

MINUTES OF THE NORTH SOMERSET LEVELS INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD FULL BOARD MEETING HELD AT KINGSTON SEYMOUR VILLAGE HALL ON WEDNESDAY 06 NOVEMBER 2024 AT 14:30

Attendance:			
Elected Members: Tim Bush Nigel Cole John Harris Bob Mitchell Bob Parsons Chris Redding	Appointed Members: Cllr M Bird Cllr C Hunt Cllr J Tonkin Mrs D Yamanaka Cllr P Burden Mr J Cato Mrs Sandra Hearne	Officers: Mr I Sturdy Mrs M Hammond Mr P Brewin Mr R King Mr G Oliver Mr M Wall Mrs N Johnson Miss I Ingledew Mrs C Murray Mr A Brinson Mr R Thorne Mr D Alsop	
Approved Apologies:			
Peter Kingcott	Cllr B Petty Mr R Westwood		
Non-Approved Apologies:			
Eric Adams George Atwell Simon Hutchings Ben Letts Alistair Mead Graham Plaister Colin Pyke	Cllr C Gibbons Cllr M Pepperall Cllr D Thomas Mr P Harris		

Agenda Item:	Detail:	Action:
1. Attendance & Apologies	1.1. Apologies as per the attendance list	
2. Election of Chair and Vice Chair.	2.1 Iain Sturdy opened the meeting saying the Board has been through an election process he would update Members on the outcome. He said a Chair and Vice Chair would need to be elected to stand for the next three years and	

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.

4. Declarations of Interest	4.1 As per the Register of Members Interests	
5. Opportunity for members of the public to address the Meeting	<p>5.1. There was a member of the public who wished to speak after the EDF presentation, so Tim Bush asked Members if they could move the EDF Saltmarsh Mitigation Project presentation up from item 8</p> <p>5.2. Andrew Cockcroft who is Head of Stakeholder Relations and Social Impact at Hinkley Point C began his presentation by saying they are in the very initial phases of considering a saltmarsh and are looking at a range of location options including Kingston Seymour, Littleton Upon Severn and slightly further up around Arlingham and Rodley. They have begun initial consultations in these communities to understand the land and they do understand the opposition. He added that IDB's are a statutory consultee in the processes and if plans progress further the IDB will be part of the process in a formal way.</p> <p>5.3. Andrew continued to explain why a saltmarsh is being considered as part of the development of the Nuclear Power Station. In a change to the development consent order, they are proposing is to remove the acoustic fish deterrent at the water intakes, but in order to mitigate the very small environmental impact of removing the system they are looking at mitigation measures to offset the impact. They have considered a range of option which include the enhancement or creation of native oyster beds, kelp forests and the sea grass habitats. Also to improve four weirs in the tributaries of the Severn and this will support populations of migratory fish. The saltmarsh is the final element. There is a saltmarsh at Steart which is a good example of a similar habitat, but the key benefits are that it can also aid in the reduction of flood risk from the sea, aid carbon storage, improve water quality and provide an area where fish can breed and shelter. The process of changing Hinkley Points development consent order has to be decided by the Secretary of State. Andrew said it is a long process with more consultations and it would probably be late 2025 before a recommendation of the proposals from the Planning Inspectorate is sent to the Secretary of State and early 2026 before the Secretary of State makes a decision whether he agrees it is viable or not. He impressed that in the early phases it is vital that if the IDB have information on the feasibility of the project in it's conceptual form it would be helpful if any concerns or views could be passed on. Kingston Seymour has the right topography and he showed the area EDF are exploring and said they are carrying out initial ecological surveys in the area. A member asked a question saying how many acres it involves and the response was about 200 hectares. There was discussion over the sea defences and Andrew said that flood risk is absolutely paramount so they will not be able to progress unless it can be proven the project will not increase local flood risk.</p>	

Sandra Hearne asked where the pier to pier pathway will go? Andrew said they are aware of the pier to pier way and the bottom section would not need any adjustment but the northern part may need to be re-routed slightly.

