

SRA BOARD MEETING – 22nd July 2015

THE SRA Board

Minutes of a Meeting of the SRA Board held in the South Somerset District Council Offices on Wednesday 22nd July 2015 at 10.00am.

Members of SRA Board:

Cllr John Osman, SCC, Chairman
Tony Bradford, Parrett IDB, Vice-Chairman
Ray Adlam, Axe Brue IDB
Jeff Fear, Axe Brue IDB
Nick Gupta, EA
Matt Heard, Natural England
David Jenkins, Wessex RFCC
Peter Maltby, Parrett IDB
Cllr Duncan McGinty, SDC
Cllr Ric Pallister, SSDC
Cllr Harvey Siggs, MDC
Cllr John Williams, TDBC
Cllr Martin Dewdney, WSC

Officers in Attendance:

Doug Bamsey, SDC,
Iain Sturdy, SCDB
Rachel Burden, EA
Martin Buckle, SRA
Sarah Diacono, SRA
Emma Beardsley, SCC
Barry James, SCC
Melanie Roberts, SCC

Apologies:

Cllr Anthony Trollope-Bellew, WSC
Paula Hewitt, SCC

1. **Declarations of interest – agenda item 1**

Members were invited to declare any interests beyond those already listed. Tony Bradford and Cllr Anne Fraser both declared their membership of the Wessex Regional Flood & Coastal Committee and the Parrett Internal Drainage Board.

2. **Minutes of previous meeting – agenda item 2**

These were correctly reflected and the SRA Board agreed the Minutes.

3. **Public Question Time – agenda item 3**

Cllr John Osman introduced Mrs Lesley Webb who had requested an update to the question on Byelaws she had asked the Board at the March meeting. As there was an item on Byelaws later on in the Agenda, it was decided that this question would be dealt with under that item (item 5).

4. **Local Memorandum of Understanding & Constitution**

Barry James, Strategic Commissioning Manager, Community Infrastructure, Somerset County Council, introduced a proposal relating to the SRA constitution, namely the officer groups supporting the SRA Board. His proposal streamlined the number of officer groups under the current, transitional structure, into one Officer Technical Group, whose Terms of Reference were shared with the Board. This group will provide the Technical

support for all the SRA's work. The group will consist of Environment Agency, Internal Drainage Boards, Somerset's Local Authorities (LAs), Wessex Water, Natural England and Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group South West and they will meet monthly preparing progress reports on the Enhanced Maintenance Programme and the Common Works Programme to the Board for decisions.

The SRA Board agreed to the proposals set out in the Supporting Officer groups and Technical Group terms of reference.

5. Byelaws

Barry James, introduced this section and started off talking about how the Byelaws are work in progress. Barry is aiming to come back with a report for the next SRA Board meeting on the 23rd September once discussions with the local authorities in Somerset have been progressed.

Leslie Webb, a member of the public submitted the following questions for the Board:

Will the SRA instigate the following actions?

- a) Encourage all LAs to adopt the DEFRA model Land Drainage Byelaws in order to assist in the prevention of flooding and the mitigation of damage within their local authority area?
- b) Reassure the LAs that under the Flood and Water Management Act section 13(4) the LAs may make arrangements for SCC to carry out their Flood Risk Management responsibilities by enforcing, if necessary, the byelaws on their behalf?

Barry James responded to Lesley Webb's questions and stated that there are many issues to consider relating to whether Somerset County Council undertakes to do this activity on behalf of district/borough partners. For example, the councils would have to decide what activities they would seek to control through the imposition of byelaws. When drafting local byelaws he confirmed that the first point of call would be to look at the model Land Drainage Board Byelaws. He reassured that SCC do have the ability to consent and to enforce byelaws and there will be an expectation that, if byelaws are put in place, that a system of consenting and enforcement will be in place. He confirmed that to undertake this work on top of current activities will result in an extra resource implication for local authorities to consider.

6. Quarterly Reports.

Financial Report:

Emma Beardsley, the SCC Advisory Finance Manager who is providing financial services to the SRA, introduced the quarterly financial progress report and provided reassurance that the SRA are forecasting full spend against the £2.7m Interim Funding in 2015/16. As this is the first quarterly report produced it is no surprise that there are currently no changes to the original budget approved by the Board in February.

Actual spend to date are the costs taken from the May/June Enhanced Maintenance Programme monitoring report and Q1 actual costs for the SRA team based at County Hall. Low actual spend at this stage is typical for a large programme of works. Higher spend will be realised as works progress through Qtrs. 2, 3 & 4.

Preparations are underway for dredging, both maintenance and pioneer, all of which are on target to start work in the autumn. Local flood risk schemes have been identified and the works have been issued to either the Engineering Consultants (Parsons Brinkerhoff) or the Term Maintenance Contractor (Skanska). Full spend is expected in 2015/16.

Investment decisions for the Growth Deal 1 funds are expected tomorrow therefore no commitment is shown in the finance report.

The first Quarterly report has highlighted some timing issues as information is provided to other meetings at an earlier stage so Emma will co-ordinate and develop the process with partners for future reports to ensure consistency.

David Jenkins from Wessex Regional Flood and Coastal Communities said that the £455,000 set aside for developing the SRA would be better presented as partly contingency, in the event that costs are needed to develop primary legislation for the new funding mechanism, and partly staff costs. Cllr John Osman agreed to discuss how to improve the presentation of financial information with Emma and Sarah Diacono with a view to improving this for the next quarterly report.

Enhanced Maintenance Programme:

Iain Sturdy, Chief Engineer, Somerset Drainage Boards Consortium presented the first quarterly report for the EMP. Overall the top priority for the programme is the maintenance of the Parrett and Tone dredge that was done during 2014. Delivery of this is slightly behind, however the IDBs, who are the delivery body, are still on course for an October start. There has been a resurvey of the length of watercourse that was dredged last year to identify any new sediment. A 2.5km maintenance dredge is planned of the river Parrett from Northmoor where the dredge finished last year upstream to Moorland House Farm and monitoring of silt build up will be put in place to inform the maintenance requirements for years 2, 3 and 4 of the 4 year maintenance cycle.

The Summary and Recommendations are set out as follows from the May/June monthly monitoring report of 2015.

1. All elements of the programme are being progressed and we are still projecting completion within the financial year. However some items are running behind the original programme and these are highlighted AMBER on the details page. At this stage however delivery within the financial year remains achievable. No adjustment to programme or funding is recommended for this issue.

2. Detailed site inspection has determined that the programmed work on the River Isle is not necessary This is recommended for removal from the programme. -£11k

3. A similar inspection on the River Yeo has concluded that more work is required than originally intended. It is recommended that this work is funded by the EMP programme. +£45k.

4. Two additional requests for funding have been brought forward.

- Wirral Park (Glastonbury) – Surface Water Pumping Station Refurbishment (£12k)

- West Somerset Streams – Biennial Maintenance (£10k) It is recommended that funding from the EMP is approved for these schemes. +£22k.

Cllr Ric Pallister suggested that it would be helpful to assess the impact on the whole system for each activity and the cumulative effect of all activities. Iain explained that here are difficulties in doing this as there is no model of the whole system, as a result the approach that has been taken is to look at the relative benefits of alternative activities.

Tony Bradford wanted to know if the costs of the maintenance dredge would be less this year than the allocation of £443,000 agreed by the Board in February, given the full 8 km would not be dredged. Iain explained that this was unlikely as the budgeted figure had assumed that the 8km maintenance would be achieved over a 4 year rolling programme

The Board agreed to all the recommendations set out in the report.

Common Works Programme:

Martin Buckle, Project Manager, Somerset Rivers Authority Project presented the CWP quarterly report.

At March's SRA Board meeting, the Common Works Programme included 187 schemes, planned by the various Risk Management Authorities for this financial year.

At the end of the first quarter, 9 of those schemes have been completed and 167 schemes are reported to be on course for completion by their planned delivery date; 5 schemes are on amber, as they are not fully on course but are capable of being brought back on course.

6 are on red where it is no longer proposed that they will be delivered this year. Of these, 2 are historic Environment Agency schemes, and following a review, these are no longer being progressed. The other 4 schemes not being undertaken this year are SCC lead local flood authority, surface water flood risks schemes, and will be re-profiled and taken through into 2016/17. 4 schemes are a mix of the current year and future years.

3 Environment Agency schemes have been added, one involving the repairs of the sluice on the River Penzoy at Westonzoyland, an outfall repair to Elsons Clyse at Northmoor and the pumping station weedscreen at Southill.

One scheme has been added by the Axe Brue Internal Drainage Board, namely a new outlet culvert and control structure at West Rhyne, Sedgemoor.

The Environment Agency has found funding to accelerate four schemes which were originally proposed to start sometime during 2016- Programme; these will start this financial year and include improving 3 pumping stations, Saltmoor, West Sedgemoor and Gold Corner and a start on the flood defence scheme at Williton.

The SRA Board endorsed the revised programme

7. Flood Action Plan – Leaders Status Report.

Sarah Diacono, SRA Senior Manager and FAP Programme Manager, provided a summary of the continuing progress made in delivering the Flood Action Plan. Dredging, both maintenance and new are covered under separate agenda items. Work on the land management programme, partly funded by the Bath and West's submission to the People's Postcode Lottery and partly funded by the growth deal, has started and a lot of schemes are waiting for their grant applications to go forward, once funding has been released by the LEP. The Bath and West scheme that has their funding confirmed is progressing.

Within the Urban Water Management workstream, preparatory work on surveys of existing SuDs sites has started and other actions involving policy changes are progressing. The A372 at Beer Wall has now been reopened with the completion of the culvert works and the next phase, realignment of the water systems beneath, delivered by the EA, will start shortly. Work with communities on Flood Plans continues and the Economic Impact Assessment has been published. We are waiting for the output of the EA's river modelling work, expected in the autumn, which will help make the case for additional investment.

Focus on:

Sarah Diacono asked Rachel Burden, EA, to provide an update on the Parrett dredging

Parrett Dredging – Rachel Burden:

Rachel Burden, Somerset Levels and Moors 20 Year Plan Manager, Environment Agency reminded the SRA Board that at the last meeting it was agreed that downstream of Northmoor pumping station towards the M5 was the location where new dredging would have the greatest impact. The Environment Agency has put tenders out for that work but quotes are now coming in considerably higher than expected. This is because as dredging moves downstream the cost of dredging increases; the channels are much wider, the access is restricted and the material removed is saline. As a result it is anticipated that the maximum length that can be afforded with the monies available this year would be up to 1km. However she stressed that the

greatest hydrological benefit, in terms of flood protection to properties, is the 8km that was dredged last summer and so advised that ensuring that profiles are maintained should be the SRA's priority. She went on to explain that as dredging moves downstream from Northmoor pumping station the physical benefits decrease considerably. The EA expect to conclude final discussions on costs with contractors shortly and the SRA will then need to decide if the contract should be awarded. Work would start at the end of October and can continue through winter, which is the best time to do the dredging at this location.

Tony Bradford and Peter Maltby both asked questions in relation to the cost benefit of dredging this stretch, now only one third of the length that was originally planned could be afforded. Peter Maltby suggested that it might be better value for money to dredge the stretch from Burrowbridge to West Sedgemoor which was something that the public felt was important. Rachel Burden explained that evidence showed this would result in an increased risk of flooding to Moorland and that it would be of very limited benefit around Burrowbridge; as a result this option had not been pursued.

Board members were concerned to ensure that a full explanation of what we are doing and why with regard to dredging was conveyed to the community. Cllr Anne Fraser asked how this information would be conveyed and emphasised that relying on the website was insufficient. Sarah Diacono suggested that it might be helpful to develop a briefing on dredging for all Board members because of its complexity, and that a Community Briefing on dredging should be prepared and distributed to relevant communities via the Community Resilience officers' networks. Cllr Ric Pallister suggested that an annual event could be organised for the public to cover both the SRA's current focus and its journey.

Rachel Burden recommended that the SRA Board should agree to the EA awarding a contract on behalf of the SRA to dredge up to 1km of the River Parrett for the available budget this year, which is £1.8m, inclusive of a risk.

The Board agreed to Rachel Burden's recommendation and it was further agreed that Board members should be issued with a technical briefing and that consideration should be given to holding a public event.

Parrett Barrier:

Doug Bamsey, Corporate Director at Sedgemoor District Council gave an update about progress of the EA/SDC joint project and development around Bridgwater. The aim is to achieve a best value flood defence solution that will provide protection for the next 100 years. The Boston Barrier took 8 years which is within the Flood Action Plan timescale. The project requires a Transport Works Act Order (TWAo) and other consents all of which will take three years to obtain. At the same time two other developer schemes, one development around the Bridgwater Barrier and the other a Bridgwater Bay Lagoon system, may progress and the SDC/EA project will keep an eye on these, but given both are uncertain, the plan is to ensure that the EA/SDC joint project is pursued without delay.

The total cost is estimated at £32 million of which £5 million is to upgrade the downstream embankments. In terms of funding, the next 6 years is funded through a combination of roof tax, which Sedgemoor has had in place for a number of years, flood defence grant in aid from the Environment Agency and Growth Deal funding. Further funding stream will need to be pursued to cover the build.

The Internal Drainage Board raised concerns about the preference for a barrier as opposed to a sluice that would exclude silt and potentially reduce the cost of dredging in the future. Doug Bamsey responded by saying that there were a number of considerations relating to this, including how a the structure would be operated, all of which were subject to more detailed consideration.

A significant factor to bear in mind is the planning for the future of Bridgwater and the surrounding area to 2032 by way of new local plans. Potentially this could include the promotion of sites that part fund, part deliver or deliver a flood defence barrier for Bridgwater. One of the options this October will be land to north of Chilton Trinity which will include a linkage to a Parrett Barrier structure downstream to the Dunball Wharf and linked to a development. The public will be consulted on this. The Environment Agency will stay in close contact with discussions on these matters.

Since March a lot of work has been done behind the scenes. An appraisal process has now started and the team has learnt more about what is happening on the east coast. It is important that a parliamentary agent is sought because of the need for a TWAO which is a particular form of legislation that Sedgemoor District Council doesn't have direct experience of. There is a commitment to deliver the Parrett Barrier within the next 9 years.

Tony Bradford suggested that as other district areas will benefit from the Barrier, developers in other districts should contribute via their CIL/roof tax. Cllr Ric Pallister said the problem was that unless a direct link could be established between the barrier and a development, developer challenge at paying this would succeed.

Cllr John Osman suggested that the Parrett Barrier should be on the agenda at every SRA Board meeting and the project plan for the project should be shared with the Board, due to the significance of the project. He also suggested that the SRA should have more involvement in the project meetings for the Barrier and put himself and a member of the Internal Drainage Board forward to attend these project meetings.

8. The Economic Impact Assessment of the 2013/14 Floods.

Melanie Roberts, Economic Manager, Somerset County Council started by explaining that Parsons Brinkerhoff, in partnership with Black and Veatch were commissioned to undertake the Economic Impact Assessment study in July 2014. The methodologies used needed to be consistent with HM

Treasury's Green Book appraisal and Defra's Flooding and Coastal Erosion Risk Management toolkit in order to ensure that the conclusions reached were robust enough to justify future government funding.

Extensive consultation took place, with over 400 businesses in Somerset surveyed and face to face interviews with the Levels and Moors farming community. In addition there was input from Defra, DfT, Somerset local authorities and agencies, Network Rail and utility companies.

Three different types of impact were identified:

Direct impacts: Impacts that occurred at the time of the flooding on the Somerset Levels and Moors.

Indirect impacts: Impacts induced by the interruption of business activities and the consequential economic losses that occurred outside the Somerset Levels and Moors but within Somerset (GVA).

Qualitative impacts: Impacts that could not be accurately assessed due to insufficient data and absence of established assessment methodologies.

Key findings included:

- The economic cost of the floods to Somerset alone was up to £147 million, with the South West region significantly affected. Half of all Somerset businesses were badly affected by the floods.
- 86% of Somerset businesses were badly affected by road closures.
- 75% of Plymouth businesses were badly affected by transport disruption caused by the floods.
- The impact on residential property was up to £20 million.
- The impact on public mental health was "devastating."
- Environment Agency, emergency services and local government response costs were up to £19.3 million.
- The impact on the railway is estimated at up to £21.3 million.
- Over 80 roads were closed at a cost of up to £15 million to the local economy.

The impacts are still being felt by many; the assessment should be considered as a snapshot at the time of the flooding (December 2013 – March 2014) rather than a comprehensive review of the economic damages, which can only be fully understood sometime after the event.

Cllr Anne Fraser commented that we shouldn't lose sight of the residual and social impact the floods are having on communities. Cllr Ric Pallister wanted to know if the report included the reputational cost to Somerset, particularly the impact on Tourism. Melanie replied that the tourism sector was represented in this report. Cllr John Williams felt the Economic Impact Assessment gave a powerful message – the economic cost of the flooding was a huge number, particularly compared to the cost of the Flood Action Plan.

9. DCLG/Defra/SRA Sustainable funding officer Review – agenda item 8

Sarah Diacono updated the Board on the timetable for SRA Board member organisations making their decisions about their preferred funding mechanism to enable the SRA Board to make its decision in September. All authorities are currently going through their governance processes and they are 90% in place, with meetings taking place in August and early September. A comprehensive list will be circulated to the Board members at the beginning of August and will be put on the website.

The Board concluded that all credible options would require time for implementation and therefore there was a need for interim funding for next year. John Osman confirmed he would be meeting the Secretary of State with Ian Liddell-Grainger to discuss this.

10. AOB – agenda item 9

Cllr John Osman thanked everyone around the table for all their hard work. In particular he congratulated the SCC Highways team for winning the Effective Transport and Infrastructure Delivery Award in The Municipal Journal (MJ) Achievement Awards 2015, for the scheme to raise the road to Muchelney. He was also pleased to report that the A372 was reopened on the 20th July and Somerset County Council and partners toasted the formal finishing of the second stage of the major flood protection works at Beer Wall. He also thanked Cllr Ric Pallister and South Somerset District Council for hosting the SRA Board Meeting.

The meeting ended at 11.45am

Chair Signature:

Date: