

SRA BOARD MEETING – 26th OCTOBER 2016

THE SRA BOARD

Minutes of a meeting of the Board of the Somerset Rivers Authority held at the offices of South Somerset District Council on Wednesday 26th October, 2016 at 10am.

PRESENT

Cllr John Osman (Chair)
Tony Bradford (Vice-Chair)
Ray Adlam, Axe Brue IDB
Cllr Anne Fraser, SDC
Andrew Gilling, Axe Brue IDB
Nick Gupta, EA
Matthew Heard, Natural England
David Jenkins, Wessex RFCC
Cllr Tom Killen, MDC
Cllr Ric Pallister, SSSC
David Spicer, Parrett IDB
Cllr Anthony Trollope-Bellew, WSC
Cllr John Williams, TDBC

In Attendance:

Emma Beardsley, SCC
Tim Burton, TDBC
Nicola Dawson, SCC
Sarah Diacono, SRA

Stuart Finney, MDC
Sally Haslam, DCLG
Paula Hewitt, SCC
Sarah Lewis, Highways England
Dan Martin, SCC
Nick Plumley, SDC
Graham Quarrier, EA
Nick Stevens, SDBC
Ben Thorne, FWAG SW

Apologies:

Maduabuchi Ani, Highways
England
Brendan Cleere, TDBC
James Cruddas, DCLG
Jeff Fear, Axe Brue IDB
Cllr David Hall, SCC
Kathryn Holdsworth, DEFRA
Peter Maltby, Parrett IDB

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST – item 1

No new declarations of interest were made, beyond the usual ones already recorded by Members.

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING WEDNESDAY 27 JULY, 2016 – item 2

The minutes of the Board meeting held on 27 July, 2016 were signed as correct.

3. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

Cllr John Osman invited Ilchester resident J Eddie Edmondson to put his question about the Ilchester A303 flood alleviation scheme to the Board. Mr Edmondson said the main issue that he and other residents had with

Highways England concerned the validity of data used for modelling. He said there was now clear evidence (through a new GPS survey commissioned by Mead resident Graham Hill) that Highways England had used incorrect height data: some assumptions used in modelling may be up to half a metre out. Mr Edmondson felt that residents could have been spared much stress, frustration and anxiety. However, a recent letter from Highways England said that funding was now available for further modelling which would take account of residents' concerns, and that it was intended to use the Environment Agency's framework contract system for procuring this extra work. Mr Edmondson asked if the SRA would commission and fund independent experts to review the modelling data used so far and advise Highways England on the correct data to be used for future modelling.

Cllr Osman thanked Mr Edmondson and moved on to the following item.

4. UPDATE ON THE A303 SCHEME – item 4

The Chair of the SRA Management Group Paula Hewitt began by recalling the A303 flood of Christmas Eve, 2013, which had a big impact locally and on travellers across the South West. Somerset's 20 Year Flood Action Plan and the SRA recognised that a solution which met everyone's needs had to be found for this strategic route. The situation was complex: the Management Group had been working with Highways England, the Environment Agency, the Parrett Internal Drainage Board and local people to look at impacts upstream, downstream, on the A303 and on residents. Funding for extra modelling was welcomed: it was important to get this scheme right.

Ms Hewitt handed over to Sarah Lewis, an asset manager from Highways England, who gave a short presentation about the historical background to this scheme, some previous assessments, how Highways England operates and what could be expected as this scheme progressed. Ms Lewis noted that the A303 had been completely closed for 20 hours at Christmas 2013, with the westbound carriageway closed for a further three hours. The A37 had also been affected. Ms Lewis outlined the source of the flooding, giving details of local brooks, rhynes and culverts under the A303. She described how Atkins had been appointed as consultants to undertake a flood study, which led to a preferred option and design, and presentations to various stakeholders. In June 2016, objecting residents submitted a petition. Highways England was also made aware of new data. It had now halted the current scheme and accepted that some re-modelling was needed. A bid for further funding had been successful, which allowed further modelling to be done. Ms Lewis described Highway England's developing use of the Environment Agency's framework system for procuring contractors. After re-modelling work had been done, she said that presentations would be given, as before, about findings, a preferred option and moving forward. Highways England wanted to engage with people and was open to recommendations.

