

**MINUTES OF THE NORTH SOMERSET LEVELS INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD
FINANCE AND WORKS MEETING AT BRADBURY HOUSE 17 JANUARY 2024 AT 14:30**

Attendance:			
Elected Members: Mr T Bush (C) Mr R Mitchell Mr C Redding	Appointed Members: Cllr J Tonkin Ms S Hearne	Officers: Mr I Sturdy Mrs M Hammond	Public:
Apologies:			
Mr P Burden Mr J Harris	Cllr C Hunt		
Non-Attendance			

Agenda Item:	Detail:	Action:
1. Attendance and Apologies	1.1 Apologies as per the above Attendance List.	
2. Items Additional to the Agenda	2.1. DEFRA Peat Grant – Phil Brewin’s application to the Lowland Agricultural Peat Grant, aimed at preserving peat, was successful. The bid was based on monitoring water levels for just under £100k for NSLIDB to install a new telemetry system. The challenge is to complete the project by March 2025. Calm Engineering and Giles Oliver (engineer) have been briefed.	
3. Declarations of Interest	3.1. No declarations at this time.	
4. Approval of Minutes	4.1. The Minutes of the Finance & Works Sub-Committee Meeting of 18 Jan 23 were accepted Proposed Tim Bush Seconded by Bob Mitchell that the Chair sign the minutes as a true and accurate reflection of the Meeting. All those at the previous meeting agreed.	Resolution 1
5. Matters Arising	5.1. NSL/20210323-01- To discuss options for adequate insurance cover of Sampson’s Sluice and propose a new way forward. Iain Sturdy reported that we are still waiting for final	Action NSL/20210323-01 ongoing

	<p>sign off. This is with Giles Oliver to finalise. Iain will check the status of the report.</p> <p>5.2. NSL/20220623-1 To calculate the suitable reserve position Maggie confirmed that the reserve position is a paper to be discussed at the meeting.</p> <p>5.3. NSL/20220623-2 To form a committee to discuss Hewish Office A meeting about the Hewish office has been held. Iain and Maggie to review usage which will feed into paper to come to the board.</p> <p>Chris Redding joined the meeting at 14:40</p> <p>5.4 James Tonkin asked who occupies the building. IDS confirmed it is a touch down place for the Area Supervisors and it is empty most of the time. Member support would be required for bringing about any change. James Tonkin confirmed that there are a number of hubs where there could be suitable accommodation. Maggie confirmed that the current cost for the Hewish Office, including other costs such as telephone and broadband is just over £24k. and that there is a significant amount of paperwork within the office that the Board will want to keep.</p> <p>5.5 James Tonkin asked if this paperwork could go into storage, as there are plenty of storage facilities in the area.</p> <p>5.6 Sandra Hearne said that we need to be aware of technology changes, where items are archived and then the technology to read it is no longer supported or does not work.</p> <p>5.7 Iain confirmed that the Board made a decision to archive through scanning. Once the documents have been scanned the paperwork has not been destroyed. There are a number of Board members and staff that have an attachment to a local facility. Members asked us to form a sub-committee which we did. They have asked me Iain and Maggie to write a paper and part of that paper is to review usage. The landlord has been kind enough to extend the lease. To have a touchdown spot if you are in the area is good. I think we will identify a need for a</p>	<p>Action NSL/20220623-2 ongoing</p>
--	---	---

	<p>local hub, it is just the economics of the Cider Barn and its costs being better than something else locally that may be smaller, cheaper but with less facilities.</p> <p>5.8 Chris Redding pointed out that “One Work” went bust.</p> <p>5.9 Tim Bush said that facilities at the St Georges development had been suggested but Tim thought that it was thoroughly depressing, with no room in the car park.</p> <p>5.10 James Tonkin said that considering the usage, perhaps the sub-committee should get together and make a decision. Tim Bush pointed out that the main push back comes from the Rhyne Supervisors and staff that had become used to using the Cider Barn in the past.</p> <p>5.11 Iain pointed out that should a decision be made to change the office a transition period would be needed.</p> <p>5.12 Chris Redding said that the cost of any alternative would be needed. Tim Bush said that any cost of storage would also be required.</p> <p>5.4 NSL/20230218-01 To investigate maintenance of gauge boards. A contractor has been appointed to put in place the level control so new gauge boards can be installed at 20 sites in the South Area and 15 sites in the North area.</p>	<p>NSL/20230218-01 Closed</p>
<p>6. Proposed Reserves Policy</p>	<p>6.1 Maggie Hammond (RFO) introduced her paper, explaining the different ways of calculating the ‘free reserve’.</p> <p>6.2 Chris Redding asked if insurance covers any of the risks associated with Sampson’s Sluice. Maggie confirmed that the kiosk and winding mechanism are covered but at the present time the whole structure is not insured. Once a rebuild value is obtained for Sampson’s Sluice insurance premiums will be sought and at that point a decision will need to be made about risk verses reward of paying an insurance premium.</p>	

Bob Mitchell asked if we could get insurance for the ancillary work required as a result of a failure. Maggie confirmed that she would have to ask and she is waiting for the rebuild value before asking the market for insurance for the structure.

Tim Bush said it was part of the sea defence of North Somerset so would assume that we could go to the EA. Iain said that if there was a failure, the way to approach it would be to deal with the immediate risk and this would be what we would want the reserves to cover. The rebuild and replacement costs would probably be subject to an application for Grant Funding, which would probably be well supported by the EA and North Somerset Council.

6.3 Sandra Hearne asked if staff were provided with GDPR training. Maggie Hammond was hoping to give staff a refresher course on GDPR as part of a new suite of training being provided to the Consortium, but we also have GDPR services provided to us externally.

6.4 Bob Mitchell asked if there was the possibility of having a loan that could be paid back over several years. Maggie confirmed that you could (Public Works Loan) but there would be interest as well as the capital to pay back.

6.4 Maggie confirmed that when the risk register is reviewed then the value of reserves required would be reviewed and reported to the board should the reserve policy need to change.

6.5 Chris Redding asked if the reserve were held separately or collectively. Maggie confirmed that it is the Board's reserves and will be invested until they are required.

6.6 Maggie confirmed that the recommendation is to build up the reserve over ten years and that over those ten years the risk register and therefore the reserve levels would be reviewed several times.

6.7 A conversation was had about the building up reserves in previous years from underspends. Iain pointed out that we should continue to be prudent with our spending, get to the end of the

	<p>year and surplus/savings would immediately go into reserves. If we have a plan to build the reserves up that would reduce the extent that we need to build them up in the future.</p> <p>6.8 Chris Redding mentioned wages and salaries for the staff, saying if we can't attract people because the salaries are too low and we should rethink the salaries we pay. Hinkley point are paying twice as much as we do. The North Somerset Area Supervisors are an aging workforce and its unlikely we would get people to shadow them on the salaries we are offering. Sandra Hearne said that she knew of people who had worked at Hinkley point for one week and then returned to their old job. Tim Bush pointed out that we have made efforts to fill the Deputy Area Supervisor post.</p> <p>6.9 Iain Sturdy commented that we have similar concerns. The Deputy Area Supervisors for the other two Boards are making good progress. The next grade up (Area Supervisors) is not a good salary. NB. We are now seen as offering T&C equivalent or better than EA.</p> <p>6.10 James Tonkin moved the motion to recommend to Full Board that the Reserve Policy as set out in the paper is</p> <p>'To Recommend to Full Board to adopt the Reserves Policy as set out in the Paper'</p> <p><i>Prop: James Tonkin</i></p> <p><i>Sec: Sandra Hearne</i></p> <p><i>All in favour</i></p>	RESOLUTION 1
<p>7. Finance Report</p>	<p><u>Quarterly Reconciliation of Bank Statements</u></p> <p>7.1. MH reported the bank statements have been reconciled up to 31 December 2023 with no issues to report</p> <p>7.2 MH talked through the current year spend as at the end of November 2023 and the forecast year-end position which is forecast to be a deficit of £37,501 mainly due to Board schemes</p>	

	<p>spending funds raised in previous years. MH said she had no concerns with this position. If this position materialised then funds would be added to the free reserves.</p> <p>7.3 MH moved to the proposed budget for 2024/25 and confirmed that this budget has been set without reference to the Reserve Policy paper discussed in item 6.</p> <p>7.4 The Administration total has increased by £17,593 with the largest change coming from the charge from the consortium for the support to NSLIDB. The Consortium budget was agreed at the SDBC Management Committee meeting on 12 December 2024. The NSLIDB salary figures shown were for a replacement for the Administration Officer who left in August 2023. A discussion around the need to fill this post was had. The meeting was paused whilst MH updated the proposed budget figures, removing the salary and oncosts budget. A new budget proposal spreadsheet was shared with the committee. The new increase in Administration budget is £2,224 and the new increase to the penny rate is 2.187% from 4.293% and results in a penny rate of 10.360. The recommendation to Full Board will need to include the fact that a budget for an Administration Assistant has been removed.</p> <p>7.5 Premises costs, an assumed increase of 6% for the premise rent and service charge has been added and the overall budget increases by £682. There is some background heating at the premises to ensure no pipes freeze and then burst and also maintain the paper records that are stored there.</p> <p>7.6 Maintenance costs have increased by £1,451 with a 6% assumption for inflation on the maintenance contracts, but due to the budget for 2023/24 being higher than required the overall increase for routine maintenance is 2.93% (£3,981). Looking at the non-routine maintenance spend so far in 2023/24 an increase in that budget line is proposed. Chris Redding is disappointed that there is not much spend against invasive weeds. Iain Sturdy confirmed that there are conversations happening about engaging specialist contractors for this work.</p>	
--	--	--

	<p>There is a new budget for Pipes/Culvert contributions to facilitate the policy of helping towards those costs within the consents process. Telemetry budget is reducing by £6,000 as NSLIDB have been successful in a bid to DEFRA, but funds are needed for the data.</p> <p>7.7 The Environmental budget has increased by £5,750 mainly due to adding a budget for Biodiversity Action Plan costs to allow for an update in bite sized chunks. There is a small increase in Water Level management Plan costs and a new budget for Water Quality Sampling to measure phosphates in the area.</p> <p>7.8 The EA precept has increased by 2%,</p> <p>7.9 Professional fees are remaining the same.</p> <p>7.10 Board schemes are proposed to increase to £50,000 an increase of £20,000. The Full Board meeting will see in the Engineering report a new table that summarises the projects and show the budgets. The £50,000 is for the whole Board and is not split between the areas.</p> <p>7.11 The proposed expenditure budget is increasing by 4.4%, £32,450</p> <p>7.12 The income budget has one major change in that more interest is being generated due to the higher interest rates and the budget is for an additional £13,142 for 2024/25. Tim Bush asked if the interest on the commutes sums is keeping up with the cost of doing the work. MH advised that at the current time the interest is around 4% to 4.5% but some of the sums are being released and therefore the ringfences amount is going down where others are not yet being released and the sum ringfenced is going up. Interest is added to the commuted sums.</p> <p>7.14 The balancing figure is the Rates and Levy total to get to a balanced budget after the changes made to the administration budgets is now proposed to increase by 2.66%</p>	
--	--	--

	<p>7.15 Tim Bush asked for a proposer to move the motion to recommend to Full Board that the version 2 of the proposed budget is accepted</p> <p>'To Recommend to Full Board that version 2 of the proposed budget is accepted.</p> <p><i>Prop: James Tonkin</i></p> <p><i>Sec: Bob Mitchell</i></p> <p><i>All in favour</i></p> <p>7.16 The current drainage rate position was shared with the committee</p> <p>As at 17 January 2024 the outstanding value was £5,397.18. At the end of the previous financial year £6,334.53 was outstanding.</p>	RESOLUTION 2
<p>8. Any Other Business</p>	<p>8.1. None</p>	
<p>9. Date of Next Meeting</p>	<p>9.1. Future key dates in the short-term were highlighted as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NSLIDB Full Board: 31 January 2024 <p>The Next Finance and Works Committee is scheduled for 5 June 2024 at 14:30</p> <p>There being no other business, Members and Officers were thanked for their attendance, and the meeting was closed at 15.49</p>	<p>:</p>

Annex:

A. NSLIDB F&W Meeting – Table of Outstanding Actions

CHAIRMAN.....DATE

ANNEX A TO

**NSLIDB F&W COMMITTEE MINUTES
DATED 17 JANUARY 2024**

NSLIDB F&W MEETING – TABLE OF OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

Action Number:	Action:	Actionee:
NSL/20210323-01	To discuss options for adequate insurance cover of Sampson’s Sluice and propose a new way forward Board consideration.	Board Officers - Underway
NSL/20220623-2	To form a committee to discuss Hewish Office	Clerk with write a paper – Ongoing