

MINUTES OF THE SDBC ANNUAL MEETING HELD AT THE CANALSIDE ON 14 MAR 2023

Attendance:			
Elected Members: Mr R Barrington Mr T Bradford (Chair) Mr B Bryer Mr T Bush Mr A Franks Mr A Gilling Mr J Harris Mr R Mitchell Mr R Parsons Mr C Redding Mr D Tratt Mr D Vigar Mr M Watts Mrs W Welland Mr T Whitcombe Mr J Winslade	Appointed Members Cllr A Betty Mr P Burden Cllr M Caswell Cllr D Dash Cllr B Filmer Cllr K Haverson Cllr S Hearne Cllr J Keen Cllr R Keen Cllr S Kingham Cllr M Lewis Cllr C Riches Cllr L Scott Cllr M Stanton	Officers: Mr I Sturdy Mrs M Hammond Mr P Brewin Mr M Wall Mr A Dowden Mr N Stevens Mr G Oliver Ms V Martin	Public: Sian Russell Andy Hohl EA Simon Rendell EA Ross Edwards EA Adrian Govier EA Sarah Baker
Apologies:			
Mr B Clapp Mr N Cole Mr R Coombes Mr M Heywood Ms R Horsington Mr N Lukins Mr M Lunnon Mr C Passmore Mr J Perrin Mr G Plaister Mr C Pyke	Cllr A Bradford Cllr J Cato Cllr I Dyer Cllr P Harris Cllr A Hendry Cllr W Human Cllr L Leavey Cllr M Martin Cllr A Matthews Cllr J Pay Cllr M Pepperall Cllr J Tonkin Mr C Webb		
Non-Attendance:			
Mr E Adams Mr W Barnard Mr J Fear Mr P Kingcott Mr B Letts Mr O Matthews Mr A Mead Mr J Stradling	Cllr H Bruce Cllr P Clayton Cllr M Crosby Cllr J Cousins Cllr L Dudridge Cllr D Durdan Cllr C Gibbons Cllr A Harley Cllr M Healey Cllr S Hogg Cllr M Murphy Cllr R Westwood Cllr D Yamanaka		

Agenda Item:	Detail:	Action:
1. Attendance and Apologies	<p>1.1. The Chair welcomed everybody to the meeting saying it was nice to see so many people in attendance. He specifically welcomed Andy Hohl and Simon Rendell, Ross Edwards and Adrian Govier from the Environment Agency and mentioned that the feed back from those associated with Adrian during the last flooding event within the Parrett area was very complimentary and the Chairman thanked him for all of his help.</p> <p>1.2. Attendance & Apologies as per the above.</p>	
2. Items additional to the Agenda	2.1. The only request was from the Environment Agency to amend the order of speakers to move the Environment Agency to item 8 on the agenda from item 10.	
3. Declarations of Interest	3.1. No additional declarations were made.	
4. Members of the Public	4.1. Members of the public were in attendance but did not want to address the meeting.	
5. Approval of Minutes	<p>5.1. Peter Burden proposed and Roger Keen seconded 'to sign the minutes as a true and accurate reflection the the meeting held on 08 March 2022.'</p> <p>All in favour</p>	RESOLUTION 01
6. Matters Arising	<p>6.1. Barry Bryer pointed out the inconsistency within the minutes for referring to Chair. He was referred to as the Chair or Tony Bradford and should be referred to as the Chair.</p> <p>Martin Watts joined the meeting at this point.</p> <p>6.2. Iain Sturdy, CEO discussed the outstanding actions with the Members as follows:</p> <p>SDBC/20220302-01 To share the latest letter re red diesel with all Board Members – We had clarification that was shared with the Boards. As long as the work being done has some agricultural benefit red diesel can be used.</p> <p>SDBC/20220302-02 To investgate possible solutions to the rising inflation and our maintenance contracts. We worked with the Boards on this issue. We did modify the year one</p>	ACTION CLOSED

	contracts so the change in CPI between the date the tenders were tendered and the point at which the work was done was added to the price. The contractors have been satisfied with this solution	ACTION CLOSED
7. Chair's Report	<p>7.1. The Chair reported:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since our last meeting we lost 2 senior members of staff. A process was undertaken to appoint a new CEO. After a rigorous selection process Iain Sturdy was appointed as the new CEO/Clerk and we wish him well. There are signs that things are now settling down. • The Chair also thanked Nick Stevens for picking up some of the things Iain was unfamiliar with and did not have the time to complete. • The Chair also thanked the rest of the staff for their work during the last year. He also thanked the Members as board meetings have been attended well and in person. • It has been a very difficult time with inflation and fuel costs over the past year and the good news is that the maintenance has been done. • The drainage rates have increased across all of the Boards. The ADA Gazette has an article that shows the rate increases for all boards and ours are small in comparison with others. • The Chair thanked some of the Councillors who would be retiring for their participation. Some have attended meetings rigorously with good input. He wished them well and thanked them for their hard work and diligence. • There has been a lot of work on peat and carbon and Phil Brewin would be covering that in his presentation • One thing that the Chair has not agreed with is the Test and Trials of storing water on the flood plains. It is something to work on and find an amicable solution • There is an ADA summit in two weeks time – Keeping the Rivers Flowing. We are having an impact and making good progress with the main message being rivers must be in a 	