Cllr Osman thanked Ms Lewis. He noted what had been done and welcomed the new work that was going to be done. He stressed the need to keep

residents involved, not just at the end of the re-modelling process, but during it. He asked Ms Lewis to discuss with Ms Hewitt how this should be done.

A number of points were raised during the discussion, including:

Highways England's re-think was good news, inspiring confidence in the process to come. However, an assurance was sought that the default position would continue to be that the A303 should act as a free-running spillway before flooding reached properties in Ilchester Mead or Ilchester itself, with no wall built along the side of the A303 which would act as a dam. The SRA's position is that whatever happens on the A303 should not result in the flooding of properties.

This was an upper catchment problem, with exceptionally heavy rainfall falling on top of exceptionally heavy rainfall, at Christmas 2013. It would not have mattered what was done further down, including whether the Sowey had been widened.

Cllr Osman concluded by thanking Ms Hewitt, Ms Lewis and members of the public and repeated his invitation for local people to get involved in the process of developing this scheme.

5. DREDGING STRATEGY AND PLANS – item 5

Nick Stevens recapped on the origins and purpose of the dredging strategy and work done earlier this year by consultants HR Wallingford. He picked out their recommendation of agitation dredging as the only real way forward for maintenance, and hence the need for trials of this method. He said the consultants' report had not looked at environmental and cost-benefit assessments: the trials would provide some of this information, as well as a route to getting costs down. The latest news was that autumn monitoring had just been done over the 8km length of the 2014 pioneer dredge, which would now be assessed to see how much silt had come back. This would inform the decision about what maintenance dredging was required next year. Contracts had been let for the trial in November of two different techniques by one contractor. A very economic package had been offered: the contractors were investing some of their own money, seeing this as a long-term business opportunity. All the necessary approvals and permits had been obtained from Natural England and the Environment Agency, concerning such matters as habitats and the Water Framework Directive, for trials on the November tides. The monitoring programme was being finalised and equipment installed to give much more information which could be used to improve the dredging strategy in the future. Modelling work looking at additional locations on the River Parrett was due to come to an end very soon. With the benefit of having analysed all this information, it was hoped to come back to the Board in the New Year with the completed strategy.

Points raised during the discussion:

The dredging report by HR Wallingford was clear and useful, and could help to inform forthcoming decisions by the SRA Board about priorities. However, the dredging strategy board felt overall that the report did not give a complete picture. As the dredging trials, together with the work being done by the Management Group on prioritisation, would give more information about issues such as the environment and cost benefits, it was judged better to wait for the finished dredging strategy in the New Year. In the meantime, any Board members interested were welcome to attend the next meeting of the dredging strategy board.

Cllr Osman thanked Mr Stevens and the dredging strategy team. He said he looked forward to the trials in November and the report in February 2017.

RESOLVED: The recommendation was passed as proposed in the report -
1. Note the progress with the preparation of a dredging strategy and the undertaking of dredging trials in November and December.

6. BRIDGWATER TIDAL BARRIER – item 6

Graham Quarrier from the Environment Agency said that a recent consultation period had focused on the two preferred sites for a barrier and what form it might take. Following feedback early on, he said that more modelling had been done to try to help create a complete system that worked for everybody, including tidal banks and communities downstream at Comwich and Cannington. Several useful sessions had been held with a stakeholder group looking at the issues of silt and navigation; it was important to get a barrier built quickly, but people also wanted it to be future-proof – and looking to fulfil this ambition had been key in gaining the support of the Parrett IDB, who had concerns about silt upstream. Designing for flexibility was crucial. Mr Quarrier said that a barrier would be like nothing else seen in Somerset before. He showed photographs of structures from Hull, the Thames and Korea. Discussions with the operators of other gates would help establish what would best suit the environment around Bridgwater. There was a debate to be had about whether the barrier should be a big bold statement, or more tucked away. Mr Quarrier stressed that any site chosen would be a compromise: Site 4 seemed to give more protection to a wider area and had fewer constraints on building, but it was technically quite tricky. It was currently the public's favoured option: it seemed to keep floods further away. Site 5 would cause more disturbance to Chilton Trinity and Express Park: it did not seem to be so helpful in promoting growth and had less room for storing water.

