should be tied up with the Queen's Jubilee. The presentation a month ago would look totally different to what it will look like in 2 months time due to the war in Ukraine.</li> <li>• Roger Keen – One of the biggest requirements for reduction in CO2 is transport. Electric vehicles are not as green as initially thought and the clever money is on hydrogen vehicles. Is there any serious people looking at hydrogen being used in agricultural vehicles? Bridget agreed to meet with Roger after the meeting to discuss this.</li> </ul> <p>8.3 The chair thanked Bridget for her presentation on a big topic. The only thing he didn't see was research into tree diseases which he felt was becoming an increasing problem.</p>	
9. Bridgwater Barrier and Downstream Defences Update	9.1. Graham Quarrier (EA) gave a presentation on the Bridgwater Tidal Barrier.	

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- There is a well established outline design and a forward thinking vision for the Tidal Barrier.
- The big milestone that has been passed in the last few weeks is getting the Transport and Works Act Order, which is required because the Barrier interferes with a navigatable waterway. There have only been three of these orders in the last 10 years across the whole country.
- Charged with recording the history at the site. There are some flues from Brickmaking kilns found underground, which has created a lot of local interest
- Need to ensure that the silt regime is unchanged and doesn't vary anymore than it does at the present time.
- We have wrapped up what we want to do to the tidal banks downstream, strengthening the primary banks.
- Building the barrier itself will start in 2024.

#### 9.2 Questions were invited from the floor.

- Chris Redding – will the sea water go upstream after installation? Graham advised that the barrier will be shut on big tides only.
- Phil Brewin – asked for reassurance regarding the ongoing commitment to downstream banks. Graham said that the whole business case was comprehensive and includes maintaining all of those banks.
- Phil also asked what the operation life span of the barrier would be. Graham advised that the life span is 100 years and expect a major refurbishment around 50 years time.
- Stuart Kingham – with shipping coming up as far as Dunball will silt formation alter in any way? Graham replied that it shouldn't do it will be monitored.
- Andrew Gilling – will the interest in the Severn Barrage have any impact on the Bridgwater Barrier? Graham replied 'not as yet, as the option is further up the Severn.'
- What modelling assumption has been used in regard to sea levels? A plan for 1.5m rise in sea levels over the 100 years.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• David Tratt – After the 2013/14 flooding de-silting has become important in the tidal links for the SRA. Why are they going to keep the structure open so much bearing in mind that all the other river outlets have structures on them on the Somerset coast which exclude tidal silt. Graham advised that this had been discussed quite a lot and the problem is you just move the silt down stream and it will then interfere with navigation.</li> <li>• Iain Sturdy – the drainage boards promoted operating the sluice to exclude tidal silt in the early days of the project but could not persuade the EA it was necessary, it had been accepted that it was more important that the structure was built and built in such a way that if the need arose it could be operated in a different way.</li> <li>• It was queried that after storm Eunice most of the water came down through the Sowey is that correct? Phil Brewin confirmed that it is quite common on early spring tides for sluices to be operated to manage the potential for over topping.</li> <li>• John Cato – There has been huge amount of work into getting where we are and our congratulations go to Graham and his colleagues in getting this far.</li> </ul> <p>9.3 The chairman thanked Graham for his presentation and congratulated him on this huge achievement.</p>	
<p>10. Acting Chief Executive/Director of Operation's Report</p>	<p>10.1. Staffing update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Acting CEO/Clerk shared a slide that showed the current staff structure with various roles highlighted in red to show vacant and compromised posts (doing 2 or 3 jobs). It showed that staff were under considerable strain but the core business is being delivered.</li> <li>• There is a general advert for recruitment.</li> </ul> <p>Tony said it is clear that we are understaffed.</p>	

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	<p>Matt Martin – does there come a time when it just isn't viable anymore? Iain commented that we are doing core business, staff are supporting each other and we work through it. We do need to do 'Review 2' and look at what we have learnt since the review, look at how we need to value our staff, how we can up-skill our staff, what we can offer to new recruits so we get to the position where we have a fully populated structure.</p> <p>Bridget Petty – have you advertised for the new CEO yet and have you looked at benchmarking pay? Tony advised that benchmarking was taking place and we will advertise ASAP.</p> <p>Tony also confirmed that the ditches are still being cleaned and he is proud to say that they have been cleaned in a timely and good fashion.</p> <p>Chris Redding – Is it a question of not paying enough? Is Hinkley Point having an effect? Tony confirmed we are where we are and are addressing the situation. Iain added that there are things that can be done such as looking at the roles we have and how we can up-skill them and add value to what those people do.</p> <p>Phil Betty – You only need one chief to run the show. He Chair confirmed that the Chairs and Vice Chairs would be getting together to look at ways forward.</p> <p>10.2 Operations and Maintenance – will be discussed in detail at the Board meetings. In summary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The maintenance has been fully externalised and has been successfully undertaken</li> <li>• Budgets have been approved for 22/23</li> <li>• Project programme - we will be working on the ring fenced reserves.</li> <li>• We are still engaged with the SRA and still delivering projects. Another year of the water injection dredging has been completed with 1 more year to go on that contract.</li> </ul>	
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	Tony reiterated what has been said about the Parrett Maintenance Dredging and that we would like a rolling programme. There will be an article in the local papers about successful dredging and it would be nice for there to be an article in the ADA gazette about our work on dredging.	
10. A.O.B	10.1. It was commented that there has been some dredging in Nailsea recently but have noticed the fields flooded for a long time and not draining like they used to. In the last few storms we have lost some tress. Can the drainage board talk with farmers about planting some more trees in a way that will not effect the Rhynes from being drained? Tony said that it is a fine balancing act and the weight of water is having an impact. He suggested that it goes on the Board's Agenda.	
10. Date of Next Meeting	<p>10.1. The RFO commented that The SDBC Environment Committee is on 5<sup>th</sup> April 22, the Health &amp; Safety Committee on 3<sup>rd</sup> May 22 and the SDBC Management Committee on 5<sup>th</sup> July 22 and the date of the next Annual General Meeting would be published in due course but was expected to be in Mar 2023.</p> <p>10.2 Tony said that he was adamant that the Parrett Board incorporates all of the sub committees into the main Board Meeting on one afternoon so that every member knows what is going on. He felt that sub committees meant that people felt they were just agreeing to decisions that had already been made and people were losing interest.</p> <p>10.2 Andrew Gilling said that staff are our biggest asset and thanked all the staff.</p>	

Annex:

A. SDBC AGM – Table of Outstanding Actions.

CHAIRMAN..........DATE 14-3-23.....

**ANNEX A TO  
SDBC ANNUAL MEETING MINUTES  
DATED 08 MAR 22**

**SDBC AGM – TABLE OF OUTSTANDING ACTIONS**

Action Number:	Action:	Actionee:
SDBC/20220302-01	Share the latest letter re red diesel with all Board Members	Contracts Manager
SDBC/20220302-02	Investigate possible solutions to the rising inflation and our maintenance contracts	Acting CEO

