

**MINUTES OF THE PARRETT INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD FULL BOARD MEETING HELD AT BRADBURY HOUSE ON 28 JANUARY 2025 AT 14.00**

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

<b>Agenda Item:</b>	<b>Detail:</b>	<b>Action:</b>
1. Attendance and Apologies	1.1 As per the Attendance Register.	
2. Items Additional to the Agenda	<p>3.0 The Chair welcomed Members and made the sad announcement that previous board Member Mervyn Winslade had passed away. He asked for a minutes silence in memory of Mervyn.</p> <p>3.1 Matthew Wall (MSW) wanted to update Members on the maintenance of an ordinary water course in North Newton. This will be discussed under item 9.</p> <p>3.2 Iain Sturdy (IDS) said the meeting was due to have a visitor from the Somerset Eel Recovery Project but unfortunately they were poorly. However, they would still be involved in the Eel Training Day in February.</p> <p>3.3 James Winslade said there is a lot of water coming from North Petherton overwhelming land and houses at</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.

	Fordgate which have not been affected before. This will be discussed under item 9.	
4.0 Declarations of Interest	3.1 None declared at this point.	
4. Opportunity for Members of the public to address the meeting	4.1. No members of the public were present.	
5. Minutes of Full Board Meeting held on 05 November 2024	5.1. <b>Proposed by Anthony Betty and seconded by David Vigar to 'sign the minutes as a true reflection of the meeting' All in favour</b>  Colin Passmore entered the room at 14.10	<b>RESOLUTION 01</b>
6. Matters Arising and Review of Outstanding Actions	6.1 There were no matters arising.  <b>P/20191105-2</b> - To convene a Task & Finish Group to review Electoral Districts. IDS asked Members to consider whether they wished to review the electoral districts considering how close the elections are. The Chair said his opinion is to keep the districts the same. – It was agreed not to review the electoral districts prior to the election this year..  <b>P/20240130-02</b> – Removal of Trees in viewed rhyne between Parchey and Sutton Corner - MSW said the Area Supervisor has spoken to the contractor who will undertake this work before the end of February  <b>P/20240130-03</b> – Reinstatement of Chedzoy Moor Drove following damage by Wessex Water. IDS said there has been correspondence with Wessex Water and the drove is looking better. The Chair added that the first section of the drove by the road has not been done and he suggested involving Chedzoy Parish Council, the EA and anyone else concerned. The Chair told Members there was another sewer break on Chedzoy Moor and this is making the situation worse as this is an important access route for the IDB. MSW said he will meet the Chair on site along with Rob King (RCK) and they will work out a plan. IDS said they would consider the impact on the functions and operations and act accordingly. Ongoing  <b>P/20240130-04</b> – Prompt EA to jet the outfall at Sam Gamblins Corner. IDS said this has been done several times in the past but it is silting back up again. It is an important outfall particularly with the extra water mentioned by James Winslade. He is considering asking the water injection dredger if they can give it a blast while they are passing but it's not a precise job and will need to be done with care to ensure the flap does not get damaged - Ongoing  <b>P/202401230-05</b> – Speak to the EA regarding removing trees from the Rivers Parrett and Tone. Roger Barrington has serious concerns over the trees growing near Hook Bridge spillway and said anything that snags in the trees will cause the water to spill over into Currymoor. The Chair said he and IDS had been to a meeting with the EA and they are waiting for the water levels to be suitable before	

