

MINUTES OF THE PARRETT INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD FULL BOARD MEETING HELD AT BRADBURY HOUSE ON 30 JANUARY 2024 AT 14:00

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

Agenda Item:	Detail:	Action:
1. Attendance and Apologies	<p>1.1. Tony Bradford (Chair) welcomed members to the meeting. He informed Members that Jeff Fear, Chairman of the Axe Brue Board has suffered an illness and that a former Member of the Parrett Board, Phil Betty has also been unwell. Tony Bradford said he'd seen him at the weekend and he is recovering and would also like to wish them both a full and speedy recovery.</p> <p>1.2. The Chair told Members there had been some problems within one of the Consortium Boards with member(s) behaviour and it has caused him great concern. Legal advice has been sought and a statement drafted to read to all Board Members although he has no concerns with the Parrett Members. However, he wished to share that statement with the Parrett Board.</p> <p><i>VERBATIM – In my capacity as Chairman of the SDBC I feel it is my duty to address you before the commencement of the meeting today as certain drainage board members give me cause for concern regarding their attitude to</i></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.

certain consortium staff. I would respectfully remind all members of the differences in their roles and that of their staff. All of us have equally important roles to play but it is our duty as board members to set the direction and strategy of our boards and it is the staff's duty to make that strategy a reality for their operational duties. The Consortium staff bring their professional qualifications and skills to their role providing their services diligently across all 3 boards in the consortium. It is not for us as members to interfere with their work, I am sorry to say that over several months, or a long period of time behaviour of certain members of a certain board is having a hugely detrimental effect on the staff and their ability to function effectively which is causing a negative atmosphere in the office and across all the 3 boards. IDB members are always expected to behave in a polite courteous manner and we are all subject to a Code of Conduct which is published on our website. The Code is based on the Nolan principles of public life. These principles which you must all adhere to include respect for others and specifically states you should respect the integrity and impartiality of the internal drainage boards statutory officers and its other employees. Our Code of Conduct states that we must treat others including our employees with courtesy and respect and we must not behave towards them in any way which puts them in conflict with their own Code of Conduct. I am sorry to say that although the Code of Conduct sets out what is expected of our members unfortunately this has not been happening with some of our dealings with some of our employees. The Consortium can ill afford to lose experienced staff as has happened in the past. I feel that if this attitude and behaviour carries on it will happen again, I urge you all to consider your actions at this time and the cost involved in complaints and recruitment is expensive and has a detrimental impact not only on the staff but the other 2 boards in the Consortium as well. We are entitled to healthy debate and we are entitled to ask questions of and challenge our staff if there is something we do not understand or disagree with but we must do this in a polite way respecting the professionalism and role of our staff. If you find you have a problem with a member of staff that you cannot resolve you must raise it with the chief executive. Some of the actions which I am aware of and which have led me to address you today have been personal and vindictive. This is not only happening in the meetings but continues in different ways after with the aim of destabilising members of staff. This behaviour has no place in our Consortium arrangement so I urge everyone manage not only their behaviour but other members behaviour which you might be aware of and to stop all future disruptive actions and comments whether in meetings or dealing directly with our staff. As I explained before I made that statement I have no concerns with this Board but to be fair to all the Boards in the Consortium they will all hear this statement.

Iain Sturdy (IDS) thanked the Chairman for his support to the staff.