Chris Redding said the loss of land might mean the loss of thousands of tonnes of milk and hundreds of tonnes of meat and asked how much it is going to cost. Andrew said it will cost a lot of money but they are not sure at this stage. A question was asked as to who would maintain the sea defences and the answer was EDF would for the operation of Hinkley Point C and then it will likely be transferred to the EA. Mike Bird said with the rise and fall of the tide and the coastline being open to weathering the erosion of the saltmarshes will be very high and he thought spending money on peat moor restoration across North Somerset would be a much better spend and achieve a lot more. Andrew said they need to see how flexible they can be with environmental mitigation and the EA and Natural England are pushing them towards saltmarsh because of its benefit to fish. Sandra Hearne said she is worried that the younger generation of fish will be hurt and asked if someone will be monitoring the situation and what kind of modelling has been done. Andrew said a lot of modelling has been done so there is a lot of detail and they also have a long record from Hinkley Point A & B. Peter Harris said the existing topography shows two sea walls, one lower and one higher and this creates a saltmarsh between the two and this saltmarsh works well. If one of the sea walls is taken down an erosion zone will be created and there will be no saltmarsh. Andrew said they need to look to see where the breaches are and he will check with the technical team to see if they are considering the non-removal of the current seawall with a setback. John Cato asked two questions; if other areas have been considered for the project and if the original DCO plan hadn't been wrong and needed to be changed would the people in the area want a saltmarsh here. Andrew responded saying they are looking at Littleton, Rodley and Arlingham as alternatives to Kingston Seymour but there is a proximity principal within the habitat regulations that says mitigations should be as close as possible from the point of impact which is why they are looking for sites as close to Hinkley as possible. The second question he responded by saying he doesn't know but he doubts it. Peter Burdon said he thinks the EA are hooked on managed realignment but he thinks that will change because he believes it was a political decision made a long time ago. He also asked if the number of fish taken by the existing two power stations can be made public to put it into perspective and said they need to push for decent environmental work nearer to Hinkley. Andrew said the detail is included in the technical report which will be available to Members. Then said they are duty bound by the way the legislation works to provide direct mitigation and they would be open to conversations over how they could do something slightly more indirect for the environment by legally.

	<p>The Chair asked what happens next. Andrew said it is good to have a discussion with IDB's to gain an initial understanding of any issues before moving forward. IDS suggested setting up a local sub-committee.</p> <p>5.4. Tania Kinane from the North Somerset Levels Action Group thanked Members for the opportunity to speak. She said they are strongly opposed to EDF's proposals to flood part of Kingston Seymour to create an artificial saltmarsh and there is a petition which has been signed by 4500 people. The action group is growing and they are collecting strong evidence against the proposal as they have scientific evidence a saltmarsh at Kingston Seymour would quickly be eroded by strong tides and get silted up. There is also the issue of invasive plants and plants giving off toxic gas which would be an issue for people using the pier to pier. Tania continued to say the current sea wall has protected 45,000 people in Clevedon from flooding for many years and there is no justification to realign it closer to where people live without causing a severe flood risk. Kingston Seymour is noted for it's freshwater ditch and rhyme network which is very well managed by the IDB and saltwater would have a detrimental impact on this freshwater environment. She said the scheme would significantly reduce the amount of rainwater storage in the rhynes and ditches which during high tides will directly increase the risk of flooding on the neighbouring houses. The proposal will destroy intergenerational productive farms, successful businesses, peoples livelihoods, their homes and a unique archaeological landscape. Lastly the EDF proposal will destroy habitat which has established flora and fauna and is home to endangered species and has a very rich wildlife.</p>	
<p>6. Minutes of the NSLIDB Full Board Meeting held on 19 June 2024</p> <p>Minutes of the Extraordinary Joint Board</p>	<p>6.1. Proposed by Cllr Peter Burden and seconded by John Harris "the minutes of the Full Board meeting held on 19 June 2024 are signed as a true and correct record of the meeting held". All in favour</p> <p>6.2. The Chair went through the minutes page by page and gave Members the opportunity to raise any issues.</p> <p>6.3. There was a typo on page 3 where YACWAG was misspelt and the YACWAG project will be discussed in the Engineers report.</p> <p>6.4. On page 6 the issues regarding maize was queried as a meeting was due to be arranged and this will also be discussed in the engineering report.</p> <p>6.5. The Chair discussed the Joint Extra-Ordinary meeting on 02 September to discuss the lack of maintenance by the EA and for the IDB to loan the EA some money in order for them to carry out the work. It was agreed to add into the</p>	

<p>Meeting held on 2 September 24</p>	<p>minutes what the specific proposal is and the conditions. The Chair said with that caveat he would sign the minutes.</p> <p>Proposed by Cllr James Tonkin and seconded by Cllr Peter Burden “to sign the minutes as a true and correct record of the meeting held” All in favour</p> <p>6.6. The Chair went through the minutes again page by page.</p> <p>6.7. Sandra Hearne had a question about page 3 of the minutes asking if there was any news on the DEFRA Flood Recovery which was put on hold due to a change in Government. IDS said he has had communication from the grants team saying there is no change but to let them know if we can still spend the money within the time available</p>	
<p>Matters Arising & Review of Actions</p> <p>NSLIDB Full Board Meeting held on 19 June 2024</p> <p>Extraordinary Joint Board Meeting held on 2 September 24</p>	<p>7.1. NSL/20221116-2 - Group of Board members to debate investments across the consortium of Boards and develop a policy for investment. The policy is currently under development. - IDS said this is in progress with MH & himself. MH said unfortunately due to illness they have not been able to arrange a meeting – Carried forward</p> <p>7.2. NSL/20221116 – 3 - New sluice to improve water levels on Claverham Drove; designs have been completed and prices to be sought – this is now complete. Phil Brewin (PAB) said David Crossman and himself have been speaking to YACWAG to provide them with the design. There were concerns with the costs but YACWAG are happy with what has been provided for them.</p> <p>7.3. NSL/20240417 – 3 (amended) - To add a link to the video of a working silt pump to the website. – IDS said this is complete.</p> <p>7.4. NSL/ 20240619-1 - To add extension of contract proposal and strategy to the next Full Board Meeting Agenda and take to the Finance and Works Committee meeting on 23th Oct 2024 - IDS said one of the requirements was to develop a proposed contract strategy to try and take into account the risks the Board has having one supplier doing all of their work and the risks to the Consortium as the contractors seem to be spread thinly across the Board’s areas.</p> <p>7.5. NSL/ 20240619 – 2 - To arrange a suitable date in early September for a Board Site Inspection – IDS said the inspection had been arranged but due to Members unavailability the meeting had to be postponed. Tim Bush said he is determined to arrange this for next year.</p> <p>7.6. IDS explained to Members that the IDB had made an offer to the EA to lend them up to £350k across the Boards on the basis it will be repaid against work that was done but the offer was declined by them after they took legal advice saying they were unable to accept a loan from another</p>	

public body. Unfortunately, this response was made at a local level and did not make it to any directors

7.7 An application for the Flood Recovery Grant was considered but this is now stuck with the new Government and the EA do not have the resources or the people to do the work. We are now exploring if we as the Drainage Board are in the position where we could identify the most beneficial work we could do under a PSCA with the EA. We have started work on the river Cary in the Parrett area at the board's expense, identified 2 watercourses in the Axe Brue area (Axe and Mark Yeo) and are looking for the highest priority areas for NSLIDB. This will all be at the expense of the individual Boards and will either reduce reserves or increase the burden on the special levy and drainage rate payers

7.8 Matthew Wall is still looking at a PSCA for work at the Land Yeo however IDS is not confident that we will be able to do all of this additional work as we are busy completing our own work. The gap between what the EA are funded to do and what they were previously funded to do is over £1m of work which is far more than we can do.

7.9 James Tonkin asked what the alternative is? If we don't do smaller amounts of work on main rivers we may have problems in the future. IDS said that this is a very serious situation and was being raised at the highest level.

7.10 Peter Harris explained that he has spoken to Tessa Munt MP about the issue. IDS replied that he has also been working with Tess Munt MP on this and she is well briefed on the issues.

7.11 John Cato asked what the possibility is on a Valenciascenario here. Who would be held responsible? IDS replied that Spain is very different to Somerset. In Valencia there was unheard of rainfall. The Obligations of public bodies – the maintenance that is not being done is permissive. The EA are advising that there is no duty to do work for riparian owners. If flooding arises through lack of maintenance the scrutiny will come to public bodies to show they have fulfilled their obligations.

7.12 John Harris said that Tessa Munt MP does know of this situation and as a previous member of the Axe Brue Board she should know all about the issues faced. John Harris suggested that we invite Rachel Gavey new Chair of FRCC to visit. IDS responded that he invited her when she was appointed and she has since visited SDBC to meet with Chairmen and visit the Boards areas. IDS stated that the issues have been taken to Emma Hardy (Floods Minister) by Innes Thompson – this has gone to the highest level. He added that Sadiq Al-Hassan (Local MP) has also been made aware of the situation.

7.13 Mike Bird and James Tonkin left the meeting at 16.15pm

	<p>7.14 IDS advised that Officers are currently working with the EA with PSCAs. He stated that these won't be signed without the Board's prior agreement. Peter Burden felt that this should be investigated first and then brought back to a select group.</p> <p>'To develop a PSCA and bring back to a select group'</p> <p>Prop: Cllr Peter Burden Seconded: C. Redding Vote: All in Favour</p>	<p>RESOLUTION 03</p>
<p>8. Health & Safety Report</p>	<p>8.1 Naomi Johnson (NJ) updated the Board on 2 recent incidents. She added that these have previously been investigated by the Health and Safety Committee.</p> <p>8.2 The first incident was a cyclist who reported she was knocked off a bike by a bucket on a contractor's vehicle. An investigation was subsequently carried out and completed. As part of that Safe systems of work will be looked into further. IDS added that all reports indicate that she was hit by the machine and she attended hospital with minor injuries. IDs said that his biggest concern was that the Contractor and Area Supervisor did not report this. The Area Supervisor has received a letter under disciplinary procedure. The Contractor has been reminded about his duty of care and that his conduct will be taken into account when offering future work.</p> <p>8.3 NJ advised the second incident involved a 13-year-old who was out walking and walked over a structure which was not a public right of way. There was a hole in the structure and his leg got stuck, subsequently the fire brigade was called to release him. The structure is now fully repaired, the child's mother has informed us she attends to make a claim, as of yet we have not received a claim. This structure is now gated. IDS explained that this was reported to the H&S Executive as it met the RIDDOR criteria. As this was an unknown hazard, IDS instructed all structures to be inspected by Area Supervisors asap. This is currently 90% complete.</p> <p>8.4 Peter Burden asked how long ago this structure was last inspected. IDS advised this was previously inspected in the April and the incident happened in August.</p>	<p>#</p>
<p>9. Finance Update</p>	<p>9.1 Maggie Hammond explained that bank reconciliations have been done and everything is as expected.</p> <p>9.2 MH asked for her Finance report to be taken as read. She drew attention to the section showing the outstanding drainage rates. There are still those that haven't paid despite reminders.</p> <p>'To commence Court proceedings for those with debts at £50 and over'</p> <p>Prop: Peter Harris Seconded: Bob Parsons Vote : All in favour</p>	<p>RESOLUTION 04</p>

<p>11 Operations, Engineering and Environment Report</p>	<p>11.1 Crossman's Hatch - Dan Alsop updated the Board on Crossman's Hatch scheme, he asked that his report be taken as read. This has been a big job including a lot of design work. Tenders have gone out to 4 firms and 2 firms replied. The prices were more than double what the original estimate has been, both tenders were just over £200,000. A reappraisal was needed as there wasn't enough money in the budget. It was recommended by Finance and Works that the scheme go ahead next year using money from the reserves - unfortunately F&W were not quorate to agree this.</p> <p><i>'To proceed with the tender approved and use finances from the reserves to do this'</i></p> <p>Prop: Peter Burden Sec: John Cato All in Favour:</p> <p>11.2 Matthew Wall was not at this meeting so IDS gave an update on maintenance. The wet weather has slowed maintenance down a bit but overall there are no major issues. Giles Oliver was in agreement with this.</p> <p>11.3 Rob King updated the members on the assets that are being inspected and told the Board that there is just 18 % of these left to check. 28 Structures have been found that need repairs, a contractor has been chosen to work solely on repairing these structures.</p> <p>11.4 Caroline Murray gave an overview of engineering projects and their current status. Giles Oliver added that good progress is being made on these projects.</p> <p>11.5 Phil Brewin referred to Pennywort mentioned in his report. It is a serious issue and he believes we could do better next year in managing this. PB suggested we move towards more spraying and less mechanical treatment of Pennywort. There is a need to be more tactical here.</p> <p>11.6 PB gave an update on peat project and telemetry. Several suppliers have been spoken to ensure they can provide the systems we require. A company has been chosen who are prepared to work with us on innovation. PB showed the Board photos of the radar units and the data they provide. This will strengthen our operational facilities. Additional peat sites have been identified for telemetry equipment.</p> <p>11.7 Good progress has been made with gGauge boards. New type of gauge board is more robust and they are easier to clean. They are now metal instead of fibre glass.</p>	<p>RESOLUTION 08</p>
<p>12 SWADA Director Report</p>	<p>12.1 IDS explained the key issues discussed at the last meeting as reported back by Rebecca Horsington. There was discussion about how ADA may be funded in the future, commercial funding may be brought in although this had not yet been decided.</p>	

	<p>12.2 There was an EA update on asset inspections . There has been a long-term decline in condition of assets. In order for the EA to get back to target conditions, they would need to spend approx. £250 million to recover plus approx. £80 million to repair each year for at least the next 3 years. Across the country asset conditions are an issue. The EA are not expecting an uplift in the next budget review. There should be a willingness for IDBs and EA to work together at a local level. Our loan offer to the EA was discussed at this meeting.</p> <p>12.3 National flood risk maps have just been updated and will be available in early 2025..</p> <p>12.4 Precept may increase but will be decided at the WRFCC.</p> <p>12.5 DEFRA update - Minister Hardy is interested in nature-based resources to prevent flooding.</p>	
13. Clerks Report	13.1 The Clerks Report has been provided to the Finance and Works Committee and IDS had nothing new to report on this.	
14 Correspondence and Engagement with other authorities	14.1 IDS reported the continued correspondence between the EA and IDB to increase visibility of issues.	
15 AOB	15.1 The Chair asked the estimated cost to replace Samsons Sluice. GO said this would be approx. £2.1 Million. MH will contact the insurance company with this valuation.	
9. Date of Next Meeting	17.1. The Chair thanked members for their attendance and said the next meeting is Wednesday 29 January 2025 – 14:30-16:30.	

CHAIR.....DATE

NSLIDB BOARD – TABLE OF OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

Action Number:	Action:	Actionee:
NSL/20221116 - 2	Group of Board members to debate investments across the consortium of Boards and develop a policy for investment. The policy is currently under development.	M Hammond - In progress
NSL/20221116 - 3	New sluice to improve water levels on Claverham Drove; designs have been completed and prices to be sought.	D Alsop - Complete
NSL/ 20240619-1	To add extension of contract proposal and strategy to the next Full Board Meeting Agenda and take to the Finance and Works Committee meeting on 23th Oct 2024.	I Sturdy - Complete
NSL/ 20240619 - 2	To arrange a suitable date in Early September for a Board Site Inspection.	I Sturdy – To be arranged 2025/26