	<p>carrying out the work. There was discussion about why the River Tone cannot be maintained under a PSCA similar to the River Parrett. IDS said funding for this work comes from the SRA and the money made available is put where it currently makes the greatest difference and the focus has been on the River Parrett. They are aware of concerns with both the trees and silt in the River Tone and these have been raised with the EA but their response is 'it's not important enough'. Roger Barrington asked how desilting of the River Tone would be carried out. IDS said water injection dredging from the vessel would not be straight forward, firstly because of the dredger cannot pass under the bridges and secondly the channel is smaller so there would be no air draft and floatation to do the work. Previously the work done by the EA has been bank based but this is a more costly approach due to hauling the waste away and that would increase the budget. Colin Passmore asked if snipping the trees with the slew on the pontoon would be possible. IDS said the pontoon is designed for stability and he would be concerned that the operation would cause instability of the pontoon. The Chair said he would have liked to see the weeds cut on the shoulder as a trial to see if the silt builds up quicker where it is cut or not - Ongoing</p> <p><b>P/20240619-01</b> - Matthew Wall to provide a suitable meeting date to discuss the problem with maize obstructing access points. MSW asked if he can push the meeting back as he has not had time to set it up. He would like to schedule the meeting between now and April - Carried forward.</p> <p>6.2. IDS said he would like to reflect on the outcome of the meeting of the 2 September in item 6; 6.4.when the Boards agreed to offer a loan to the EA to undertake more Main River maintenance He said there were no further actions apart from the IDB making the offer which has now been declined by the EA. The option the Board has gone for is to apply to the IDB Flood Recovery Fund for money to carry out the works and DEFRA have confirmed that the grant application for £75k was successful.</p>	
<p>7. Health &amp; Safety Report</p>	<p>7.1. Naomi Johnson (NJ) asked Members to take the report as read. Points to note were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rocky Thorne will attend the DEFRA 1 Water Safety Awareness training and Jody Farthing will undertake Mental Health First Aider training, both in early February.</li> <li>• Wessex Water have yet to attend to alter the drain outside the office building which is believed to be the cause of the unpleasant smell throughout the building.</li> <li>• The building has stayed dry over the winter but there is still roof debris building up due to birds which could cause damage over time.</li> </ul> <p>7.2. IDS said it should be noted in the H&amp;S report that</p>	

	<p>within the last 6 months there has been an incident which was reported to the Health &amp; Safety Executive and potentially the Boards could still be investigated.</p>	
<p>8. Finance Report</p>	<p>8.1. Maggie Hammond (MH) said the bank statements have been fully reconciled up to the end of December 2024 with no unusual entries. She added they have been countersigned by Stuart Kingham up to the end of October.</p> <p>8.2. MH said the budget was considered in detail at the F&amp;W Committee. She asked Members to note the forecast figures showing a surplus of £78k but these could change before the end of the year.</p> <p>8.3. There were recommendations from the F&amp;W committee which were to approve the following :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the creation of a new reserve for the environmental underspend in 2024/25. This will mean no budget will need to be raised in 2025/26. The money will be ringfenced for the biodiversity action plan and any water level management plan costs and environmental impact assessments.</li> </ul> <p><b>Proposed by David Vigar and seconded by Cllr Alan Bradford ‘to ringfence the environmental underspend for future years’ All in favour</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• accept the proposed budget for 2025/26 as per the papers and recommended by the Finance &amp; Works Committee.</li> </ul> <p><b>Proposed by Anthony Betty and seconded by Rebecca Horsington ‘to accept the 2025/26 budget’ All in favour</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• in proposing this budget, the penny rate will be 9.889 pence in the pound a 6.85% increase from 2024/24. This is needed to raise the drainage rates on the special levy as per the agreed budget</li> </ul> <p><b>Proposed by Colin Passmore and seconded by Cllr Alan Bradford ‘to adopt the pennyrate of 9.889’ All in favour</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to have fully funded Board schemes for next year, £30k needs to be released from the free reserves to fund these one off items. The reserves policy states there should be £750k in free reserves and MH said there is enough to afford to release £30k for a fully funded programme for 2025/26.</li> </ul> <p><b>Proposed by Barrie Bryer and seconded by David Vigar ‘to release £30k from the free reserves to fund one off schemes for next year’. All in favour</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The final recommendation is to allow permission for the RFO to set up a 95 day notice account to achieve more interest than the current interest of 1.6%. MH said she</li> </ul>	<p><b>RESOLUTION 02</b></p> <p><b>RESOLUTION 03</b></p> <p><b>RESOLUTION 04</b></p> <p><b>RESOLUTION 05</b></p>

	<p>would have to look at the situation but they could possibly invest £500k.</p> <p><b>Proposed by Roger Barrington and seconded by Cllr Norman Cavill ‘to allow Maggie Hammond to set up a 95 day notice account’ All in favour</b></p> <p>8.4. MH discussed the outstanding drainage rate position saying there is just over £8,500 outstanding which is a similar position to last year. She informed Members that on 21 January she attended Court to apply for liability orders for unpaid accounts and these will be issued in due course. The Chair thanked MH and Colin Passmore</p>	<p><b>RESOLUTION 06</b></p>
<p>9. Operations, Engineering &amp; Environment Report</p>	<p>9.1. Rob King (RCK) thanked Members for allowing early winter penn due to the very wet Autumn and although it has not stopped flooding it has definitely helped the situation. The Board has now gone to full winter penn in all areas.</p> <p>9.2. Morrisons in Minehead have finally completed their maintenance but we are still waiting for the Council to carry out their own work in the area.</p> <p>9.3. RCK showed slides of the excess amounts of water around Ilchester and Yeovil saying the water at Podimore Pumping Station should be flowing in the opposite direction and added the Area Supervisor said he has never seen the water flowing this way.</p> <p>9.4. RCK said the Area Supervisors have been checking all the structures and arranging any repairs which are being completed by Terrys Ironworks. He will have more to report at the next Full Board meeting in April.</p> <p>9.5. James Winslade said due to housebuilding, water in North Petherton is definitely coming down to North Moor a lot more quickly. He asked whether more pressure should be put on Developers to put money into flood prevention. The Chair said the problem is the water runs down the roads because it cannot enter the ditches as they are no longer maintained. Cllr Alan Bradford said the roads have been deteriorating for the last few years because the weight of the lorries and farm vehicles are too heavy for the roads and they cause dips which the water sits in. IDS said James Winslade had helped a lot of people when he dug a channel to allow water into the Parkbrook rhyne recently, but it is not a long-term solution and he believes work needs to be done and the IDB should be involved. Cllr Julian Taylor said he agrees with James Winslade, saying the rainfall runoff is brown from the Quantocks within 24 hours whereas in the past it took up to three days for the water to be brown. He said water (and soil) is being exported off of the Quantocks and not being held back. The Chair added that the ground is so saturated after two years of bad weather everything that falls now is complete runoff.</p>	

9.6. MSW told Members that routine maintenance was 97% complete which he is very pleased with considering the weather. They have run out of time on Stanmoor and a couple of other places due to access issues.

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**9.7 CONFIDENTIAL SESSION**  
**Members of the public were asked to leave the room**  
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9.8. The Chair discussed the maintenance of the River Cary which is an EA maintained river that the IDB have undertaken work on under a Public Sector Co-operation Agreement. He handed over to MSW who showed a plan of the river where the weed cut had been completed. Weather and high water levels have hindered the work but good progress has been made so far. Unfortunately, due to heavy rain over the last 48 hours work has had to stop and the long reach machine being used by the contractor has been off-hired but when water levels subside they will re-hire and continue with the work. MSW showed before and after pictures of the work completed so far. Donna Gowler asked how long it had been since the river was maintained. David Vigar said it was last done two years ago and annually before that. MSW said they had to stop tree removal work last week as there were reports of an otter and the owner of Viaduct Fisheries wasn't too keen on the tree being removed. IDS said the current maintenance we are doing has been more than routine maintenance due to neglect which is why it has taken longer and it has been done through a PSCA. The Chair concluded the discussion by saying the River Cary had been in a state, full of weeds and trees but by the time the IDB have finished the work it will be much better. He thanked IDS & MSW for getting the project completed and said landowners were grateful. Also, he would like it mentioned in the press and ADA gazette that through lack of maintenance funding the EA were unable to do the work so the IDB have taken on the challenge and fortunately been able to reclaim the money from the Flood Recovery Fund.

9.9. Cllr Julian Taylor handed out a copy of his email to Emma Hardy MP and a copy of her response. He gave some background information saying he'd had a meeting with his MP and was told the floods in 2014 were not caused by austerity or budget cutbacks but by exceptional rainfall. He then had a discussion with the EA over maintenance of the banks on the Northmoor Drain and in response to his questions he received an email telling him he was a riparian owner and was responsible for maintaining his stretch of the Northmoor Drain. Cllr Julian Taylor said he had carried out some research at the Somerset Heritage Centre and informed Members that Northmoor Drain was an artificial watercourse created in the first part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and given to Northmoor Drainage Board. He said he would be surprised if the farmers who gave the land at the time would have expected riparian ownership and he was disappointed with

the response and planned to take the letter to other sources.

9.10.MSW updated Members on the unconsented fencing at Brickyard Rhyne saying he is concerned that it may become a traveller site as historically this often causes issues as these sites become more populated over time restricting access further. It can then become hazardous to carry out maintenance. A letter has been sent to request removal of the fencing but there has been no response. MSW said the Board needs to continue moving this forward but potentially, it could cost a lot of money in enforcement action. IDS said a sub-committee has been formed with delegated authority and their view is to proceed with enforcement. He said it will be protracted and potentially hazardous and he does not want to put officers in harms way so they would probably take advice from solicitors and engage people who are experts at dealing with these situations. Also, he said the sub-committee needs to make sure enforcement action is reasonable and proportionate to the functions of the organisation. If it is a big flood risk problem, the Board should be determined and thorough but if it isn't high risk are there other actions to take such as diverting the watercourse or letting the landowners do the maintenance which has been happening since the fence has been put in place. The Chair said when the sub-committee met they came to the conclusion it is unconsented work on a viewed rhyne which affects several houses in Stretcholt and had this been anyone else they would not hesitate in putting an enforcement notice on them and he says these people should not be treated any differently. He said he has advised MSW if there is no response by the end of February they should contact Wilkie Chapman Solicitors to see how they proceed. The Chair thinks Somerset Council should be made aware of the problems and ask for them to be taken in to consideration when they are reviewing planning permissions. Virginie Martin will update her response. Donna Gowler suggested a further letter to the landowner with a deadline for them to respond by. Anthony Betty said there had been previous correspondence with them.

9.11.Caroline Murray asked Members to take the engineering report as read. She showed a location map of the projects CALM are currently working on, have completed and the SRA work. Contractors have been appointed for the peat projects at Fiddlers End and Blackhole and they should be completed before the end of March with the funding available. CM said the Nythe Road headwall work has had to be delayed although the designs are ready, the road closures plans would not be in place to enable the work to be completed before the end of March.

9.12.IDS ran through the Environment report asking Members to take it as read. The Chair asked why the funding for eel passes has to be spent by March? IDS said it is a condition of the grant which is a frustration He added all the grant funding that has been made available

**ACTION**  
P/20250128 – 06

at short notice has a tight deadline. MSW said eels are a protected species and the time for this work is critical and it needs to be done at a certain time of the year and the timing should be matched with the migration of the eels.

9.13. Donna Gowler said there are beavers in the Avalon Marshes which are a protected species but they are being monitored in case they do any damage. She confirmed that NE had not introduced the Beaver to this location.

The Chair said the Langacre Rhyne has been kept high and asked if RCK could look into it as it was causing problems.

9.14. At this point Mark Heywood declared an interest. IDS told Members an unconsented structure associated with a paludiculture/peat project had been built with a bank constructed to retain water in a damp zone with the intention of growing bullrushes as part of a trial sponsored by DEFRA. The issues are the installation is on a viewed rhyne and there was no application for land drainage sent. Also, it was a Board Member who did the work. IDS said he was disappointed the Member did not go through the correct procedures of a consent application which would probably have been rejected as it is in the middle of a watercourse but the impact on maintenance was minor. A letter has been sent to the Member to say there are concerns that a Board Member would do this and they have apologised and the structure has been removed. Anthony Betty asked if it breaks any code of conduct. IDS said it does but also it affects the reputation of the Board. The Chair said the Member knows they have done wrong but he is concerned as it's not the first time they've done it and if the Member leads on the DEFRA projects the people who award the work need to make sure he understands the rules and regulations.

9.15. Cllr Alan Bradford declared an interest in the next topic. MSW updated Members on how they will proceed with the maintenance of a watercourse in North Newton which is outside of the Boards area. He said previously Cllr Alan Bradford has asked the council to undertake the maintenance but it takes a long time for them to take action and it does have an impact on the Boards inlet structure so the IDB have done the work under an AC13 contract clause with the existing contractor. It cannot be taken into view as it is outside of the Boards area but has been done as a one off piece of work. IDS said the Board can do work with an agreement outside the Boards boundary where it benefits the Boards area but this is possibly not coming under those criteria. The other option would be with the agreement of an authority for the Board to do the work under their powers with IDS saying his worry was around liability. Cllr Alan Bradford said the work was always undertaken by Sedgemoor Council in conjunction with the Parrett IDB. He said if the ditch becomes blocked the village floods. There was discussion around how the work could be done with IDS saying the Board could do the work as a contractor to the council.

<p>10. SRA Update</p>	<p>10.1.CM gave an update saying:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Water Injection Dredging is due to be completed this week. She said the new method working with an excavator mounted on a floating pontoon has been working really well along side the water injection dredger.</li> <li>• The Sowey bank raising is in the process of being designed and then they can request prices from contractors.</li> <li>• The KSD/Sowey outfalls – a contractor has been appointed but the ground conditions are too wet so they are revising the program until a time when the ground conditions are more suitable.</li> </ul> <p>Cllr Julian Taylor asked whether there were any comments about the lack of funding for the EA and what political lobbying the SRA has undertaken with the treasury to increase funding for Somerset. IDS said the lack of funding was brought up but it would be unwise of the SRA to lobby for more funding as Somerset already has special arrangements for an extra £3million via the SRA. IDS said there was a positive outcome for main river maintenance funding and the EA have bid to the SRA for funds to top up their maintenance budgets for 2025/26 and this has been accepted.</p> <p>10.2.Barrie Bryer said he noticed the Cary is up to full height and the whole area could flood. He thinks nobody is taking any notice and he would like it put on record that, that could happen. The Chair said he is annoyed by the operation of Monksleaze without the IDB’s permission and the detrimental effect downstream is phenomenal. IDS said the EA usually ring the IDB for agreement but he thinks they may assume the IDB will always say yes. He will talk to the EA to make sure they ask first as there was a historic operating rule that every 7 days it was switched off to give the bottom end the chance to recover. Rebecca Horsington asked if the EA could be reminded of the 7 day rule. Mark Heywood said for years the structure was not used in that way and asked if the EA have changed the parameters to use it. The Chair confirmed they had.</p>	<p><b>ACTION</b> P/20250128 – 07</p>
<p>11. Issues and Items to be raised with ADA</p>	<p>11.1.The Chair said he wanted to raise the difficulty in Obtaining public sector cooperation agreements and underfunding for maintenance.</p> <p>11.2.The Chair said ADA are doing a consultation on making sure Board Members behaviour at meetings is acceptable. They are working on sanctions as there are currently none in place. Anthony Betty asked if similar sanctions can be put in place for non-approved apologies. The Chair asked for attendance at sub-committee meetings to be reviewed at the next Full Board meeting.</p>	
<p>18. Any Other Business</p>	<p>18.1.IDS said he has been asked by Wembdon Parish Council if maintenance on some of the watercourses within the Boards boundary can be added to the Boards maintenance contract for the area. He said the WPC would pay but there would have to be a PCSA. Currently these watercourses are not maintained and cause flooding to</p>	

	<p>road and property access. MH said she would like a written agreement as there has been issues with agreements like this in other Boards. Anthony Betty declared an interest. The Chair asked for an investigation and report back at the next meeting.</p> <p><b>Proposed by James Winslade and seconded by Mark Heywood 'to investigate the work needed and report back at the next meeting'</b>  <b>All in favour</b></p>	<p><b>RESOLUTION 08</b></p>
<p>19. Date of Next Meeting</p>	<p>19.1. The date of the next meeting is Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2025</p> <p>The Chair thanked Members for attending and the meeting closed at 16.30</p>	

Annex:

A. Parrett Board – Table of Outstanding Actions

CHAIR..... DATE .....

**PARRETT BOARD – TABLE OF OUTSTANDING ACTIONS**

Action Number:	Action:	Actionee:
P/20240130-02	Removal of trees in viewed rhyne between Parchey and Sutton Corner	Operations Manager – Ongoing
P/20240130-03	Reinstatement of Chedzoy Moor Drove following damage by Wessex Water	MSW/ Contracts Manager – Ongoing
P/20240130-04	Prompt EA to jet Sam Gamblins Corner	Clerk/CEO – Carried forward
P/20240130-05	Speak to the EA regarding removing the trees from the River Parrett and Tone	Clerk/CEO - Ongoing
P/20240619-01	Matthew Wall to provide a suitable meeting date to discuss maize.	MSW/ Contracts Manager – Carried forward
P/20250128-01	Brickyard Rhyne unconsented fencing. MSW if there is no response by the end of February they should contact Wilkie Chapman Solicitors to see how they proceed.	MW
P/20250128-02	Monksleaze – IDS to talk to the EA to make sure they ask first as there was a rule that every 7 days it was switched off to give the bottom end the chance to recover. EA to be reminded of the 7 day rule.	IDS
Resolution 08	An investigation and report back at the next meeting on Wembdon Parish Council if maintenance on some of the watercourses within the Boards boundary can be added to the Boards maintenance contract for the area	IDS
P/20250128 – 06	Unconsented work on a viewed rhyne at Stretcholt which affects several houses. Virginie Martin will update her response.	VM
P/20250128 – 07	Operation of Monksleaze without IDB permission, detrimental effect downstream. EA usually ring IDB for agreement but may assume IDB will always say yes. IDS to speak to the EA to make sure they ask first as there was a historic operating rule that every 7 days it was switched off to give the bottom end the chance to recover. Remind EA of the 7 day rule	IDS