	<p>1.3. Apologies from; Cllr Richard Wilkins, Cllr Lance Duddridge, Cllr Gwil Wren, Anthony Betty, Roger Coombes and Mark Heywood.</p> <p>1.4. Cllr Stuart Kingham mentioned persistent absenteeism and the Chair agreed there were a few names who have not attended several meetings and he thinks it is the duty of the Board to investigate this and take action if needed. He called for an action before the next meeting for a list of persistent non-attendees to be drawn up. There was discussion around this and IDS said there is an attendance spreadsheet so it would be fairly easy to do this but bear in mind many of the Members are non-paid volunteers.</p>	<p>ACTION: P/20240130-01 Draw up a list of persistent non-attendees to Board Meetings</p>
2. Items Additional to the Agenda	2.1. IDS said there has been none notified.	
3. Declarations of Interest	<p>3.1. The Chair declared an interest in Item 11.</p> <p>3.2. Will Barnard declared an interest in the Peat Grants Recovery Project and Landscape Recovery Project.</p> <p>3.3. IDS clarified that if Members have submitted their Register of Members interests, there is no need for them to repeat them at every meeting but if the conversation veers into an area where you feel you do have a prejudicial interest you should declare it at that point in the meeting.</p>	
4. Members of the public to address the meeting	4.1. No members of the public were present.	
5. Minutes of the Full Board Meeting held on 18 October 2023	5.1. The minutes were unanimously approved as a true and accurate reflection of the meeting and were signed by the Chair.	
6. Matters Arising and Review of Actions	<p>6.1 Matthew Wall pointed out that Rob King and himself were not listed as Officers on page 1 of the minutes</p> <p>6.2 It was noted there was no seconder for Resolution 09, page 10 in the minutes where James Winslade proposed PABs recommendation 'to be engaged in other bodies recovery bids with FWAG'. IDS said the recording was unclear so the Chair re-read 10.19 and Cllr Stuart Kingham seconded – All in favour</p> <p>6.3. P/20191105-02 – Review of Electoral Districts - This long-term action is ongoing. The Task & Finish Group will be formed nearer to the elections which are in 18 months time.</p> <p>6.4. P/20211026-02 – To complete a review of the Strategic Review of Plant Machinery and Manpower – IDS said this needs to be kept in the background. The Chair recommended this action is removed as the IDB works well with the outsourcing of work. If there are any problems with contactors then a Task & Finish Group will be formed to come up with a plan.</p>	

**Proposed by Barrie Bryer and seconded by David Vigar
'To remove this action from the table of outstanding
actions'**

RESOLUTION 01

16 in favour and 1 abstention

6.5. P/20231018-01 – Email Declaration of Interest forms to Members who have not yet submitted - Completed

6.6. P/2023 1018-02 – To discuss Northmoor Main Drain with the EA – Completed.

6.7. Cllr Julian Taylor asked whether the water level issue at Saltmoor was around the weed screen and the pump at Saltmoor being too high. IDS said that EA had been consulted but they haven't agreed to undertaking any changes. Cllr Julian Taylor said in the circulars they have sent locally they are referring to Northmoor as a reservoir and the implications are is that can be then used for storage of water. James Winslade said he agrees as he has also heard reservoir being mentioned in conversations and it is not a reservoir and never has been. There was some discussion around this with IDS saying there is a legal definition of a reservoir whereby embankments have to be maintained to a particular standard and there are priorities firstly in the interest of public safety and secondly a breach and inundation area. He does not believe they are considering Northmoor is a legal reservoir that stores more than 25k cubic metres of water and therefore has to be managed in a particular way. He thinks they are talking about flood operations where they consider it to be an area where water is stored. He sees the objections that David Steer and the residents of Moorland and the surrounding areas have made that it shouldn't be considered a storage area because it is an area which should be protected.

6.8 Rebecca Horsington said there was a meeting for the Northmoor Moor Association next Wednesday evening with the Northmoor land owners and some of the IDB Members will be attending to formalise arrangements for the Moor Association. The EA are going to come along and take questions. James Winslade asked whether there should be a Drainage Board Member there? IDS will speak to Claire Newell in the first instance and find out which meetings are likely to take place and work out what the IDB attendance needs to be as discussion is likely to focus on water levels. James Winslade added he wanted to set the Moors Association up for Northmoor and Saltmoor landowners because the RSPB and Natural England have meetings about their land but don't include them. IDS said when the Moor Associations are brought together and land owners involved are Drainage Board Members you need to be absolutely clear whether you are on that group as a land owner or a Drainage Board Member because the assumption will be you are representing the Drainage Board. Tony Bradford asked for whoever is organising the meetings to send an invitation to the Drainage Board and we can then appoint an appropriate Officer to attend.

<p>7. Health & Safety Report</p>	<p>7.1. Naomi Johnson (H&S Co-Ord) asked Members to take the report as read with key points as follows -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Deputy Area Supervisors have completed and passed their Lantra Extended Pole Pruner training. • Five members of staff will be attending a Lantra Mobile Works training course on 01 February. • Since the water ingress into the building late last year, the building has fortunately remained dry. We were unsuccessful in claiming back through our insurance company but the repairs remain within budget at the moment. Quotes are being sought to install an overflow system to prevent the gulleys becoming overwhelmed in future. <p>7.2. Cllr Stuart Kingham asked about the quotes for the roof repairs. NJ said she has had two quotes so far and she has gone back to them both to narrow down the stages of work within the quote to decide how much work will get done this year and whether any work which is not so much of an emergency can wait until next year.</p> <p>7.3. NJ's report stated accidents and near misses as follows –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Contractors flail struck an old wire fence and burst a hydraulic hose causing a small amount of hydraulic fluid to spill • A Traffic management report from Highways regarding the use of signage for mobile works • Two lorries narrowly missed a collision when passing a contract on the road. • Threatening behaviour by a landowner when an A/S was in attendance; and finally • A tree resting on an overhead power cable, reported by a contactor. 	
<p>8. Finance Report</p>	<p>8.1 Maggie Hammond (RFO) updated Members on the position at the bank saying they have been fully reconciled and there are no issues.</p> <p>8.2. MH's recommendation for the Minimum Reserve Policy is that the Board adopts a risk-based reserve policy with a plan to increase the free reserves over the next 10 years. She then handed over to Colin Passmore, Chair of the Finance & Works Committee (F&W) who commented on the reserve policy and the budget for next year. Colin Passmore asked for a proposer and a seconder.</p> <p>Proposed by Rebecca Horsington and seconded by Cllr Stuart Kingham 'to adopt the reserve policy and 2024-25 years budget'</p>	<p>RESOLUTION 02</p>

	<p>8.2. MH gave an update on the drainage rate position saying the outstanding amount was similar to last year and she has no concerns. She said about £1k of the outstanding amount was land in the unknown account and the highest single account outstanding was £577.81. Colin Passmore congratulated MH on rate collection and the concise presentation given to the F&W committee. MH thanked Colin and said rate collection is a team effort.</p>	
<p>9. Engineering, Operational Report & Environment Report</p>	<p>9.1. IDS asked Members to take the report as read and hoped Members noticed it was a largely expanded largely due to the fact there are more resources available. He said through this winter the Board has been able to be more reactive to unforeseen blockages and difficulties and the contractors work well and deploy within 24hrs of a problem being reported.</p> <p>9.2. IDS introduced Caroline Murray from CALM Engineering and said they have constructed a work program format to better update Members at meetings on programs of work, funding of work, funding available, what work will be done now and next year and finally outstanding work in future years.</p> <p>Some notable points from the paper were :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was the wettest December for 10 years and the 12th wettest since our records began in 1971. • The IDB were still running at winter penn levels in all areas. Poor weather has made managing water levels quite difficult. <p>9.3. Cllr Stuart Kingham asked if there were regular toolbox talks, Rob King (RCK) responded by saying there was a toolbox talk every 4-6 weeks when the Area Supervisors have their meetings and the latest one was preparing vehicles for winter weather.</p> <p>9.4. Matthew Wall (MSW) Contracts Manager gave an update on the maintenance saying Cary Valley is completed but the ground conditions at OMW are too wet to complete any more work. There is a little bit of work left on both the M5 Channels and at Wembdon and they are commencing work in Langport next week which should take about 2 weeks and then maintenance should be completed this year except for OMW. James Winslade asked whether they would start the maintenance of OMW early next year? MSW said he can have a look at it but there is obviously a schedule to work to but if they can they will get it done earlier if it is needed. The Chair said he thinks it is essential because if there is another wet year and the maintenance hasn't been done for two years it needs to be done as soon as ground conditions allow.</p> <p>9.5. The Chair said between Parchey and Sutton Corner there are two trees in the main rhyne and he asked if they can be removed as they are holding the water back and also they are right next to the road which doesn't look good once the maintenance has been done.</p>	<p>Action P/20240130-02 Removal of trees from viewed rhyne</p>

9.6. The Chair also told the Members that Wessex Water have had a main sewer break at Chedzoy Moor which they have repaired but the access track at Moor Drove used for IDB maintenance purposes has been damaged. MSW will contact Wessex Water and arrange a meeting on site.

9.7. Barrie Bryer said issues with the blocked culverts might be because the contractors are using a bradshaw bucket rather than flailing and this is causing more debris to flow through the water courses when flooding occurs. Tony Bradford said the contractors have been under pressure this year due to the weather conditions with MSW confirming that the tracked machines can go places the flail cannot.

CLOSED SESSION

9.8. MSW discussed the Parrett routine maintenance contracts and handed out the Tender Assessment paper to Members.

9.9. David Vigar asked how many contactors had chosen not to return a tender and how many new ones are there? MSW said Trevor Newton had decided not to submit any tenders for this work and there were also no tenders received for Stanmoor and Southlake so there is a recommendation in the paper to undertake the maintenance under an AC13 clause so these areas will be priced on hourly rates.

Proposed by Cllr Mike Caswell and seconded by Colin Passmore 'to approve and award the Parrett Maintenance & Operational Contracts as recommended within the Tender Assessment Paper' All in favour

9.10. The Chair said he would like to thank Matthew for the effort and work in putting the tenders together. The papers were then collected back in.

9.11. RCK informed Members that the Operation Technician vacancy had been filled by Charlie Ford who started on the 20 January. RCK added going forward Charlie would be a good assistant for himself, Matthew and Phil and he would also be learning some of North Somerset area.

9.12. Caroline Murray ran through the project program and asked Members to take her report as read. She said the Water Injection Dredging (WID) trial has been completed and everything ran to budget. The trial removing material from the shoulders went really well. The lessons learned were that the materials were a bit denser so it takes a little longer for the water injection to actually shift the material downstream but overall it was very successful. Rebecca Horsington asked if this was because it has been allowed to build up over 10 years whereas if it was done every year it would not be so dense and would be easier to flow. CM

**Action
P/20240130-03
Contact Wessex
Water to reinstate
Chedzoy Moor
drove**

RESOLUTION 03

said because it is consolidated material on the bank that is why it is hard to shift. IDS said they have recognised over the years that the build-up on the shoulder where the WID doesn't reach is over a number of years and some of it does become denser but also it is impacted by the roots knitting it together and this combination gives it different properties. It is much more effective than hauling it away and putting it on banks.

IDS added that to manage expectations it would be very unlikely the whole river would be able to be done in that way in one year and they would focus on pinch points and the greatest need each year.

9.13. CM said water Injection dredging has the least impact environmentally. James Winslade said there is a lot of silt amongst the reeds at Sam Gamblins Corner. IDS will prompt the Environment Agency (EA) to jet Sam Gamblins. Will Barnard enquired whether the surveying, analysis and WID is ongoing with the SRA programme. IDS said that it is a well-supported project and he said as long as the SRA is here and higher priorities are not identified he would hope they would still be able to deliver it for the Partnership. Cllr Mike Stanton, Chair of the SRA said there has been lots of feedback from residents up and down the Parrett saying this needs to be done. The SRA has to decide where to put its money and Rebecca Horsington, Tony Bradford and himself will be advocating for it to be an annual investment. James Winslade asked whether they jetted the outfalls between New House and Sam Gamblins as he has brought this up for the past two years. IDS said as far as he is aware they have not done that but they are directing the EA to the problem areas.

9.14. IDS said there is some modelling being done by the EA to have a look at the River Tone. He anticipates there will be a proposal to carry out some work on the River Tone in this coming financial year. James Winslade advised he had heard they are making the spillway at Athelney wider and deeper and he asked for some confirmation. The Chair said they would gather information before the next meeting. Cllr Julian Taylor said Bridgwater is undergoing a regeneration project and the river in Bridgwater has very wide banks and it would be an advantage to do something about the banks and take them back to their original structure. IDS said it was modelled after 2013/14 and the length that was improved and is subsequently maintained was the length that made the greatest difference at the time. It might be a good idea to take some new sections to be modelled to see whether it has changed. Finally, the Chair said 'would somebody remove the trees growing in the middle of the river. IDS will speak to the EA regarding removing the trees from the river.

9.15. CM said WS17 tilting weir and Pitney Rhyne culvert projects have both been awarded to contractors. The tilting weir has come in under costs and Pitney Rhyne is slightly over but within 10%. MH said the report shows

ACTION :
P/20240130-04
To prompt the EA
to jet Sam
Gamblins Corner

ACTION:
P/20240130-05
Speak to the EA
regarding
removing the
trees from the
river.

	<p>some underspends where jobs have been completed with funding leftover or a job which has been aborted and she asked for those funds which total £62,024 to be carried forward to the next year.</p> <p>Proposed by Cllr Stuart Kingham and seconded by Will Barnard to ‘carry forward £62,024 to the 2024/25 financial year. All in favour</p>	<p>RESOLUTION 04</p>
<p>10. Environmental Report</p>	<p>10.1. Phil Brewin (PAB) Ecologist presented his report from the Environment Committee held in Dec 2023, which included presentations from guest speakers about their work in Somerset and how it relates to the duties and activities of the IDB. The Environment Paper included summaries of the presentations.</p> <p>10.2. PAB, again, highlighted the importance of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy to the IDB, which is being prepared by Somerset Council. The Strategy will be a spatial plan for Somerset that will identify the most suitable areas to undertaking environmental improvements.</p> <p>10.3. PAB informed the Board of The Greater Sedgemoor Landscape Recovery Projects which has recently been approved by Defra for funding. The project is a flagship initiative within the Environmental Land Management Scheme. The areas it included are West Sedgemoor, Allermoor and Kings Sedgemoor which comprises about 5,000 hectares. Within this area there are protected sites buffered by a wider landscape and a large area of peat at the surface. So far there are 70 owners/occupiers signed up to be part of the planning phase.</p> <p>10.4. PAB informed the Board of a community led eel recovery project, which aims to halt and reverse the dramatic declines in eel numbers in recent decades. A range of activities are planned, including engagement with landowners, local communities, and schools. There will also be an eel conference on Glastonbury on 5th June 2024.</p> <p>10.5. PAB informed Members of recent grant award to the IDB from Defra to undertake works to update and extend the IDB telemetry networks and undertake infrastructure improvements in the King’s Sedgemoor area. The King’s Sedgemoor SSSI can become too dry in summer months and target water levels cannot be sustained. Work will be undertaken to restore water feeds to the site and improve connectivity and water control within the site.</p> <p>10.6. Barrie Bryer said the raised water level area when it was badly flooded was lower than the rest of the ground around it. Rebecca Horsington said it was just an observation but peat and the locking of carbon seems to be something everyone is loving at the moment but what has to be remembered is that all the ground is a flood defence and when talking about raising water levels it has to be respected because the environmental benefits of</p>	

	<p>capturing the carbon can be at serious detriment to the ground itself and also to the flood defence. Cllr Mike Stanton added a proper land use strategy is needed for Somerset and asked Members if he started a campaign would it be worth doing. David Vigar said there is a situation where a Two Mile Drove penn is 6 inches to a foot higher than it used to be. PAB said under the Water Level Management Plan they are trying to keep water off the bottom and he had spoken to Nick Lockyer (Area Supervisor) about it this morning and NL said the level was ok. David Vigar said there is a lot of water on top the fields and the bridges across to the fields have water touching them. The Chair asked if this could be looked at. Colin Passmore said this highlights that any raised water level area needs to be dredged regularly to allow fresh water into the system and to let water out when needed.</p>	
<p>11. Somerset Rivers Authority Update</p>	<p>11.1. IDS gave an update telling Members the IDB continues to be an active member of the SRA with Rebecca Horsington and Tony Bradford representing the Parrett IDB at meetings. He said the enhanced program for the coming year was approved and projects the Board will be doing with the SRA are a continuation of the Parrett maintenance dredging, continuation of the bank scraping shoulder work and a project to refurbish Cobbs Lease tilting weir which is currently on the reserve list but will be taken forward in the coming year. IDS told Members that the Board has taken on a piece of work to develop a project completion plan for the outstanding works on the King Sedgemoor Drain project. This has arisen because the EA were unable to complete the work, and the Board, encouraged by both IDB and SRA Members will put together a project completion plan to advise whether the work can be started in July 2024 or July 2025.</p> <p>11.2. The SRA have been consulting around the development of their new Strategy and Flood Action Plan. There have been several online sessions and the final SRA workshop is on the 9 February. A revised strategy would then be proposed to the full SRA meeting in March.</p> <p>11.3. IDS told Members that at the last SRA meeting the EA notified Members they were unwilling/unable to complete two further critical pieces of work which has put the SRA and Partners in a difficult position with about 1.8km of low bank and two important outfall structures to be completed. A member of the press was at the meeting and reported on the situation with an online report seeming to implicate the Drainage Board and particularly Tony Bradford as the landowner as one of the reasons why the project couldn't be undertaken. IDS said in summary Cllr Mike Stanton, the Chair of the SRA corrected the assertion at the Board Meeting saying it wasn't the land owners fault, the EA walked away and had the opportunity to do the work last year and because of internal bureaucracy and procedure they are now trying to promote the works when the site is under water and it is not possible to proceed. Unfortunately, the hardcopy of the Bridgwater Mercury has published the article which looks very similar but they have omitted Cllr Mike Stanton's interjection in the article where</p>	

	<p>he was very clear that the problem is not because Tony Bradford is being difficult but because the EA were unable to deliver the work effectively. Tony Bradford is understandably not happy with the situation and said he should not have been named and said the SRA meetings should not be open to the press. He is taking his own advice on the situation but says the fallout will not be good for the SRA or anyone trying to improve the flood situation in Somerset. IDS said he needs to work with Cllr Mike Stanton and the SRA team on how to move forward regarding seeking a correction to the article which will acknowledge that it was incorrect or incomplete. Tony Bradford summed up the discussion by saying this article has distracted people from the amount of good work the SRA has done throughout the County.</p> <p>Cllr Mike Caswell left the meeting at 16.11.</p>	
12. Issues and items to be raised with ADA	12.1. The Chair said he thinks ADA should give a public statement to make sure the rivers are better protected and properly maintained.	
13. AOB	<p>13.1. James Winslade mentioned riparian ownership ditches being clogged up and said people who rent land for grazing do not maintain their ditches. He said it should be highlighted in the newsletter so people are made aware.</p> <p>The Chair thanked everybody for attending and the meeting finished at 16.22</p>	
16. Date of next meeting	Tuesday 16 April 2024 @ 14:00	

Annex:

A. Parrett Board – Table of Outstanding Actions

CHAIR..... DATE

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/20240130-01	Draw up a list of persistent non-attendees to Board meetings	Special Advisor
P/20240130-02	Removal of trees in viewed rhyne between Parchey and Sutton Corner	Operations Manager
P/20240130-03	Reinstatement of Chedzoy Moor Drove following damage by Wessex Water	MSW/ Contracts Manager
P/20240130-04	Prompt EA to jet Sam Gamblins Corner	Clerk/CEO
P/20240130-05	Speak to the EA regarding removing the trees from the River Parrett	Clerk/CEO