	<p>condition to convey as much water as possible across the whole country.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We attended an environmental day at Peterborough which was enlightening and useful. • Only 60% of the budget requested by EA Wessex from DEFRA for the maintenance of main rivers has been allocated. • Regarding flooding, which will be discussed in detail later on, somethings went well and others not so well. There was a discussion with the EA last week which was a very useful meeting as long as actions are acted upon. This must be followed up within the next fortnight and we must keep the pressure on. • The Chair attends many meetings and four words are mentioned consistently – Climate Change and Global Warming. If it is happening then what is being done about it? If flooding and intensive rainfall in a short space of time is going to be the norm then why are the Main Rivers being neglected? • They should be made better than they were in order to convey the water and also deal with drought. It is a lot of work to do and will take a lot of effort by everybody to get central government to give the money to maintain what we have got to a better standard. 	
<p>8. Bridgwater Barrier and Downstream Defences Update</p>	<p>8.1 Simon Rendell introduced both himself and Andy Hohl. Andy gave an update on the Barrier itself and Simon discussed downstream defences:</p> <p>Barrier Update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Andy shared images of the Barrier and said that their remit from their partner Sedgemoor District Council was for a bold, confident and contemporary scheme representing that flood risk is being managed within Bridgwater and the surrounding area. • The design solution is a twin vertical lift gate similar to the Hull Barrier and the Barking Barrier because of it's proven reliability in a high silt environment. • It is relatively easy to maintain and replace elements compared to rising sector gates. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Environment Agency Operational Team will be able to manage the Barrier • A real drive is minimising whole of life cost and operational carbon emissions. • Completed actions include stakeholder consultation which included Parrett IDB, which allowed the completion of the outline design. • In December 2019 EA submitted the Transport and Works Act order application that is the consenting process and provides the planning approval for the scheme. It is required on this scheme because it interferes with the right of navigation on the river Parrett. The navigation should be able get beneath the gate which has a 9 meter maximum height clearance. • In September 2021 the outline business case was approved. • In March 2022 the Secretary of State granted the Tansport and Works Act Order, giving the EA legal powers to construct the scheme. • In July 2022 EA obtained the Marine Management Organisation Licence. • EA are progressing with scheme enabling works. Getting on with works as soon they can flush out any unexpected issues for example asbestos so there is no impact on the overall delivery plan. • EA have been working with Kier (Contractors) on the detailed design to deliver the sub-structure works. <p>Downstream Defences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These are needed to protect the land and communities downstream of Bridgwater as well as Bridgwater itself from tidal flooding. • EA will be raising some of the existing primary banks immediately adjacent to the river. • EA will be building secondary embankments away from the river to protect communities and give higher protection than they currently have. • Embankments will be built across IDB viewed rhynes and culverts will therefore need to be constructed. Conversations are being held with the IDB about this. • Slack in the programme means the delivery date has not been impacted by the unexpected find of asbestos buried on site. • The Barrier should be operational by Autumn of 2026. 	
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	<p>8.2. Questions were invited from the floor.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sandra Hearne – will material from the bypass channel be stored locally? Answer(A) - It will be stored in a compound adjacent to the channel. • Are there any impacts further down towards Burnham-on-Sea? A - Assessments show that there no impacts further downstream and the impacts of operating the structure have shown no significant effects. The Barrier will be open most of the time. • James Winslade asked – is there any chance of operating the tidal barrier in the case of a severe flood to make more room in the river? A - The Barrier has been designed to manage tidal flood risk. There are very marginal benefits by closing the barrier. When it is in operation the best operating regimes will be looked at and considered. The consent applied for is to manage tidal flood risk. • John Harris – on the Congesbury Yeo they are completing the bridging works and the piling is going down to interesting depth. How is the piling going to work on the barrier? A - The steel piles are around a meter in diameter and will go down about 12 – 15 meters into the bedrock. EA are looking to drive a test pile to give more information. • Stuart Kingham – in the Parrett we get a lot of sediment movement. When you close the gate and you have a surge coming in will the silt remain or will carry on up through the Parrett? A - The Parrett is a very active river and the sediment level is very high. We anticipate that there could be a build up of silt and some de-silting may be needed around the barrier. We could use the Barrier to help flush away any silt build up. The modelling that has been done shows you might get periods of time when there is a silt build up and you get a different regime and that silt erodes away. It is a very active environment. • Chair – How about the money? Are you confident that the funds are sufficient? A - The outline business case approval is for £128m and we are in the process of putting together our cost estimates for the full business case. EA have received a very good contribution from Sedgmoor District 	
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	<p>Council and are as confident as they can be and are in a good position.</p> <p>8.3 The Chair thanked Simon and Andy for their presentation.</p>	
<p>9. Somerset Council, the new Unitary Authority</p>	<p>9.1. Mike Stanton Somerset Council Councillor introduced himself to the audience.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are good relationships and goodwill present and there is 'constructive tension' as well. • There will be cost savings by moving to a unitary council eg by needing one CEO, 1 Section 151 Officer etc. as well as reducing the number of councillors and they are in the middle of a significant amount of staff redeployment. • Local Community Networks (LCN) are being set up. • There are changes that effect the IDB's. There will be new appointed members with more Parish Councillors appointments yet to be made. • Somerset Council will be the host for the SRA, with 2 Parrett and 2 Axe Brue members on the board. • Somerset Council are involved in the major flood incident of January '23 and there are 2 public events coming up. • 20 March Moorland Village Hall 16:00 • 27 March Burrowbridge Coronation Hall 19:30 • The Chair shared an observation that it would have been nice to have seen a meeting at Chedzoy and Moorland. <p>9.2 Questions were invited from the floor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • James Winslade shared an observation about recent flooding – Shutting the gates 2 days earlier and the highways change over from day to night did not communicate the lock combination which led to highways cutting the gate lock and then having to get a new lock at a later date. The road closure was instantly closed and vehicles had nowhere to turn around as there was insufficient signage about road closures. • Anthony Betty – How will the SRA Board work in the new council? Mr Stanton confirmed that it will still continue. There will be a new scrutiny committee being representative of the new council. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Liz Scott – Why is Wessex Water on the SRA and not Bristol Water? A - Wessex Water is a lead flood risk management authority and Bristol Water is just a billing and water supply authority. <p>9.3 The Chair thanked Mr Stanton for his presentation.</p>	
<p>10. Developing a peat strategy in Somerset</p>	<p>10.1. Phil Brewin started by sharing some of the work that the Boards had done on environmental issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We now have an Environment Committee which is a SDBC joint committee. Each board nominated 3 members. Both the Axe Brue and Parrett Board have been deferring appointing new members waiting for the new council to be in place. The intention is to have quartley meetings. The committee is looking at the legislative framework, developing policies and recommending actions to the individual boards. Regardin invaisive species, we sit on the National Floating Pennywort Steering Group and are working with our partners to draw in new funding sources. The annual drainage rate demands included a leaflet about floating penny wort. Another area of work being looked at is eels and elvers and putting in elver passes or elver ladders on tilting weirs. Water Level Management Plans need updating. Prioritisation is being looked at by the committee. It's about creating action plans and looking forward to new schemes. <p>10.2 Peat Strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government and Local Council have adopted concepts around net zero and move to a low carbon economy and environment. DEFRA have been working on a peat strategy. It is quite likely that there will be some funding and water management is a 	

	<p>key part of this. There will be an opportunity to invest in infrastructure.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a lot of new science and evidence being collected about carbon emissions from degrading peat. In the national context the situation in Somerset is not as bad as many other areas. • The drainage boards have been collecting seasonal water table data and Phil showed a graph showing water table levels in bore holes at various distances from rhyes across fields . • Weather is making it hard to manage water tables and levels with regard to peat. • Locally, there is the Peat Partnership with a very important role for the drainage boards to play. • The Sedgemoor Landscape Recovery Development Fund, is developing a bid for funding mainly about farmers working together to manage water levels differently in defined areas. <p>10.3 Questions were invited from the floor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barry Bryer – The land owners for the 2 projects that are funded are not farmers so the trials will not be realistic. Phil agreed that Barry was correct and also some work is not on farmed landscape. • Trevor Whitcombe – Asked was it correct to say the more you flood the peat land the more methane will be produced? Phil agreed and said it is something that we need to be careful about. • Stuart Kingham – Commented that they have been creating lakes where the peat has been extracted, surely it would be better to go back to farming land. Phil did not understand how that would be possible when there is no peat to farm on and a large hole which will naturally fill with water? Trevor Whitcombe pointed out that some planning conditions had been placed on the land where there was peat extraction and land should have been put back to agriculture. That has not been complied with. 	
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alan Franks – Asked where the private funding mentioned would come from ? <p>Phil responded that some of the funding is 'stackable' and DEFRA are keen to look at external funding.</p> <p>10.4 The Chair closed the session and thanked Phil for his presentation. Feedback from the national peat report is proving that if you keep grass on peat in Somerset there will be less of a problem. Nothing is achievable without water level management.</p>	
<p>11. Comments on the January 2023 flooding</p>	<p>11.1. The CEO introduced this item as a 'near miss'. Without the prior work on dredging and pumping stations etc the flooding event would have been significantly worse and we need to be careful not to be wrongly critical of the situation. There had been some good work, but some extra things that could have been done and some elements of flood management could have gone better than it did. This item is to allow us to capture thoughts to feed back into all of the operating authorities, ourselves included to make sure that when the next one comes along we can do better.</p> <p>11.2 Comments were invited from the floor as follows</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Andrew Gilling – the thing I cannot get my head around is the fact that pumps have to be relocated each time. You waste time shifting pumps around. • Alan Franks – has the EA got any contingency plans if that near miss came to fruition in North Somerset or the Brue? • Anthony Betty – are the EA looking at their trigger points for when they are bringing in pumps? It only took 24 hours to flood. On another note the SCC signs for road closures were not in place and artic lorrys were coming through when the road was flooded. • Andrew Gilling – the Bleadon Sluice meeting with Bristol Water and EA was cancelled. De-commissioning Bleadon Sluice will effect many people in the area. • Liz Scott – Cheddar, the south side of the Yeo was flooded. I am not sure why that has happened. 	

