

**MINUTES OF THE AXE BRUE FULL BOARD MEETING HELD AT BRADBURY HOUSE ON
MONDAY 19 JUNE 2023 AT 10.30**

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

Agenda Item:	Detail:	Action:
1. Attendance & Apologies	1.1 Apologies as per the above Attendance List.	
2. Items additional to the Agenda	2.1 There were no items additional to the agenda	
3. Declarations of Interest	3.1. Martin Watts declared an interest in any discussion relating to Mr Attwell. 3.2. Cllr Nick Cottle said he was related to the Hawkins and Attwell families. 3.3. Jeff Fear advised his grandson worked for J D Pope.	

<p>4. Members of the public to address the Meeting</p>	<p>4.1. Mr A Dowden addressed the meeting thanking the old Axe and Brue Boards which he was part of first as Clerk then as CEO before they amalgamated. Anthony Dowden pointed out that he had worked for the Drainage Board for nearly 40 years and wanted it noted that he did not resign but merely gave an indication that he wanted to finish in September.</p>	
<p>5. Minutes of Axe Brue Full Board 17 April 2023</p>	<p>5.1. The minutes were signed as a true and accurate reflection of the meeting.</p> <p>Proposed by Andrew Gilling and seconded by Wendy Welland</p> <p>5.2. Martin Watts queried 5.1, saying IDS stated Mr Attwell had extended the gateway and he questioned what size pipe Mr Attwell had used. IDS clarified the issue had not been discussed because Martin Watts had to leave the meeting early and gave him the opportunity to raise the issue with Members now. Martin Watts asked IDS again what size pipe was used and whether it was consented to which IDS said he could not say what size pipe was used and it was not consented. Martin Watts asked what action was taken and IDS said they had written to Mr Attwell to warn him not to infill without consent as this was the action decided in a subcommittee of appointed and elected members formed to discuss the issue. Martin Watts said that was no good as it was affecting the adjoining neighbours' property and Mr Attwell had infilled further parts of the ditch to which IDS said this would be a separate issue. Jeff Fear asked Martin Watts if he would like another site meeting to discuss the new infilling to which Martin Watts said it was pointless. Cllr Susannah Hart said it was not pointless because if all people get is a warning letter they will do whatever they want. Martin Watts asked whether he would get a discount on his drainage rates because he has an increased risk of his land flooding but IDS said that is not something the Board will do. IDS drew the discussion to a close saying if Martin Watts has further information they will arrange a second meeting to see what the impacts are and bring the findings back to the Full Board and act proportionally in accordance with IDB powers</p> <p>5.3. Liz Scott asked what the protocol is with informing of ditch infilling and IDS responded saying historically the IDB only enforced on viewed rhynes but over 10 years ago with the resolution of the Boards they now enforce on all ordinary watercourses within the Boards area. However , enforcement has to be proportionate ranging from education and discussion at one end of the scale to full enforcement at the other.</p> <p>5.4. Martin Watts asked if there was any news from Ashfords regarding Stoke Moor Pumping Station. IDS said the advice received is quite complicated and Ashfords will come to the subcommittee meeting to discuss it.</p> <p>5.5. Roger Keen asked if IDS has had a chance to look into getting a hearing loop. IDS said that he had and the cost</p>	<p>Resolution 01</p>

