

Minutes of the Full Meeting of the Somerset Drainage Boards Consortium held at Sedgemoor Market Centre, Bridgwater on Tuesday 21 October 2014 at 7.00pm
Chairman – Peter Maltby

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1. **Attendance and Apologies** – as per attendance sheet appended. The Chairman (PM) requested that members add their email addresses to the attendance sheet.
2. **Items additional to the agenda** – Nick Stevens (NWS) Item (10) report on an action concerning the Water Level Management Plan.
3. **Opportunity for any member of the public to address the meeting** – 1 public member attended but did not wish to address the meeting.
4. **Chairman's Report** – appended. PM confirmed that the SRB should now be known as the Somerset Rivers Authority.
5. **Minutes of the Consortium meeting of 31 October 2013** – Item 8 should read Broads not Boards. With this amendment the chairman signed the minutes as a true and correct record.
Proposed: Tony Bradford, Seconded: David Spicer "that the minutes are signed as a true and correct record". All in favour RESOLUTION 1
6. **Matters Arising** – Tony Bradford (TB) Item 6 – a letter of gratitude should be sent to the Environment Agency (EA) for the dredging work that was completed ahead of schedule and to a high standard. Charlie Ainge (CA) suggested that a press release is carried out. Concern was expressed for the lack of previous funding and future funding. It was agreed a letter from the Consortium would be sent to the Prime Minister and copies to Prince Charles and the local agency. Item 10 – Bleadon Sluice update – nothing further to report at this time; IDS to follow up.
7. **Finance Report** – In the absence of Stephen Gee, NWS circulated a report and gave a brief explanation. The income and expenditure sheet was accepted by members. Regarding the SDBC draft budget, TB questioned the charge for development and reported that there is mechanism for discharge costs being used in East Anglia. NWS advised that the system there is better established and was in place prior to current initiatives. NWS was asked to investigate. SUDS: SCC with Statutory and submissive powers which could be introduced was suggested by Julian Taylor (JT). IDS advised that SCC are to regulate surface water run-off via SUDs, however the current Defra view is that SCC may not be the correct body although the planning authority may be. ADA and IDS have drafted responses to a public consultation. Rating System: members were advised that the new rating system will use the traditional OS field numbers rather than new IAX numbers; Water Management Alliance will be consulted to discuss field reference numbers. LIDAR: NWS advised that the Board has used LIDAR for approx 8 years, with information received from the EA; LIDAR is used to allow modelling of tidal flooding.
8. **Engineering Works** – appended. IDS provided an overview of the report with a presentation of photographs. Thorney Ring Bank with funding from the 20 year Flood Action Plan will provide protection for approximately 12 properties and the highway. The EA has requested an extension to the works; the scheme will be Thorney Pottery Ring Bank. Axe Brue area – tenders for an outfall at Biddisham have been received for approval at a forthcoming Axe Brue meeting. Brue Dredging – design and costings are complete. The project will be submitted for Royal Bath and West Society funding; however the project does not fit the RB&W's preferred model. West Huntspill scheme – this scheme is to be completed in phases. North Somerset Services – review of engineering services provided to North Somerset Levels IDB is due; initial feedback is that NSL members are satisfied with the work undertaken. For the SDBC the work load is greater than expected at beginning of the project as development control for Weston-Super-Mare is immense; review document draft to be presented to NSL next week.
9. **Natural England – Assessment of the effects of recent flood events on wildlife** – Mark Jones gave a briefing and presentation of slides/photographs. A discussion was then held including:
 - Hay cut on moor following the flooding was only useful for bedding
 - The report was very interesting although there is concern that budgets will be cut because of the findings Natural England are in favour of dredging and control of water.
 - Natural England is a Government advisor with regard to barrage discussions
 - Surge barrier is easier on environmental impact than a tidal exclusion barrier
 - High Level areas need to be managed well to receive conservation payments; NE are working with farmers to achieve targets
 - The chronic impact to livestock farming is a concern of the Board, however if flooding continues livestock farming will cease, which will be detrimental to wildlife
 - NE are committed to continuing support to farmers on the levels and moors

- The works of the IDB prior to 2012 flooding allowed farmers to continue farming; however in the flood event of 2013/14 management of water levels did not allow for farming practices and wildlife management

The Chairman thanked M Jones for his attendance and presentation, opining that NE has become more receptive to the IDB and farmers which has improved working relations. Members gave their appreciation to Mr Jones by way of a round of applause.

10. 20 Year Flood Action Plan and Somerset Rivers Board update including CEH Report - NWS advised that the title Somerset Rivers Board has now been amended to Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA) to prevent possible confusion with the Somerset Drainage Boards.

The current proposals which remain subject to further change and agreement will be scrutinised by a Leader Working Group on Monday 13 October. There are two principles that are key interest to the Boards:

(1) The SRA should not diminish the responsibilities of the individual partners nor those of riparian owners as well as the existing flood risk management authorities (FRMAs) including IDBs.

(2) Existing funding streams, responsibilities and accountabilities would continue as existing.

The SRA has the accountability for ensuring that all of the FRMA work is undertaken in a coordinated way and that opportunities would be taken for joint delivery where agreed.

The SRA will operate across the whole of Somerset and will not be confined to the Parrett & Tone and Axe Brue and the streams flowing into the Bristol Channel.

IDS advised that the Board has been asked to provide an estimate for the Shadow SRA first year spend; this has been estimated at £3.0m, to include maintenance and operations identified by the Agency and IDB's.

The Environment Secretary, L Truss, will be asked if a new precepting authority (the SRA) can be set up for April 2016, interim funding would be required from central government until that time.

11. Office Accommodation Bradbury House update – NWS advised that Bradbury House is owned by the Axe Brue IDB with SDBC and the Parrett IDB as tenants.

The building was purchased in October 2013, with refurbishment works awarded to Melhuish & Sanders following a strict tendering process. Completion of refurbishment works is due 3rd week of November, with floor coverings, IT equipment and telephones to be installed by mid-December. Re-location of offices and staff is due to take place mid-December.

12. Special Correspondence and meetings – NWS advised that at a recent Partnership Framework meeting the Lincolnshire model was discussed; the model may not apply to Somerset as the two areas are quite diverse in size and operation. To date the EA, IDBs and Planning Managers have been working well although there is no further funding for additional works.

Public Sector Co-operation Agreements, although present in the Lincolnshire Agreement were discussed at the Partnership Framework meeting.

13. Any Other Business - none

14. Date of next meeting – SWADA 10 December 2014, Oaktree Arena and SDBC Management Committee 16 December 2014, 1 Church Street, Highbridge.

The Chairman thanked members for their attendance and closed the meeting at 9.22pm

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Chairman

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Date