

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

Attendance:			
Elected Members: Will Barnard Roger Barrington Anthony Betty (VC) Tony Bradford (C) Barrie Bryer Mark Heywood John Perrin David Vigar James Winslade Rebecca Horsington	Appointed Members: Cllr Alan Bradford Cllr Hilary Bruce Cllr Mike Stanton Cllr Julian Taylor Cllr Stuart Kingham Cllr Liz Leavey Cllr Richard Morgan Cllr Gwil Wren	Officers: Iain Sturdy (Clerk/CEO) Nicky Cornish Naomi Johnson Phil Brewin Matthew Wall Rob King	Public: Vic Satchill Alison Greenhalgh B & M Goodland A Warren David Steer Tansy Steer Ms R Light
Approved Apologies:			
Colin Passmore	Cllr Mike Caswell Cllr Norman Cavill Cllr Richard Wilkins	Maggie Hammond (RFO)	
Non-Approved Apologies:			
Roger Coombes	Cllr Lance Duddridge		

Agenda Item:	Detail:	Action:
1. Attendance and Apologies	1.1. Tony Bradford (Chair) welcomed members to the meeting. Apologies from; Cllr Norman Cavill, Cllr Richard Wilkins, Cllr Mike Caswell and Colin Passmore. Also, staff members Maggie Hammond	
2. Items Additional to the Agenda	<p>2.1. Iain Sturdy (Clerk/CEO) explained to Members that the Boards operated with a Health & Safety Committee and there had been a recommendation from that Committee to raise Health & Safety up the agenda as it is an important for all Board activity.</p> <p>Proposed by Will Barnard and seconded by Cllr Anthony Betty 'to raise Health & Safety up the agenda' – All in favour</p> <p>2.2. Iain Sturdy (IDS) reminded Members to complete and return to the office their 'Declarations of Interest' forms. These should have been completed within 28 days of being appointed but there were still a few outstanding. IDS</p>	<p>RESOLUTION 01</p> <p>ACTION: P/20231018-01 Email DOI forms to Members</p>

Each Board is a statutory public body with responsibilities for flood protection, land drainage and the environment.
All are members of the Association of Drainage Authorities.

	<p>said he would email all outstanding Members with the blank Declaration of Interest form.</p> <p>2.3. Finally, IDS reminded Members of the charity coffee morning being held in the office on the 31 October for the Children’s Liver Disease Foundation and Ronald McDonald House.</p>	
<p>3. Opportunity for members of the public to address the meeting</p>	<p>3.1. Members of the public from Moorland and North Newton attended the meeting. Their spokesperson Malcolm Goodland from Northmoor Corner advised the meeting that he understands that Natural England (NE) are proposing to raise water tables on both sides of the railway line. There are rumours that NE are going to farm the land naturally and are going to enlarge a pond on Chadmead side of the moor with a view to increasing the water level on the moor. He said that since the floods of 2013/14 Somerset has been very lucky not to be flooded to the same extent again but added the lower the water is on the moor the longer the residents of affected areas get to stay in their homes. Mr Goodland would like to see the moors as they were before and that included abundant wildlife which doesn’t seem to be present now.</p> <p>3.2 Another member of the public, Rhona Light said they need to be careful about any changes that happen because there is a well-defined EA trigger system and changes would need to work with this and not impede getting water off the moor as this is vital to allow water from Currymoor to come across. She added the longer it takes to get water off of the moor the longer the A361 is closed and possibly in extreme situations the railway would flood as it had done before, and cut the South West off from London. She highlighted the political aspect of Moorland flooding again saying DEFRA would question why it happened again as there was a lot of money invested after the 2013/14 floods. Malcolm Goodland said they understand how all the trigger points work as they have toured the area to see what is going on but the EA have got pumps which are being stored at Bradney but may be needed to be used elsewhere in the country and if we get extra ordinary rain again what will happen?</p> <p>3.3. Cllr Julian Taylor added it was a major situation for people living in Moorland, Fordgate, Chadmead and Northmoor Corner who were all flooded out of their houses for over eight and a half months in 2013/14. There has since been a further emergency earlier in Jan 2023 where there were delays in getting pumps and generators to power the pumps. The trigger point system needs looking at as there was not a sufficient early warning. He continued by saying budgets have been cut by the EA and for the past two years there has been no flailing on the North Moor Main Drain in a field opposite where he lives which previously was flailed to keep water flow effective and this is common throughout the whole of the moor. He has been informed by the EA that it is his responsibility to maintain to the centre of Northmoor Drain and advised the meeting there had recently been an EA slew grab desilting this area which deposited the spoil in the field and he queried why</p>	

they could not have taken out the reeds at the same time and asked who has taken the decision to avoid maintenance.