	<p>11.3 It is now up to the EA to come back to the drainage board with solutions and things that could have been done better. We will keep the pressure up and make sure that there are some actions.</p> <p>11.4 Norfolk have started a large flood alleviation project. The Chair has a meeting with them in 10 days time and will find out what is happening.</p>	
<p>12 CEO and RFO Overview</p>	<p>12.1 The CEO shared the staffing structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have had a period of stability • There are now 3 Deputy Area Supervisors in place and they are a good fit with the organisation. Part of their remit is to gain the local knowledge of the area. The operational side of the organisation is now fully populated. • There is an internal recruitment process to fill the current gaps in the business support side of the business. • The real challenge is engineers. New adverts on enhanced salaries are out. <p>12.2 Overview of the year</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The budgets have been set for 2023/24 which allow us to deliver core services, maintenance in particular. • We have completed the maintenance for 2022/23. There are always problematic areas. • Our profile has been maintained strategically. Phil Brewin has been identified as a national expert in invasive weeds. • Outsourced work is going well • Flood response in January 2023 was satisfactory. • Sampson's Sluice is a very large structure. It's failure is high on the risk register. It is old and a survey has been commissioned to look at it's condition. We are waiting for the report. • This year was the final year of the Parrett dredging contract. 	

	<p>12.3 RFO Overview</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The RFO, Maggie Hammond shared a slide on CPI over the last 10 years showing the significant increase since budget talks started and the end of this financial year. • Government predictions are that inflation will be under control by the end of the next financial year. • 2023/24 budgets have been set with assumptions about CPI as some of the contracts we have are uplifted by April CPI. • The budget set is a 'standstill' budget • The new staff structure in place is largely cost neutral • Utility bills have been protected from large increases as contracts were placed in 2021 until 2026/27. • An ADA survey has found that the average 23/24 budget increase was 13.3% with the highest being 38.79% • 2024/25 budget setting could be a high increase to the scheme budget (capital works) budget increase. • Local Government Pension Scheme employer contribution rate has increased from 20.3% to 22.3% with the lump sum towards the pension deficit being removed. The impact of this change on the budget is £3,976 • The internal audit report which was completed in February 2023 was shared. It gives a substantial assurance, the highest assurance that can be given along with 2 best value issues (future forecasting and a review of the scheme of delegations). 	
13 AOB	<p>13.1 John Harris – thanked Tony Bradford for his role as Chair of the Consortium recognising that it has not been easy over the last few years</p> <p>13.2 The Chair thanked John and the floor and said he was heartened to see as many people in attendance.</p>	

<p>14. Date of Next Meeting</p>	<p>14.1. The Chair recognised that the venue was held within the Parrett area and asked for any suggestions for the next meeting venue. He also asked if evening meetings were preferred and a buffet to start and asked for the meeting venue and time to be a agenda item at the forthcoming Full Board meetings.</p> <p>14.2 The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and the presentations, closed the meeting and wished everyone a safe journey home.</p>	
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Annex:

A. SDBC AGM – Table of Outstanding Actions.

CHAIRMAN.....DATE

**ANNEX A TO
SDBC ANNUAL MEETING MINUTES
DATED 14 MAR 23**

SDBC AGM – TABLE OF OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

Action Number:	Action:	Actionee: