

**MINUTES OF THE AXE BRUE FULL BOARD MEETING HELD AT BRADBURY HOUSE ON
MONDAY 15 APRIL 2024 AT 10.30**

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

Agenda Item:	Detail:	Action:
	Andrew Gilling (Vice Chairman) as Acting Chairman opened the meeting and informed members that Jeff Fear (Chairman) was unfortunately back in hospital. He asked that members join him in sending continued best wishes to Jeff. The Acting Chairman invited members to hold a minutes silence as a mark of respect for long standing contractors to the Boards John Pope and John Tucker who had both recently passed away.	
1. Attendance & Apologies	1.1 Attendance and apologies as per the above Attendance List.	

2. Items additional to the agenda	<p>2.1. Maggie Hammond (MH) reminded Board Members of the charity coffee morning on Thursday for Motor Neurone Disease and said raffle tickets are on sale for anyone who wishes to purchase them.</p> <p>2.2. Matthew Wall (MSW) said he would like to discuss the extension to West Town Gutter in Brent Knoll.</p> <p>2.3. Iain Sturdy (IDS) said Alan Franks would like to discuss with the Board the flooding in Godney and Blakeway and Water Level Management and flooding in the Brue, Sheppey, and North Drain. Some concerns with gateways in Tealham Moor and potential for a silt pumping scheme.</p>	
3. Declarations of Interest	3.1. Joe Stradling declared an interest in Water Level Management at Gold Corner in item 10.	
4. Members of the public to address the Meeting	4.1. Mr Hearse of Hazeldene Burton Row wished to speak. The Acting Chairman reminded him he had 3 minutes to address the Board Members. Mr Hearse started by saying since December 2022 his house has flooded on several occasions. Once just before Christmas in 2022 and again before Christmas in 2023 resulting in the fire brigade having to pump the water away. He believes the reason they are flooding is a culvert further down Burton Row which is too small for purpose. He would like to discuss the Board improving the culvert by replacing it with a larger one which he feels would alleviate a lot of the pressure he has with flooding. Mr Hearse added that the aftermath of the flooding was devastating because the water came from the fields where animals graze so everything had to be hygienically cleaned. The knock-on affect from the insurance companies is they are increasing premiums and excesses. He asked the Board to look at the situation favourably. Andrew Gilling acknowledged his concerns and said the Board would take action if they can.	
5. Minutes of Axe Brue Full Board 29 January 2024	<p>5.1 Andrew Gilling went through the minutes page by page and asked for any comments.</p> <p>PROPOSED: Joe Stradling, SECONDED: Bob Clapp “that the minutes of the Full Board meeting held on 29 January 2024 are signed as a true and correct record of the meeting held”. All in favour</p>	RESOLUTION 01
6. Matters Arising	<p>AB/20220411-01 – Investment Policy -Maggie Hammond (MH) had rewritten the policy and it is with IDS to review</p> <p>AB/20221109-02 – Stoke Moor Pumping Station - Ashfords are working on valuing the land. There is an outstanding task to talk to the landowners to make sure that with the engagement of legal advice/costs and Land Agents we are all still on the same page. - Ongoing</p> <p>AB/20230417-02 – Dog Leg Ditch – ongoing, IDS said this is a longstanding very difficult issue. Alan Franks has raised the issue at previous meetings and he suggested that someone needs to carry out an investigation into how it works out there. Alan Franks said he thought the Environment Agency should be involved in this</p>	

meeting because the River Sheppey and Decoy Rhyne is where most of the water is coming from and the condition of North Drain which is how the water eventually gets to the pumping station. IDS said he has questioned the EA on their assets condition and they say that 94% of their assets are in target condition. He added that some of the EA's asset target condition is poor and some of those are failing. After IDS spoke to the EA it looked as if they were only going to get 31% of the maintenance money they requested for the Axe Brue area. Charlie Riches said he has noticed this has been on the agenda for a long time and asked if there was capacity for the IDB to carry out its own investigations. IDS said we have recently tried to start this off but had encountered land owner difficulties. This would be a big study and is not something the IDB could credibly do independently. Alan Franks added the IDB need to invest time and money into desilting water courses and making sure culverts are working well. As well as grazing being affected, there were also households and a compost factory.