3.4. James Winslade said rainfall is getting more intense and the EA need to be more aware and have pumps ready when they are needed. He said the trees are still in the main river and obstructing flow, and he first mentioned this two years ago. Also the confluence where the River Tone meets the Parrett is also silted up and causing an issue. Nothing seems to get done. IDS said he believes the removal of trees on the Parrett will be started by the EA this week.

3.5. The Chair intervened and said the meeting was digressing from what the members of the public came in for which was concern over storing more water on Northmoor and raising the water levels. He informed the meeting that since the last round of flooding there has been a couple of meetings with the EA to discuss the issues. He added Northmoor was the second moor after Currymoor that NE wanted to trial storing water on and these are two of the most critical flood areas in Somerset. In some ways they flood to reduce the risk of flooding in Taunton, Bridgwater and the surrounding villages.

Mr Steer commented that it was most important to ensure as little water as possible comes into Currymoor and Northmoor by keeping the Rivers Parrett and Tone well maintained.

3.6. IDS added the IDBs function is water level management, flood risk and drainage. In exercising those functions there are some other duties and Acts that the IDB must be compliant with and one of those is the Environment Act. As a regulator the IDB need to make sure any submissions made to them do not increase flood risk. There are ways to have environmentally friendly water levels alongside flood risk but it needs to be properly understood to make sure the proper measures including conveyance, capacity and safe storage are put in place. He said to the public he hopes they understand that the IDB do understand their concerns and will deal with them as a regulatory body. On managing flood risk generally, the key is conveyance, safe storage and flood water evacuation.

David Vigar asked whether the IDB can be overruled? IDS said the Act says consent is not to be unreasonably withheld but said it is not just the act of being flooded but also the anxiety of it being possible. Tony Bradford finished by thanking the members of the public for coming along to voice their concerns and said the IDB will do everything in its power that is legally possible to protect homes.

The Chairman reassured members of the public that the Drainage Board would do all it could legally to protect them from flooding

	<p>3.7. Cllr Julian Taylor asked for clarification on one of the slides showing activities by the Environment Agency – trees to be removed – Tony Bradford confirmed it was the trees on the main rivers of the Parrett & Tone. It was agreed to discuss the reduced maintenance standards and the impact on riparian owners e.g., Northmoor Main Drain, at the next EA meeting.</p>	<p>ACTION: P/20231018-02 – To discuss Northmoor Drain at the next meeting with EA</p>
4. Declarations of Interest	<p>4.1. As per the Register of Members Interest.</p> <p>4.2. Rebecca Horsington said she has been asked by FWAG to see if there is any interest to develop a Moor Association on Northmoor and it was a paid position.</p> <p>4.3. Will Barnard said he was developing a possible bid for one of the items of Phil Brewin’s paper.</p>	
5. Minutes of the Full Board Meeting held on 20 June 2023	<p>5.1. The minutes were unanimously approved as a true and accurate reflection of the meeting and were signed by the Chair.</p>	
6. Matters Arising and Review of Actions	<p>6.1. P/20230620-02 - Cllr Alan Bradford said it states that he says Council Meetings start at 5pm but they now start at 2-2:30pm</p> <p>6.2. Julian Taylor asked if there had been any response regarding the underfunded EA maintenance. IDS said the issue was picked up and acted upon by the Chair of the RFCC and it was noted that the EA had only received 63% of the budget they had bid for in 2023/24. He added the IDB had asked for a list of all the worthwhile projects that will not be done but there had not been a response yet.</p> <p>6.3. P/20191105-02 - To convene a Task & Finish Group Meeting to review Electoral Districts. IDS said this is ongoing but he plans to arrange it closer to the next election.</p> <p>6.4. P/20211026-02 – To complete a review of the Strategic Review of Plant Machinery & Manpower. IDS said this is on hold after his appointment but will be brought forwards as necessary.</p> <p>6.5. P/20230620-01 – To check the date within the April Minutes regarding the floods and subsequent dredging – IDS confirmed the dredging was actually was carried out in 2014.</p> <p>6.6. P202360620-02 - To report to the next Full Board meeting attendance information – IDS said he has checked the Good Governance Guide which states <i>'your IDB Membership is important and only very good reasons should prevent your attendance, if you are unable to attend you should contact your Clerk with an apology and an explanation; if you fail to attend any meetings of your IDB for 6 months your Membership ceases unless the absence is due to illness or some other reason approved by the IDB'</i></p>	

	<p>and he added that continued absence is not helpful to the running of the Board. Tony Bradford said that he thinks it is only Full Board meetings and it is at the Chairs discretion but added that it is important to contact the Board with a reason. Cllr Hilary Bruce said she remembers from the last meeting there was some discussion about the timing of the meetings as some people work so evening meetings would be helpful. She added that a poll with some options of times could be sent to Members.</p> <p>6.7. P/20230620-03 – To ensure that the list of outstanding board schemes be made available at the next Full Board meeting – IDS said after a hiatus of delivering an engineering program the Boards have appointed consultants to provide engineering services. He then updated Members on progress.</p>	
<p>7. Health & Safety Report</p>	<p>7.1. Naomi Johnson asked Members to take the report as read.</p> <p>7.2. NJ said there had been some staff training but more notable there was an induction for new Members and current Members who wanted a refresher.</p> <p>7.3. The lone worker devices which NJ showed Members at the previous meeting was now being used by the Area Supervisors and was working well.</p> <p>7.4. NJ told Members the updated H&S Policy had a slight change to the structural diagram and requested the Board approve the signing of the H & S Policy.</p> <p>Proposed by Cllr Anthony Betty and seconded by Cllr Stuart Kingham ‘to approve and sign the H&S Policy’ – all in favour</p> <p>7.5. NJ informed Members that at the H&S Committee meeting it was agreed to appoint a Chair for a term of three years rather than at the start of each meeting. As this is a change to the TOR she is bringing it to the Full Board for approval.</p> <p>Proposed by Cllr Anthony Betty and seconded by Cllr Gwil Wren ‘to approve the Terms of Reference with amendment’ – all in favour</p> <p>7.6. NJ informed Members that the building had had a couple of water leaks during the heavy rain. Scaffolding has been erected at the front and back of the building in readiness for the roofer to start work.</p> <p>7.7. Finally, NJ updated Members on accidents and near misses, saying there had been four incidents and one near miss since the last Full Board meeting which were in summary:-</p>	<p>RESOLUTION 02</p> <p>RESOLUTION 03</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An Area Supervisor had fallen into a watercourse, he was fine but there was an investigation ongoing. • A waterpipe was struck by a contractor whilst they were flailing – this has been resolved and contractors have been reminded of the importance to check maps before starting work. • Another contractor struck a BT cable which was unconsented and had not been properly installed – BT were called out to repair the cable and they were told they needed Land Drainage Consent and that the cable should be properly installed. • An Area Supervisor struck a wasps nest whilst strimming, apart from a few stings he was fine but the opportunity was taken to remind the Area Supervisors to be vigilant and make sure all their health information was up to date. • There was also a near miss where a contractor had arrived on site before the A/S and found the gate was locked. Even though they pulled onto the side of the road there was a couple of lorries coming in opposite directions. And the contractor parked on the side of the road resulted in a near miss. Going forwards it has been recommended that all Area Supervisors who think that could happen in their area should make a plan for the contractors to pull over somewhere safe and contact the A/S to confirm access is clear. 	
<p>8. Governance and Staff Update</p>	<p>8.1. IDS updated Members saying CALM the engineering contractors were now in place and he was very optimistic that at the next meeting he would be able to report completion of designs and feasibility assessment.</p> <p>8.2. IDS told Members there was a new member of staff for the reception/admin position, Jody Farthing and she is fitting in very well. He had also received an application for the position of Senior Engineer.</p> <p>8.3. IDS ran through the consultation paper concerning the meeting calendar saying the time between the April and June meetings occupies a huge amount of time for both Members to attend and staff preparing reports, writing minutes and checking them not only for the Parrett Board but also Axe Brue, North Somerset Levels, sub-committees and The Consortium. The consultation paper is suggesting a case for whether quite so many meetings are needed or if the Board could trial going from four meetings to three Full Board meetings a year with a minimum of two Finance & Works meetings, one to agree the budget for the year and a second meeting to agree the accounts. There could also be open surgeries bi-monthly to discuss issues in more detail. The second part of the paper is to discuss the terms of reference from Finance & Works to Finance & Governance. Rebecca Horsington said she</p>	

	<p>would support this as a trial to save repetition at meetings and possibly amend the rule for attendance from six to nine months. There was some discussion between IDS & Members and then Tony Bradford said he would ideally like to have four Full Board Meetings and no sub-committee meetings. IDS's opinion on this was that these meetings would be very long meetings start at 10am and lasting into the evening. Cllr Anthony Betty said that at some meetings they discuss and agree on issues but due to not being quorate they then need to go through it again at the Full Board, so what is the point of sub committees.</p> <p>There were two proposals and IDS said they need to decide which proposal they wanted to take forward. The first proposal was the existing structure of four Full Board meeting and the second was 7C from the paper IDS which was to trial three Full Board meetings per year. It was decided to stay with the current structure.</p> <p>Proposed by Cllr Alan Bradford and seconded by Barrie Bryer to keep the meetings calendar the same - four Full Board meetings a year– 7 for, 4 against and 3 abstentions'</p>	<p>RESOLUTION 04</p>
<p>9. Finance Report</p>	<p>9.1. In Maggie Hammonds absence, IDS asked Members to take the report as read.</p> <p>9.2. IDS said there was a proposal to set the amount for drainage rate debtors to be summonsed at £50. There was discussion around how much it costs the Board to take people to court, to which IDS said it costs very little money but the issue is staff time and overall, it adds £105.75 to the ratepayers demand.</p> <p>Proposed by James Winslade and seconded by Stuart Kingham 'to set the rate for drainage rate debtors to be summonsed at £50' – all in favour</p>	<p>RESOLUTION 05</p>
<p>10.Engineering, Operational Report & Environment Report</p>	<p>10.1. IDS asked Members to take the report as read.</p> <p>10.2. Cllr Julian Taylor asked how the hydrometric summary compares to previous years when there was flooding. IDS responded saying at the end of the month it was lower than the long term average and lower than the same time last year.</p> <p>10.3. Tony Bradford told the meeting there was a crack in the structure at Monks Leaze which is one of the most important structures the EA operate and asked if IDS had heard anything about it. IDS replied to say the EA are aware and they are monitoring it.</p> <p>10.4. Tony Bradford also advised Members that the EA let the water go at King Sedgemoor and it went down about 3 feet in an hour. He said it would be good if the EA could let the IDB know when they open gates to release the water.</p>	

10.5. Matthew Wall updated the Members telling them that maintenance is 45% completed so far and the majority of the work is still within the contracted time. One of the contractors has been unwell recently and if they are unable to complete the work within the contracted time MSW investigate if other contractors can do the work.

10.6. David Vigar asked if the late harvest of maize is causing problems. MSW replied that it has caused significant difficulties as the contractor needs to come back once the maize has been harvested. The Area Supervisors are reporting reseeding straight away so there is no window to go in and do the work. He said the IDB needs to agree the approach on how to deal with it by either accepting the additional cost of the contractor coming back or instructing them to carry on through crops. Tony Bradford said other drainage boards compensate the farmers for damage to crops. IDS added that notice is served to undertake the maintenance and any valid claim would be compensated. Tony Bradford said the IDB have the right to maintain ditches within 9 metres with IDS clarifying there is a byelaw which says nothing shall be built, constructed or placed within 9 metres of a watercourse without the consent of the Board.

10.7. Rob King reported that the Deputy Area Supervisors are now trained to use angle grinders and polesaws and have been given practical training by the Area Supervisors.

10.8. RCK told Members that the EA have completed their maintenance at Dunwear Ponds and is now ready for the IDB to go in and flush the whole system through.

10.9. Finally, RCK said Thorney Pump has been tested and is ready to be deployed.

10.10. IDS reported that Colin Passmore wanted to raise the concerns about the shingle ridge at Stolford. He said he has spoken to the EA and they have responded to say they no longer move the shingle around mechanically since the defence improvements were made in Stolford. They have been to the site and do not have any concerns about the current situation however, the contingency plan is they will complete emergency repairs if necessary.

10.11. IDS said he hopes Members have noticed there is more information on the Engineering report than of late and this is due to CALM Engineering now working with us.

10.11. IDS showed Members a slide of the actions the EA have advised him they are doing on the flood recovery work discussed at the meeting with the IDB. In summary they are:-

- Desilting program on main drains are underway.
- Removal of trees in the Parrett commencing this week
- Review of trigger point documents

- An assessment will be done as to whether Vineys Bridge and Kitch Drove Bridge are an impediment to flow
- Mobilisation of extra pumping and reviewing options to deploy pumps.
- Producing a briefing note on the strategic attenuations in Taunton explaining where they are, what they are and how they operate.

10.12. IDS reported there was a good team working on this your Parrett maintenance dredging and the latest survey shows there is less material in the river than previous years but there is still about 20,000 cubic metres that can be removed from the Thalweg.

10.13. In the Environment Report, Phil Brewin reported on his action from the previous meeting around phosphates and the IDB purchasing their own equipment. This has been actioned and the Area Supervisors are now using them.

10.14. PAB gave an update on the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) and wanted Members to note that it was an important and statutory piece of work being done by the Council. The preparation of a LNRS is a key requirement of the Environment Act 2021 and the IDBs are required to contribute to the creation and delivery of the LNRS.

10.15. PAB said the Somerset Coast, Levels & Moors Partnership have recently invited the Drainage Board to join them. Natural England run the group and Iain and himself will represent the Boards and report back. James Winslade asked who was representing the landowners around the sites as decisions made would affect their land. PAB said he did not know but the group does need to be engaged more widely.

Proposed by Will Barnard and seconded by James Winslade ‘to join the Somerset Coast, Levels & Moors Partnership’ – all in favour

10.16. PAB said the Joint IDB Environment Committee has recommended the preparation of a best practice operations manual which is something many other Drainage Boards already have and discussed this with Members. He said it will help demonstrate the Boards have thought through their maintenance activities and are doing them to an acceptable environmental standard. Barrie Bryer said maintenance of SSSI should be completed by November but around his area they wait for winter pen to do it which is contrary to PABs report. IDS said this clearly demonstrates some of the constraints and tasks the Board has to work around to deliver a meaningful, legally compliant program of works. Therefore, PAB has requested to develop a best practice manual. John Perrin added that all moors are different to which PAB agreed and said it will be done on a moor by moor approach.

RESOLUTION 06

RESOLUTION 07

	<p>Proposed by James Winslade and seconded by Cllr Gwil Wren ‘to develop a Best Practice Manual’ – 17 in favour with one abstention</p> <p>10.17. PAB reported good progress has been made with floating pennywort control in 2023, due largely to the commitment and determined effort of Richard Vaux, an Area Supervisor for the Langport Area. Richard has been working across the SDBC Board areas coordinating control activities including the spraying programme. PAB highlighted the problems of controlling pennywort and the almost impossible task of eradication, and emphasised how important it is for contactors to use good biosecurity and to clean equipment before moving to new areas after coming into contact with pennywort.</p> <p>10.18. PAB discussed the new peat plan from Defra and the grants available for infrastructure improvements that the Board has expressed an interest in although there it is a tight timescale for delivery. Rebecca Horsington said she went to the ADA meeting in London with her role as South West Director and they spoke about the grant. She said although it was a challenging timescale it could be quite detrimental if the South West do not make an application. Each IDB can apply for a grant of up to £250k per board.</p> <p>Proposed by Rebecca Horsington and seconded by James Winslade ‘to put together an application for a grant from ADA’ – all in favour</p> <p>10.19. PAB mentioned joining the discovery fund alongside FWAG which would involve working alongside farmers and so anytime spent working on it can then be reclaimed.</p> <p>Proposed by James Winslade seconded by ***** ‘to be engaged in other bodies recovery bids with FWAG – all in favour</p>	<p>RESOLUTION 08</p> <p>RESOLUTION 09</p>
<p>11. Somerset Rivers Authority Update</p>	<p>11.1. Cllr Mike Stanton, Chair of the SRA discussed the workshop which took place in Long Sutton. The Flood Action Plan set up by DEFRA in 2015 was originally a 20 year plan but a lot has changed since it was set up so it is being reviewed after 10 years. IDS added he is working with the Technical Group on the enhanced works program, the additional projects the SRA fund and the IDB have put some bids in.</p>	
<p>12. Correspondence & engagement with other authorities</p>	<p>13.1. No special correspondence of note has been received.</p>	
<p>13. AOB</p>	<p>13.1. Tony Bradford suggested the next meeting was brought forward to 14:00 – all in favour</p> <p>The meeting finished at 18.00</p>	<p>RESOLUTION 10</p>
<p>16. Date of next meeting</p>	<p>Tuesday 30 January @ 14:00</p>	

Annex:

A. Parrett Board – Table of Outstanding Actions

CHAIR.....DATE

ANNEX A TO

**PARRETT BOARD MINUTES
DATED 18 OCTOBER 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 Bring forward closer to elections
P/20211026-02	To complete a review of the Strategic Review of Plant Machinery and Manpower. This is a long-term action.	CEO – Ongoing but on hold
P/20231018-01	Email Declaration of Interest forms to Members who have not yet submitted.	Special Advisor
P/20231018-02	To discuss Northmoor Drain with the EA	IDS