	<p>was not too much but they hadn't gone any further with it but it was an ongoing action.</p>	
<p>6. Matters Arising</p>	<p>6.1. AB/20220411-01 – To carry forward to a later date the investment group meeting. IDS said all three boards have met and the outcome was without doubt everyone was risk adverse and investments should be low risk. He added that he has discussed the policy with Maggie Hammond (MH) and it is a good risk adverse policy.</p> <p>6.2. AB/20221109-02 – To set up a meeting to discuss Stoke Moor Pumping Station. IDS said as discussed in 5.4 it is ongoing. Jeff Fear briefed the new Members on the action saying – it is about a pumping station that was sold to a former member of the Upper Axe Board who wants to convert it into a dwelling but there was a covenant put on it restricting development. IDS added the question is whether the Board relinquish the covenant to allow the new owner the freedom to use it as they wish. Jeff Fear called for volunteers to sit on the Task & Finish Group to discuss the issue. Cllr Susannah Hart, Cllr Nick Cottle, Charlie Riches, Roger Keen and Cllr Bob Filmer will form the new committee.</p> <p>6.4 AB/20230130-01 Reporting on Environmental Expenditure in the AGAR. Complete</p> <p>6.5. AB/20230417-01 – To raise a query with the Environment Agency concerning the maintenance of Panborough Drain. Alan Franks confirmed he has had a meeting with Matthew Wall (MSW), Martin Andrews and Dan Farthing from the EA. He said they agreed they would do some upgrading in the Autumn on an area that has not been maintained for a considerable length of time.</p> <p>6.6. AB/20230417-02 – To contact Andrew Rowlands to discuss changes to the engineering and operation of Dog Leg Ditch. IDS said this is ongoing. Martin Watts commented that in recent heavy rain the peat factory didn't flood. Alan Franks said he thought that was due to recent works on peat workings behind the factory. Alan also commented that parts of Oak Drove had recently been raised by private land owner. It would be good if that could be done along its full length. There was discussion about trying to understand Godwins long term plan and the associated difficulties.</p> <p>6.7. AB/20230417-03 – To investigate the very high levels in the Yeo. Liz Scott said that it will be looked at in the Autumn.</p> <p>6.8. AB/20230417-04 – To investigate the installation of a hearing loop in the Boardroom. Discussed in 5.5.</p> <p>6.9 Martin Watts mentioned that he had asked about employee's criminal records at a previous meeting but said there was nothing in the minutes. Jeff Fear said Andrew Gilling had proposed that be redacted. There was some</p>	

	<p>discussion about DBS checks whilst working around children. Jeff Fear brought the discussion to a close by saying the Board will take advice from their solicitors.</p>	
<p>7. Health & Safety</p>	<p>7.1. IDS asked Members to take the report as read and said he was very pleased there was a comprehensive H&S report within the papers. There are good processes in place where any accidents or near misses are reported, investigated and action taken as necessary. He added although there looks to be a lot of near misses he actively encourages reporting so they can act accordingly to reduce the risk of something similar happening and becoming an incident.</p> <p>7.2. Andrew Gilling asked who was responsible for the H&S of contractor's employees. IDS said everyone has a responsibility saying as the client the IDB have to identify and communicate any hazards we are aware of and this is done by way of a pre-works risk assessment provided to the contractor so they can advise us of how they will deal with the hazards. IDS added all contractors are actively monitored during the work and also they must be on the Boards Approved Supplier List so they must have shown competence in H&S to make it onto that list.</p> <p>7.3. Martin Watts asked why it's the same contractor who keeps getting windows damaged and he queried whether the machine (a spearhead) was suitable for the job. IDS said all incidents are investigated and they have not identified any failings in the machinery but they have identified failings in the information given to the contractor. Martin Watts said there never seems to be any problems with the tractors with a hedger on the side it always seems to be this particular machine. He added it seems fine cutting the banks but when there is a hedge it seems a bit dangerous. IDS said it was a good point and he would investigate the suitability of the machine. There was further discussion about how serious the incident could have been if debris had flown onto the Motorway. Which is why we are now working with National Highways on a suitable safe system of work before any other work is undertaken adjacent to the motorway channels.</p>	
<p>8. Governance & Staff Update</p>	<p>8.1. IDS gave a staff update, saying the new Deputy Area Supervisors are very good although the NSL DAS has left due to personal reasons. The Business Services department has two vacancies filled, that of Business Services Manager and Ratings Assistant but are currently recruiting for a Reception/Admin Assistant but the biggest burden is Engineering staff. IDS has found an external provider for engineering with CALM Engineering. He took a proposal to the F&W committees to appoint CALM for the foreseeable future until we are able to source our own Engineers. The F&W committees have approved the proposal.</p> <p>8.2. Martin Watts asked whether Bradbury House had facilities for disabled people. The meeting was informed that there</p>	

	<p>are facilities for the disabled; there is a lift to the 1st floor, a ramp to the ground floor corridor and a disabled toilet.</p> <p>Proposed by David Tratt and seconded by Roger Keen ‘to employ the services of CALM Engineering’ All in favour</p> <p>8.3. IDS informed Members that the new byelaws have now been confirmed by DEFRA and are therefore in operation.</p> <p>8.4. IDS said he was advised that appointed Member Cllr Matt Martin has advised the Council that he wished to resign his seat on the Board. And secondly Cllr Mike Murphy is also not available for Board business at the moment.</p>	<p>Resolution 02</p>
<p>9. Finance Report</p>	<p>9.1. MH ran through the account say the banks have been fully reconciled up to the end of May and everything is as expected. She advised that a Board Member checks through the bank recs and asks questions before countersigning the bank statements.</p> <p>9.2. MH told Members she would start with the AGAR report, Section 1 and said the internal auditors TIAA have sent a report which lists what they have looked at and reviewed. They have given a substantial assurance which is the highest they can give. MH advised there were two recommendations the first one was the scheme of delegations which haven't been updated for a little while and the second was about having a 5 year plan. This report should enable the Members to answer the questions from Section 1 of the AGAR. MH ran through the questions on page 12 of the report and the Board Members responded yes to all questions.</p> <p>9.3. MH talked Members through Section 2 the Accounting Statements for 2022/23. Roger Keen said they had been through the figures in detail at F&W and proposed accepting the figures</p> <p>Proposed by Roger Keen and seconded by David Tratt ‘to accept the recommendations’ All in favour</p> <p>9.4. MH ran through the reserves position which had been updated since the F&W meeting. She also updated Members on the drainage rate position saying the total received so far is £155K with £114k still outstanding. Second reminders will be sent at the beginning of July. There has been a problem with paying by credit card via the website which has now been resolved but the website link has been temporarily removed.</p> <p>Martin Watts asked MH when development land transferred from drainage rate to special levy. After some discussion MH advised it would be in the following year once it had been built on.</p> <p>Bob Filmer queried the accounting of SRA work. MH explained that SRA work is fully refunded to the Boad.</p>	<p>Resolution 03</p>

	<p>Bob Filmer also queried the budget line “Legal and Professional Services” which looked significantly higher than previous years. MH explained that it was a one off expense to undertake the necessary investigation into a challenge received about members code of conduct.</p>	
<p>10. Operations, Engineering & Environment Report</p>	<p>10.1. IDS advised Members that they have combined the Operational, Engineering and Environmental report and asked them to take it as read. IDS had asked the Environment Committee to work with Phil to ensure the Board were properly engaged and represented in the increasing number of Environmental initiatives locally and nationally.</p> <p>10.2. He said there had been some odd weather so far this year with wet spells which delayed summer pen and now it is very dry and we are struggling to get water to all those who need it. Please call through any problems to the officers and we will investigate.</p> <p>Regarding maintenance, IDS reminded members that we are now fully contracted and work was going well with a good spread of contractors across the Boards.</p> <p>10.3. IDS updated Members on Development Control saying we have developed a really good system to help us manage consent applications and that process is now almost paperless. We will now work to roll that out to planning consultation as well. Jeff Fear asked for a list at the bottom of the development control papers to show what the acronyms mean.</p> <p>Liz Scott asked whether planning permission or Land Drainage Consent had precedence. IDS advised that LDC would not remove the need for planning permission if that was required.</p> <p>10.4. David Tratt told Members about a development of three houses being carried out in Lympsham and he was concerned about the standard of the gateway which may cause an issue. Jeff Fear asked David to keep an eye on it and update the Board as necessary.</p> <p>10.5. Martin Watts asked why the structure at West Pennard was completely taken out when it was just the footbridge that had tipped over. IDS responded by saying the structure had to be removed to see what the problem was and after taking it out the structure was very poor with short piles that didn't go far enough into the bed. He added that it would be replaced but not in the same place due to the ground conditions.</p> <p>10.6. Phil Brewin updated the Board on the work of the IDB Environment Committee and thanked committee members for their involvement and help.</p> <p>10.7. Phil Brewin reported that the Board had received a proposal from FWAG for a short-term (one summer only) test of slightly high water levels in the South Drain area near Gold Corner. The land is owned and managed by Joe Stradling, a Drainage Board member. Will Barnard, who works for FWAG,</p>	