Estimated costs had gone up for several reasons, including: moving the Barrier to locations further downstream than previous studies had looked at, meant the river was wider; banks and communities downstream were also now being considered; construction prices were increasing, a faster-than-inflation trend likely to continue, especially with Hinkley coming up; partners were getting a better idea of the amount of land a Barrier might need and the

legal process required: the largest estimates include 45% contingency, reflecting experience elsewhere.

With regard to the affordability of the Barrier, Mr Quarrier explained how more national funding can be acquired, with more funding also coming in from local sources. For several years, Sedgemoor District Council had been collecting from new developments in Bridgwater (via the Community Infrastructure Levy) and one lesson learned from other towns was that contributions can be sought from areas that will benefit from a barrier.

Cllr Anne Fraser gave more details about funding. She said that Sedgemoor DC had been collecting money on a flood tariff basis on every new development in Sedgemoor. Larger developments pay up to £100,000. So far £1.49m had been collected: £6million had been identified for collection upon the completion of schemes. Other sources would be approached. Everyone was aiming for the best solution at the cheapest price. One question being considered was whether the structure should be made into something that people would want to look at, in which case there could be spin-offs to get funding from other agencies and parties not necessarily thought of at the moment. Cllr Fraser was keen for members of the Environment Agency's Large Projects Review Group to visit Bridgwater in the spring.

Mr Quarrier said that test boreholes should be drilled at both preferred sites before Christmas, and more consultation meetings were due to be held to help choose a preferred option. He said Sedgemoor was in a strong position. Under Flood Defence In Aid rules other partners could put more money into a scheme to get the solution they want. He expected there to be a preferred site, and consultation upon that option, next spring.

Nick Plumley, of Sedgemoor District Council, said it was crucial to focus at this stage on the quality of the outcome, and on what science says about the best solution, not on the budget. Noting the significant contingency allowances, he said it was important not to overreact to what appeared to be a significant increase in costs. Later this year, the process would be set in motion of getting a clear financial strategy in time for the Transport and Works Act Order. To put matters in context, he said that figures of £70m upwards were being quoted for a Weymouth Barrier. He said that Sedgemoor was very confident and looked forward to the project proceeding.

Cllr Osman said he was very impressed with 95% of what he had seen and heard but by Spring 2017 people had to be able to say how they were going to pay for a Barrier, and have a very clear and detailed financial plan when going out to consultation, because, even allowing for contingency, costs had increased substantially.

Points raised during the discussion:

At a Wessex Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (WRFCC) presentation on climate change, Bridgwater had been listed as one of the 12 places

nationally most vulnerable to tidal surge. WRFCC anticipated that the most substantial element of funding for this scheme would be grant in aid, which was money allocated by Defra through the Environment Agency, on the advice of the 12 regional committees, and for Wessex it was registered as a priority for funding. While it was important to close down budget uncertainty as soon as possible, in mitigation it was very difficult to estimate the cost of a scheme before one knew what the scheme would be.

Government funding would be essential as the sums involved were massive.

It was a great pity that because of costs it looked like it was going to be impossible to incorporate a road crossing, which would benefit West Somerset and Bridgwater (for example, lorries going to Cannington Grain).

It was critical to build a barrier in the right place, even if it cost more, because only one was ever going to be built, and it had to give maximum flood benefit to Bridgwater and surrounding areas

Construction was aimed for by 2024. This was the date that Liz Truss [former Secretary of State at Defra] had wanted. It would be good if the SRA could get the scheme's continuing priority re-affirmed by the Government.

The Barrier features in the Environment Agency's 6 Year programme and has long been seen as an important – and credible – piece of national infrastructure. The timetable had been brought forward because it was thought it could help with flood management.

Cllr Osman concluded by saying that the Bridgwater Tidal Barrier was a major part of Somerset's 20 Year Flood Action Plan, and before that of Sedgemoor and Environment Agency plans, but next Spring was a key time, because while the Government was still committed in principle, a £30m project was different to an £80m project. There was a need to get costings, and start lobbying and consultations with anyone who could fund this all-important project to ensure that there was a funding plan in place by next Spring.

The report was noted.

7. PRECEPTING LEGISLATION AND NEXT YEAR'S FUNDING – item 7

Sally Haslam from the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) reminded members that, at the last Board meeting, her colleague James Cruddas had outlined the timetables and steps involved in drawing up passing precepting legislation. Those procedural matters had not changed. Ministers in DCLG, Defra and the Treasury had been briefed as part of the necessary business of settling the policy intent and securing collective agreement. The Government was still deciding which measures were going to be included in which Bills. More would be known in the next few weeks.

Cllr Osman said that as legislation establishing the SRA as a separate precepting authority would not be in place for April, he understood that the Government had allowed local authorities to pass funds from council tax to the SRA, frozen at this year's levels. Local authority leaders needed to take this proposition back to their councils. He noted that Sedgemoor had previously taken a different route [by contributing a sum equivalent to 1.25% on council tax from the council's reserves] and would therefore need to consider approaching DCLG with a request to allow them to raise council tax next year for this purpose.

Points raised during the discussion:

Sedgemoor expected to join other local authorities in introducing the shadow precept, instead of doing what it had done before, but it would like an assurance that the original 1.25% increase would remain the same. DCLG confirmed this.

Given the assurance that the Government was moving towards precepting legislation, the leaders of different local authorities confirmed that they would recommend their members to continue precepting on behalf on the SRA.

Cllr Osman said that discussions would continue at Leaders' meetings. It was vital the SRA's important work should go on.

8. SRA 2016/17 QUARTER 2 PERFORMANCE REPORTS – item 8

8a. Progress and risks

Sarah Diacono said a new dashboard approach had been developed for progress updates, which she hoped would be easier to read. She asked for feedback on the new format plus any thoughts on how it could be improved, outside of the meeting.

Ms Diacono said that 62 actions were either in progress or just completed. The vast bulk of schemes were on track in terms of budget and delivery time. There were some risks with larger projects such as the Bridgwater Barrier, the Sowy project and the Taunton scheme. Ms Diacono outlined particular achievements since the last SRA Board meeting in July, such as the completion of the 750m Parrett pioneer dredge, and substantial progress on the £4 million scheme at Cannington, to which the SRA was contributing. A lot of maintenance works were now starting and would continue throughout the winter (for example, on rivers and additional works on highways). Small-scale on-farm natural flood management works were proceeding apace. Ms Diacono noted that the dredging trials might be extended as and when conclusions were reached from monitoring.

Points raised during the discussion:

Peat disposal was a problem because contrary to expectations it was not seen by producers as a commercial opportunity. Producers had been approached and effectively offered free peat but because it needs processing for horticulture, they were not interested. There were limits to how much peat you could spread on farmland without spoiling existing soil.

RESOLVED: The recommendations were passed as proposed in the report -
1. Note the overall progress and key risks of the SRA's Enhanced Programme for the year, as shown in the 2nd Quarter 2016/17 Enhanced Programme Performance Dashboard and Full Report.

8b. Finance

Emma Beardsley explained the SRA's financial position at the end of the 2nd quarter 2016-17. Forecasting information provided by delivery partners indicated that almost 50% (£5.6m) of the SRA's planned spend for 2016-7 had taken place, though this was not yet reflected in the total amount so far paid to delivery partners (£3.4m), because of time-lags between delivery partners receiving contractor invoices and claims being raised with the SRA.

She recommended using £9k contingency to cover the small-scale overspend of two actions from the 2015-16 Enhanced Maintenance Programme, explaining that this proposal had been put forward by the SRA's Technical Group and reviewed by the Management Group. Details were highlighted in an accompanying commercially sensitive, confidential report. If the recommendation was agreed, it would leave a balance of £219k from the remaining 2015/16 Interim Funding in Contingency.

No questions were asked.

RESOLVED: The recommendations were passed as proposed in the report -
1. Note the contents of the attached 2nd Quarter financial summary report
2. Approve the use of £9k contingency to cover the small scale overspend of two actions from the 2015/16 Enhanced Maintenance Programme

9. FAP SPECIFIC SCHEME UPDATES – item 9

a. Taunton Strategic Flood Alleviation Improvements Scheme

Tim Burton, Taunton Deane project sponsor for this scheme, emphasised that it was being taken forward jointly by Taunton Deane Borough Council and the Environment Agency. He said Phase 1 (a high-level study of flood relief options for Taunton) had been completed in 2014, and two important Phase 2 milestones had very recently been achieved. The main consultants had been appointed and started work – and the collaboration agreement between TDBC and the Environment Agency for Phase 2 had been signed.

Mr Burton said the scheme was a cocktail of interventions, potentially. An expensive and significant one was a detention reservoir at Bradford on Tone:

Phase 2 would look at this proposal in more detail (in terms of extent, design, etc), at existing Taunton town centre flood defences and what could be done with them, and at the potential of conveyance works through French and Firepool weirs in the town. A stand-alone option for Bathpool was closely linked with the urban extension at Monkton Heathfield. Funding for Phase 2 was coming from TDBC and the Environment Agency, with a contribution from Somerset Rivers Authority. As Phase 2 progressed, costs would become clearer, particularly as regards Bradford on Tone; this would help with other sources of funding. A bid had been put into Defra. An announcement was hoped for in the Autumn Statement.

Consultants now needed to get on to land and make assessments at Bradford on Tone, so landowners would be contacted in the near future. Three key milestones for next year were: a stakeholder event in February; a preferred option completed in autumn of next year; a planning application for the Bradford on Tone scheme at the end of next year or early 2018. A big issue for timescales beyond that was land acquisition, and the possible need for Compulsory Purchase Orders.

Points raised during the discussion:

The scheme was welcomed – as was the SRA's support for it. New developments in Taunton were totally reliant upon its delivery.

As funding was so crucial, Taunton Deane was urged to consider a flood tariff similar to the one operational in Sedgemoor (one of the first, if not the first, in the country). The issue was going to be looked into, though it was noted that there were many demands upon the Community Infrastructure Levy, and not enough would be raised to pay for this scheme in its entirety. However, it would now be given priority as an element of funding.

Highways England would be added to the list of key stakeholders.

RESOLVED: The recommendation was passed as proposed in the report - 1. The Board note the contents of the report and progress made on the Taunton Strategic Flood Alleviation Scheme for Phase 2 and consider this as an appropriate basis for continued joint project working.

b. SUDS

Dan Martin, Flood Risk Manager at Somerset County Council, said the SRA's Workstream 3, Urban Water Management, covered issues of widespread public concern. The aim is to build evidence to prove or disprove concerns and implement measures to address known shortcomings. Mr Martin emphasised the importance of ongoing support from district council colleagues, as well as other consultees, in delivering this workstream.

Matters highlighted included:

Local Planning Authorities are being encouraged to adopt the West of England SUDS guidance document. Exmoor National Park have adopted it and published it on their website.

A review is being undertaken of national legislation and local documents to assess opportunities within the planning process for getting the best possible SUDS. One important stage is an upcoming meeting with key stakeholders at local planning authorities, and with local consultees such as the IDBs and the Environment Agency, to get local context and local views on problems to consider. The aim is to signpost weaknesses and seek out improvements.

Of particular interest in and out of Somerset is the SRA-funded inspection of sites where SUDS have been constructed by developers to see if they were adequately designed, constructed as designed, have any deficiencies, and are being adequately maintained. A contract is due to be awarded soon, with work completed by the end of March 2017. Flood risk managers in other counties are jealous of this opportunity to build evidence, which will help to validate community concerns or establish whether SUDS are having desired effects. Tangible evidence will also help in giving feedback in any consultations about SUDS (to Defra, for example).

An awareness-raising campaign will focus initially on updating the SRA website, with up-to-date information from across the workstream and information and case studies that will emerge from ongoing projects.

European funding has been won for a SUDS retrofit project, looking at retail car parking spaces, with opportunities to show what can be achieved, and demonstration sites. This 4-year project (partnering with Westcountry Rivers Trust) is in its very initial stages; it will be unaffected by Brexit negotiations.

A rain garden demonstration project will show what can be achieved at a more local residential level.