**PROPOSED: Charlie Riches, SECONDED: Alan Franks “to carry out an investigation with relevant partners”
All in favour**

RESOLUTION 02

10.53 Cllr Alistar Hendry left the meeting

AB/20240129-01 – Write to Mr Higgins concerning Axe Brue Statutory instrument, corporate status and reference of Localism Act to IDBs – IDS said he had instructed Wilkin Chapman Solicitors to investigate and draft a reply. This response had been sent to Mr Higgins covering all his questions with a copy also being sent to Martin Watts at his request about three weeks ago but so far there had been no response from them. IDS said that unsurprisingly the Solicitors had confirmed the IDBs do exist under the Land Drainage Act. The cost of instructing legal advice and putting together a response that would stand up to scrutiny has cost the Board several hundred pounds.

AB/20240129-02 – Inform Mr Watts of any rerating of agricultural land and when – MH said this has not been done for many years and in the Land Drainage Act there is no requirement for an IDB to undertake individual valuations of chargeable properties every year. She added there would be a cost involved as someone would need to carry out the work and it would not affect the overall income of the Boards, although it may affect the split between Drainage Rate and Local Levy.

AB20240129-03 – Inform Somerset Council Highways of the need for reinstatement of permanent barrier railings on Black Ditch – Rob King (RCK) told Members both himself and Godwins Peat have reported this to Highways.

AB/20240129-04 – Operation of sluice/door at Red Road by member of staff required – RCK said it will be operated as usual which can be an as and when basis when, although the structure was not intended to allow water to pass in the direction requested.

<p>7. Health & Safety Report</p>	<p>7.1 Naomi Johnson (NJ) said at the H&S sub-committee meeting they discussed in detail accidents or near misses on the incident register. One action following the meeting was regarding the Visit in Pairs (VIP) register when a question was raised as to whether people should be informed if they have been added to the register. NJ informed Members that when the register was set up they did seek advice and were told people should be informed unless there is a good reason not to. This is an ongoing action.</p> <p>7.2. NJ updated Members on training saying;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deputy Area Supervisors have completed the LANTRA powered pole pruner training. • Five members of staff have done mobile works training • Charlie Ford and Giles Oliver have done their water safety training and • Several Members of staff are booked into for first aid training at the end of the month <p>7.3. NJ advised that as outlined in the H&S policy there will be an external auditor coming in to audit the H&S arrangements within the next couple of weeks, they will produce a report with any recommended actions. Phil Holms offered to support the H&S sub-committee as he is the Chair of H&S at Somerset Wildlife Trust. Bob Clapp said no stone should be left unturned when it comes to health and safety. IDS agreed saying the Board actively encourages near miss reporting and thoroughly investigate incidents and reports and proactively scans the HSE's website for new guidance and legislation requirements.</p>	
<p>8. Flooding and operational issues - Discussion</p>	<p>8.1. IDS said it was agreed to turn this meeting into a more operational focussed session for Members to raise any flooding or maintenance issue that they feel the Board should be investigating or asking partners to look at.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alan Franks said the newer issue is in Blakeway area but Dog Leg Ditch ongoing. • Alan Franks asked if the Brue was going to be desilted? IDS said the SRA have completed the hydraulic model of the Brue and it is available to partners to test different scenario. He has asked the SRA to co-ordinate a workshop and said the first things the IDB would like investigated is the removal of trees in the lower reaches, making sure the banks are at the right level in the right places and if the conveyance of the channel is adequate. • Andrew Gilling supports the Chair of the SDBC with sorting out the drainage of water from unsuitable areas and he thinks this should be high on the priority list. • Alan Franks said the IDB should speak louder than we currently do as the organisation is now fairly large. • Andrew Gilling said over the years he has pressed the Local Authorities to treat Drainage Boards as statutory consultees for planning purposes. • Trevor Whitcombe asked whether they are any recordings of how high the banks should be as over the years they have eroded in places which is why there is overspill. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joe Stradling said the EA seems to be reactive rather than proactive and don't seem to try and get rid of water with any sense of urgency until there is flooding. He said they should start to pump when significant rainfall is due to increase capacity for the expected rainfall. • Alan Franks said he has been farming on the moors all his life and they are nothing compared to how they used to be and Andrew Gilling said they should debate more on this topic in future meetings. • Wendy Welland said there was a lot of concern about Red Road, West Rhyne and Brean which had been a lot higher throughout the winter than it normally was. She was told there was a pinch point but no-one has told her where this pinch point is. Wendy Welland said Ben Harris was going to have look but she added when she gives feedback she never hears back whether anything has been done. MSW said they did look at the high levels around Red Road and found a trash screen had been put in at Unity Farm on the golf course and this was causing a difference downstream. • Wendy Welland then asked why the water is so much higher this year. MSW said with the rainfall we've had this year and the operation of the flap at Red Road and with Ford Common being flat as well that will build levels back upstream. He said the system is sensitive and needs to be managed in a careful way. • IDS asked Members if they would like to add a discussion about Water Level Management, raising problems and recording them to future agendas. It was generally felt that would be beneficial. 	
<p>9. Papers for approval</p>	<p>9.1. MSW talked Members through Mr & Mrs Hearses request to replace the culvert across Burton Row to help alleviate flooding. Highways have agreed to fund the road closure licence and the admin fees which is approximately £2k. There is £22k ringfenced in Board reserves for this project from an underspend last year and MSW would like to deliver this project before Winter 2024/25. MH confirmed there was a significant underspend in the maintenance budget from 2023/24 so a reserve would be created for this work and the money ringfenced</p> <p>PROPOSED: Roger Keen, SECONDED: Bob Filmer “to upgrade the culvert and install a 600mm pipe” All in favour</p> <p>9.2. Bob Filmer thanked the team for getting landowners to clean their ditches.</p> <p>9.3. MSW told Members there had been quite a few complaints this year about flooding in gardens at New Road and Church Road. It has been proposed to improve the connection into Cornmoor Rhyne. Noel Lukins said when the houses were built the ditch was not dug deep enough, this project is something that was proposed a long time ago and should have gone through back then. MSW thanked Noel for the history. IDS said they were looking for approval to use the underspend from 2023/24 to fund the project as the project itself had already been approved by the Board. Bryan</p>	<p>RESOLUTION 03</p>

**PROPOSED: Bob Filmer, SECONDED: Charlie Riches “to implement the suggested objectives and trial for 3 years”
All in favour**

RESOLUTION 06

10.3. MSW informed Members that on the downstream section of Wick Rhyne adjacent to BK01 there are quite deep channels and the water levels have been kept low during the last wet winter. These low levels had destabilised the banks and as a result some banks have weakened and there have been a few slips.

10.4. RCK said the Area Supervisors have been brilliant reacting quickly and dealing with flood issues, clearing weed screens and unblocking culverts. He added that 80% of the current defects list has been completed.

10.5. RCK informed Members the surveillance cameras and signs which have been put near structures work well and have reduced tampering in all areas.

10.6. Regarding summer penning, RCK said this will be started at the end of w/c 15 April in most areas except Tealham and Tadham. Bob Clapp asked if Baltonsborough could be left for another week. It was agreed there would be no penning until it was requested.

10.7. Caroline Murray (CM) updated Members on the 2023/24 program of works and SRA projects as follows.

- West Town Gutter, Applewitthy Rhyne connection – this rhyne is silted up and has trees which need to be removed so water can flow downstream.
- West Town Gutter, Crooked Lane culvert – the culvert connecting these assets is 150mm and frequently blocks so will be replaced with a 600mm culvert
- Butleigh Rhyne – the current structure is temporary and there is leakage around the structure. The design of a new adjustable structure is under review and should be signed off at the end of the month and ready to go out to tender.
- Dutch Bridge, Mark – this is a bridge crossing for a maintenance route which was unsafe for vehicles. The crossing has been relocated and a new culvert will be put in and as access is through the farm gates, they will be replaced as well.
- At the last Board Meeting a bank slip at the back of Mr Fox’s garden was raised. A site inspection has been carried out and CALM are working on a scheme for resolution.

12:30 Mr Bell left the meeting

10.8. Virginie Martin (VM) updated Members on Development Control as follows

- the Gravity application is a variation of the DCO application as they are now building 3 buildings instead of the approved 1 building DCO. We are currently assessing the enabling works for building 1 and providing comments to

	<p>the local authority. Once completed we will be concentrating on the land drainage consent application</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VM said there is a large area coming up for development East of Burnham on Sea, it is very early days and the developer has been in contact to find out where IDB structures are and maintenance routes. • Isleport Road – she is in discussion with the developer of this site about the culvert which has not been installed as agreed. This is because the invert level is too high. She might have to serve notice formally on the developer to remove the culvert. Bob Clapp asked why the culvert was put in wrong to which VM said their topographic survey was incorrect and the information provided to the Board was unclear. <p>10.9. Phil Brewin (PAB) gave an update on the Environment Report as follows</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • he had been contracted by Somerset Wildlife Trust who were working on a landscape recovery project. There is a meeting at Honeygar Farm on Thursday 2 May @10:30 for any Members who would like to come and be briefed on the project. • There is an investigation by the Wetlands and Wildfowl Trust on using Eel DNA to take samples and find out where eels are. There is a conference coming up in Glastonbury on 5 July 2024 • he has an early draft of the Somerset Beaver Strategy which the SRA and Wildlife Trust have been working on. There are some conversations to be had around how beavers might fit within the levels and moors and what management measure might needs to be adopted to mitigate any impacts on land drainage or water level management in the system. • A large part of PAB's work is focussing of peat projects happening in Somerset and there is considerable interest from Defra about the future of peat management in Somerset. • Local Nature Recovery Strategy is ongoing as reported by the Somerset Council to the Environment Committee. • Nutrient Neutrality is a big issue for Somerset Council. They have invited PAB to give evidence to their scrutiny committee on how water is managed. <p>13.00 Phil Holms left the meeting</p>	
<p>11. Issues and items to be raised with ADA</p>	<p>11.1. IDS told Members that DEFRA are promoting a consultation on the draft strategy of English Drainage Boards Alternative Valuation Calculation Regulations 2024. It is work that ADA has been doing with DEFRA to allow new Drainage Boards to be created or existing Drainage Boards to expand. IDS said it will not be compulsory to use the new valuation process so the Boards can continue using the existing systems until it is no longer possible.</p>	
<p>12. Any Other Business</p>	<p>12.1. IDS asked Members whether they were happy to have more meetings based on today's format. Several Members said today's meeting was one of the best and very informative. Charlie Riches said it gives a more rounded picture of what is</p>	

	going on but it emphasises the need to have strong sub committees.	
13. Date of Next Meeting	13.1. Finance & Works Monday 03 June 2024 and Full Board Monday 17 June 2024 The meeting was declared closed at 13.20.	

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 – Information with the Clerk to review.	Clerk & RFO Ongoing
AB/20221109-02	To set up a meeting to discuss Stoke Moor Pumping Station – this is currently with Ashfords who are valuing the land	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.. A formal investigation to be undertaken.	Clerk/Operations Manager Ongoing
AB 20240129-01	Write to Mr Higgins concerning Axe Brue Statutory Instrument, corporate status and reference of Localism Act to IDBs.	Clerk/CEO Completed
AB 20240129-02	Inform Mr Watts of any rerating of agricultural land and when.	RFO Ongoing
AB 20240129-03	Inform Somerset Council Highways of the need for reinstatement of permanent barrier railings on Black Ditch	Operations Manager Ongoing