	<p>added that the scheme was part of Defra’s development of a new environmental payment scheme for farmers (ELMs). Will Barnard said during the early stages of the work they looked at the entire Parrett & Axe Brue area to establish viable places to conduct a trial. He said Mr Stradling’s block of land has a single tilting weir which he operates so they designed a trial which was as modest a change as possible to test the process of agreeing changes to water levels required by ELMs. FWAG would now like to formally agree the proposed change in water levels with the IDB. Phil Brewin added that there are likely to be similar proposals in the future from farmers interested in entering their land into the new scheme and he invited the Board to set out a procedure that officers can follow for assessing the suitability of such proposals. Phil suggested a site visit should be arranged for members and officers to meet with Mr Stradling to see how water is managed in this area and to help develop a procedure for approving any similar proposals that come to the Board in the future.</p> <p>10.8. Charlie Riches asked if FWAG had consulted with the surrounding landowners to find out what people think. Will Barnard stated that he thought this unnecessary as there would be no discernible hydrological impact outside of Mr Stradling’s land. Trevor Whitcombe raised his concerns about the impact on others. IDS said that in order to protect the Board it was still important to consult the neighbours on their concerns and that he would like to ask a group of members to meet Mr Stradling and his neighbours on site and report back to the Board with a solution that everyone can live with. Jeff Fear asked any Members who were interested in joining this group to contact Phil Brewin.</p> <p>10.9. Phil Brewin asked Members to note the rest of his report, particularly the important work on Local Nature Recovery Strategy which the new Council will be developing over the next few months and will be significant to the Board which is required to take part in the Strategy by the Environment Act 2021. It will also help inform the environmental actions the Board needs to identify in a strategic plan by the end of 2023 and delivered by the Board in coming years, as required by the Environment Act, and in order to achieve the Board’s commitment to enhance the natural environment, as set out in its recently updated Policy Statement.</p>	<p>Action: PB to arrange a site visit for interested members to meet with Mr Stradling and his neighbours to agree a way forward.</p>
<p>11. Wessex Water – Somerset Levels and Moors Weland Scheme, Shapwick</p>	<p>11.1. Lorraine Isgar and Sarah Williams from Wessex Water’s Biodiversity and Wetlands team gave a presentation on their proposal to develop an Integrated Constructed Wetland (ICW) near Shapwick, as part of Wessex Water’s obligations under the Water Industry National Environment Programme.</p> <p>11.2.Lorraine said this project has started because of the high phosphorous levels in the Somerset Levels and Moors and the high nutrient levels causes eutrophication and the decline in condition of the protected site. The aim of the project is to deliver an ICW to reduce nutrient concentrations (primarily phosphorus) and deliver wider environmental benefits in the Somerset Levels Ramsar site before the regulatory date of March 2025. Wessex Water has submitted a pre-planning</p>	

	<p>application and are looking to submit for full planning permission in August/September 2023 with construction currently planned to begin in May 2024 and completed before Winter 2024. Wessex Water will also be submitting an application to the Drainage Board for Land Drainage Consent and had been invited by Phil Brewin to present the proposal to the Board as part of this process.</p> <p>11.3.Lorraine asked Members if they had any questions. Trevor Whitcome said he thinks the scheme is being constructed in the wrong place as the main source of nutrients in the South Drain is from NE land in Shapwick Heath, which is pumped directly into the South Drain. Trevor also suggested the scheme will damage the peat and release CO₂ when construction begins. Lorraine responded by saying water quality monitoring had shown phosphorus concentrations in the local streams and rhynes to be well above the threshold required by NE for good ecological status and that the only peat in their working area is on the Hawk & Owl Trust land, which has been severely degraded by arable cultivation in the past. Also, by putting in the wetland it means we will have a higher water level to keep the remaining peat wetter.</p> <p>11.4. Andrew Gilling raised concerns that farmers were being unfairly blamed for nutrient pollution and suggested more focus should be given to removing phosphorus from washing detergents. Similarly, Mark Lunnon raised concerns about pollution from unregulated car wash businesses. It was noted that adding phosphorus to detergents had been banned in 2014.</p> <p>11.5. Wendy Welland asked how the phosphorous gets taken out. Lorraine said the way the wetlands work is a key process in sedimentation. Phosphorus is often bound up in soil and it's that settling out and the wetlands that reduce the flow and effectively it can build up. Also, plants can absorb it but at this stage they are not looking to harvest the plants to take it away.</p> <p>11.6. Charlie Riches said four years ago the Drainage Board were not talking about these topics but now Natural England would like us to be involved in research, interventions and monitoring. He suggests an item on a future agenda to discuss what capacity the Board is going to need to be able to respond and be a partner and engage in these discussions.</p> <p>11.7. Jeff Fear thanked both Lorraine and Sarah for their contribution to the meeting.</p>	
<p>12. SRA Update</p>	<p>12.1. IDS gave an update on the SRA saying there was a full meeting on Friday and keys things which came out of the meeting was a discussion around test and trails for water level management schemes and storage of flood water to reduce flood risk to properties. Also to maintain healthy Peat soils condition.</p> <p>Due to the levels of payment on offer it is likely that there will be a lot of interest in schemes like this in future</p>	

	<p>12.2. IDS said the Annual Memorandum of Understanding was signed by all parties, and the annual report was approved.</p> <p>12.3. The Environment Agency gave an update on the flood recovery from January saying they are making good progress around things that could have been done differently, done more quickly and any new things that could be done.</p>	
<p>13. Correspondence & Engagement with other authorities</p>	<p>13.1 No correspondence</p>	
<p>14. Any Other Business</p>	<p>14.1. MH said at the F&W meeting Martin Watts had raised the issue of the Chairmans allowance and the fact that it has not been raised for many years. Currently it is £1500 and was set in 2012. MH said there are many ways to increase the allowance but whatever way they choose they will have to write to the Minister to ask to increase it. Following general positive support for this it was resolved as follows.</p> <p>Proposed by Wendy Welland and seconded by Liz Scott 'to go away and consider the Chairmans allowance' All in favour</p> <p>14.2, Martin Watts asked a question 'he said he would like to know why Anthony Dowden was sacked. Jeff Fear responded to say he wasn't employed by the Drainage Board; he was a contractor. Martin Watts continued to say 'we are the lead Board why was he sacked on the 21st? IDS said I don't think Mr Dowden was sacked at all. Martin Watts asked Mr Dowden if he was sacked. Mr Dowden responded saying he indicated he wished to do 40 years of work at the Drainage Board until September. Jeff Fear said IDS and Anthony Dowden can have a private conversation and that he doesn't think it should be discussed in front of the Board. Martin Watts said it should be as a lot of the Board Members are not very happy about it. IDS said for the record Mr Dowden offered his notice in front of himself and the Chairman at the conclusion of the last meeting. Martin Watts said Mr Dowden wanted to do his 40 years and he has done a great service to the Board. He then asked why doesn't Martin Andrews get the sack as he swore at someone, called them fat and was found asleep all afternoon. He continued saying there was an Officer who came to the last meeting who lied to the Board about work that was being done and questioned whether he has been reprimanded. Jeff Fear again said if Martin wished to have a discussion about this it should be private. Martin Watts then said he proposed a vote to have Anthony Dowden reinstated. Jeff Fear said if that was proposed and it was carried there would be a number of resignations within the Board and the staff and asked if Martin Watts would propose that. Martin said he would but IDS said I don't think it is a proposal that can be made as the process has been correct. IDS asked if they should ask members of the public to leave the meeting so they could continue the discussion.</p>	<p>Resolution 04</p>

	<p align="center">Members of the public left the meeting</p> <p><u>Confidential session</u></p> <p>The meeting was declared closed at 13.39</p>	
<p>15. Date of Next Meeting</p>	<p>02 October 2023 – Finance & Works 09 October 2023 – Full Board</p>	

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 Sturdy Ongoing
AB/20230417-02	To contact Mr Andrew Rowlands to discuss changes to the engineering and operation of Dog Leg Ditch	Clerk/Operations Manager
AB/20230417-04	To investigate the installation of a hearing loop in the Boardroom	Clerk/Health and Safety Officer Ongoing