A SUDS inspection service, funded by the SRA, is being offered through Somerset County Council. A meeting is being held with district council planning policy managers to make them aware of this service and discuss how to get maximum benefits from it. The service is designed to address a weakness in the current system whereby no authority is funded to inspect SUDS that developers are constructing – unless the SUDS is being adopted by another authority in which case it is in their interests to inspect it.

Points raised during the discussion:

There is an appetite for mapping existing SUDS schemes, but no funding for this at the moment. It would be a huge undertaking, to collect, order and present information from planning documents. Consideration will be given to how it can be achieved. This will include discussing what data may already be available, in what format, who may hold it and how it can be collated and presented. This mapping exercise is separate to the forthcoming inspection of

SUDS sites across the county, which were selected in consultation with district council planning officers.

Board members welcomed the inspection of SUDs sites, particularly in the light of public concerns. It is vital to make sure that developers are doing what they are supposed to.

All planning managers in councils across Somerset must work together to sort out exactly what they can and cannot get developers to provide. What developers do not have to provide, they will not.

Officers must be made aware that it important to do this work and do it promptly. It is better to inspect during and straight after construction, than four or five years down the line.

A way has to be found to address the question of the long-term maintenance of new SUDS schemes, if, for example, a developer goes out of business.

RESOLVED: The recommendations were passed as proposed in the report -
1. Note the progress made in the Urban Management Workstream.
2. Endorse the completion of the project as originally designed and planned.

c. Sowy/King's Sedgemoor Drain (KSD)

Graham Quarrier said the major civil engineering works at Beer Wall were now substantially complete, and the expected cost was £3.7m, down from the estimated £4m reported at the last Board meeting.

Sow/KSD consultations were continuing. IDB members were concerned that some land might become too wet, environmental NGOs that it might become too dry. The scheme's aim is gaining operational flexibility – but one person's flexibility is another person's uncertainty. Tender documents are being put together, but concerns must be resolved. Likely issues for contractors will include archaeological risk, peat, and restrictions on working times.

This autumn surveyors will be gathering data around the old arched Dunball railway bridge and Parchey bridge to assess the possible need for de-silting work in the spring. Vegetation will also be cleared.

Points raised during the discussion included:

The Sowy/KSD has been identified as one of the most important SRA schemes but is the only scheme red on budget and delivery.

IDB ratepayers in the middle area around Greylake fear they will not get any advantages, just disadvantages. Flooding issues need to be looked at in the round and we need to feed into the discussion the impact of the dredging strategy as it emerges.

It would help to understand the impact of enhancements that have been made to date, and in what position that leaves people in to deal with the kind of extreme events we first set out to deal with.

The idea of the Sowey/KSD scheme is to create a more flexible water management system, which gives more options in the event of extreme situations – so it is hard to understand the concerns expressed.

Cllr Osman said the Sowey / KSD had been identified as a key project from day one. He asked members to put concerns in writing so they could be addressed at another meeting.

10. W2 LAND MANAGEMENT UPDATE ON ISSUES – item 10

Ben Thorne, senior farm conservation adviser with FWAG SW, and leader of the SRA's Land Management Workstream, gave a short presentation focused on integrated support and advice to promote flood management and also resilience in the flood plain, and on work done over the last year and a half. About 850 farm visits had been completed, concentrating mostly on the Parrett and Tone as that is where most issues were during the flood of 2013/14. 192 schemes were either proposed or complete, with about 340 structures (some schemes include more than one structure). Mr Thorne showed a range of structures (woody dams, gabions in ditches, filter fences on highly erodible soils, silt traps, temporary structures such as filter sox and coir rolls, soil bunds, flood plain scrapes, trees for planting, and leaky ponds). He explained how computer modelling of flow pathways was used to help identify the best locations for structures, to break up flows and divert them into safe areas where they could be slowed. One aim was to store more water in the upper reaches of rivers. Leaky ponds were particularly being used near highway flooding sites, to collect water and then let it drain away slowly.

Soil management is important. If soil in a catchment is working properly, it does not just shed, but drains water vertically, not just horizontally. Soil mapping has shown where best to concentrate efforts: both grassland and arable can benefit from sub-soiling. Work with highways, particularly over the last seven or eight months, was focusing on sites where land management has a direct influence on flooding and looking at how that can be solved.

Lower catchment farm resilience efforts have focused on gateways, culverts, droves and some shared machinery for some Levels and Moors farmers.

There is a tremendous growing public interest in natural flood management. Increasing numbers of parishes, villages, and community flood groups are looking for natural solutions.

There are some problems with planning and getting permission for structures – some planning officers do not understand what is trying to be achieved and as a result there are some schemes being blocked and/or delayed.

Another big issue is the measuring of benefits. Schemes have local benefits but it is difficult at catchment scale to prove for a major flood what benefits they will deliver. Schemes are needed not just for two years, but probably for 20 years around the catchment, to have a cumulative effect.

As regards a community land trust, a farmer had been engaged who had made a big success of this on Pawlett Hams, to try a community co-operative approach, with different landowners working together. Four different areas on the Somerset Levels were being trialled, with work due to be completed soon.

Points raised during the discussion included:

Mr Thorne and his team were commended for their splendid work.

The Land Trust has great potential. It would be good if more people could be made aware of it.

It is disappointing to hear of problems with planning officers. An ideal opportunity to address concerns would be to tie in with the work on SUDS and Mr Martin was asked to follow this up in his work.

The criteria for developing schemes include mapping flow pathways and seeing where the worst problems are occurring. Another way has been to look at historic flooding hotspots in local areas, identified through talking to the LLFA, highways, and Catchment Sensitive Farming and focusing efforts there.

Cllr Osman summed up by saying that the SRA needed to continue supporting such schemes. Big projects were important but they would not protect everybody. He agreed that small schemes had a cumulative impact. He thanked Ben and his team for doing a huge amount of hard work.

RESOLVED: The recommendations were passed as proposed in the report -
1. Note the progress made in the Land Management Workstream;
2. Provide, in principle, ongoing support for catchment and natural flood management work.

11. REVISION OF W5: BUILDING LOCAL RESILIENCE – item 11

Nicola Dawson, Workstream 5 Lead, said the workstream focus so far had been on recovering from the big flood of 2013-14, helping people and communities. For the last 18 months, a resilience worker had been helping flood-affected communities on the Levels to develop their own local resilience plans. Now it was time to think about moving into longer-term resilience. The revised proposals drew on input from the SRA's Technical Group and Management Group, individual officers and Ben Thorne, and lessons learned from events in Cumbria earlier this year and the recent Exeter University report into flooding. The proposals fell into four groups.

One: support for communities and residents, and building resilience to disruptive events: advice, information, practical support and small amounts of money to help communities band together and achieve things as they had with flood plans around Moorland, recently trialled in Exercise Godwin. It is hoped to replicate such successes in other communities at risk of flooding, especially ones with less social capital, which need support, advice and examples. One idea (borrowed from Devon & Cornwall) is to set up a Community Resilience Forum, so communities can learn from each other.

Two: support for businesses. Somerset has a very high proportion of SMEs and owner-run businesses, and the aim is to use the Economic Impact report to identify sectors of groups of businesses that would be particularly impacted by flooding to see what support is there already, see where there are gaps and fill those gaps. These proposals might be slightly amended to recognise the fact that farm businesses often had diversified enterprises.

Three: residents' understanding of what risks now existed from extreme flooding. Local residents have a very keen understanding of the immediate impacts of flooding in their area, but it is unclear how much understanding they have of what residual risk exists in their area, even the work that has been delivered over the last two years under the SRA.

Four: making an opportunity for engaged and informed public and political debate to grapple with issues, such as looking ahead to the impact of climate change. The SRA needs to engage very closely with communities and stakeholders, partly to understand what residents expect of the SRA and other agencies, also what the SRA expects of residents and individual communities and businesses.

Points raised during the discussion included:

Communication needs to be addressed. If residents do not hear about an exercise until an hour after it started, this does not give a good audience .

Presentations such as this one, and the one on land management, had been arranged to help get a sense of the Board's priorities for funding, as plans were being developed for a programme for next year.

12. AOB – item 12

None.

The meeting finished at 12.15pm.

Chair Signature:

Date: