

## Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA) Board Meeting – 10 December 2021

### THE SOMERSET RIVERS AUTHORITY BOARD

Minutes of the Board meeting of Somerset Rivers Authority  
held on Microsoft Teams on Friday 10 December 2021 at 10.30am.

#### PRESENT:

**Cllr David Hall – Chair** (Somerset County Council - SCC)  
**Tony Bradford – Vice-Chair** (Parrett Internal Drainage Board - IDB)  
**Dr Rachel Burden** (Environment Agency – EA - *Substitute*)  
**Cllr Mike Caswell** (Sedgemoor District Council - SDC)  
**Cllr Dixie Darch** (Somerset West and Taunton Council - SWTC)  
**Jeff Fear** (Axe Brue IDB)  
**David Jenkins** (Wessex Regional Flood & Coastal Committee)  
**Claire Newill** (Natural England)  
**Cllr Mike Stanton** (South Somerset District Council - SSDC)

#### IN ATTENDANCE:

**Dave Coles** (SDC)  
**Michele Cusack** (SCC)  
**Katy Menday** (SSDC)  
**David Mitchell** (Somerset Rivers Authority - SRA)  
**Graham Quarrier** (EA)  
**Ann Rhodes** (SWTC)  
**John Rowlands** (SRA)  
**Iain Sturdy** (Somerset Drainage Boards Consortium - SDBC)  
**Jonathan Stevens** (SWTC)  
**Ian Tier** (SCC)

#### APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

**Emma Baker** (EA)  
**Doug Bamsey** (SDC)  
**Cllr Garfield Kennedy** (Mendip District Council – MDC - *Substitute*)  
**Rebecca Horsington** (Parrett IDB)  
**Cllr Matt Martin** (MDC)  
**Clare Paul** (SCC - *Substitute*)  
**Haylee Wilkins** (MDC)

## 1. ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR

Cllr David Hall was nominated as Chair by Tony Bradford, seconded by Cllr Mike Caswell, and elected unopposed to serve as Chair for two years. Thanking the Board for their expression of confidence in him, Cllr Hall said that he would continue to do his best for the SRA and everyone in Somerset.

Cllr Hall nominated Tony Bradford to continue as Vice-Chair. Jeff Fear seconded Mr Bradford, who was elected unopposed to serve as Vice-Chair for two years. Mr Bradford said that he would work tirelessly for the success of the SRA. He felt his knowledge of conditions out on the ground complemented Cllr's Hall skills as Chair. Cllr Hall agreed that together they made a good team.

## 2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

David Mitchell, SRA Senior Manager, reported apologies from Board members Cllr Matt Martin, Rebecca Horsington, and Emma Baker, and from officers Doug Bamsey and Haylee Wilkins. He said Rachel Burden was standing in for Ms Baker, Dave Coles for Mr Bamsey.

### **3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

### **4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 10 SEPTEMBER 2021**

The minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

### **5. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no questions from the public.

### **6. QUARTER TWO 2021-22 SRA FINANCE REPORT**

Ian Tier, SRA Finance Manager, outlined the SRA's financial position at the end of Quarter 2 (Q2): £1.6million of the £10.388million the SRA had available was spent in the first two quarters of 2021-22, £2.9million was forecast to be spent in the remaining two quarters, and £6.3million was scheduled to be spent in future years. Mr Tier drew particular attention to Workstream 1 (Dredging & River Management) Q2 spending of £332,000 on River Sowy-King's Sedgemoor Drain (Sowy-KSD) enhancements, and increased Q2 spending in Workstream 4 (Resilient Infrastructure) following claims for desilting structures, gully emptying and drain jetting. Q2 spending had therefore been more than first forecast, but forecast spending of £2.26million in Quarters 3 and 4 on Workstream 1 [i.e. Sowy-KSD], was now scheduled for 2022-23.

Mr Tier also drew the Board's attention to proposed re-allocations of funding to contingency, and to the full spending of £13.049million of Growth Deal funding from the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). He said that contributions from the SRA's Local Partner Funding would continue to be used to support the Taunton Strategic Flood Alleviation Improvements Scheme, Sowy-KSD enhancements and Bridgwater Tidal Barrier.

Points raised:

David Mitchell reminded SRA partners that it had been a condition of the LEP funding agreement that the SRA should continue to report upon the spending of Local Partner Funding as match-funding until 2024, which was why relevant information about project spending would continue to be needed from partners.

David Jenkins (Wessex Regional Flood & Coastal Committee) recalled that the Board had in the past been anxious about whether the LEP's funding would be usefully spent for Somerset within the LEP's required timescale, so it was very gratifying to hear that it had been. He said this was a reflection of good management, and congratulated those involved.

Cllr David Hall concurred, and added his thanks. He said there was currently a degree of uncertainty about the way that central government funding streams would develop as a result of various reviews and Levelling Up initiatives, but he thought it quite likely that there would be some re-structuring and he wanted the SRA to be as positively positioned as possible to benefit. He pledged to keep the Board informed as matters became clearer.

Cllr Hall also agreed with David Mitchell that when Sowy-KSD works were completed next year, a concerted effort should be made to explain all the positive things achieved with the LEP's money, and to get people out to see some of those things.

As recommended, the SRA Board:

1. Noted the financial performance as at the end of Quarter Two of 2021-22.
2. Approved the re-allocation of funds to contingency as per Part Two.

## **7. 2022-23 SRA ENHANCED PROGRAMME**

David Mitchell said the proposed 2022-23 Enhanced Programme would be the eighth funded by the SRA, with an estimated £2.97million available through the SRA's share of council tax, and approximately £900,000 in contingency. He reminded Board members that the programme would come back to them for final approval in March, once funding for the SRA had been confirmed by SRA partners in February.

Mr Mitchell outlined the course of the programme's production so far, from an initial 18 bids with a value of approximately £5.3million, through reviewing and scoring and Technical Group and Management Group assessment, down to the current 16 schemes. An application for funding for channel smoothing at Dunball had been deferred because the scheme would not be ready for delivery in 2022-23, and a bid for funding for enhancements to Dulverton Weir and Leat had also been deferred to allow more time for a first phase of investigations to look at flood risks and benefits.

Mr Mitchell said that around 47% of proposed spending on the current 16 schemes related to Workstream 1 (Dredging & River Management). He cited contributions to Bridgwater Tidal Barrier, and to the repair and refurbishment of Dunball Sluice, a key part of infrastructure at the bottom end of the Sowy-KSD system.

For Workstream 2 (Land Management including Natural Flood Management), Mr Mitchell highlighted the involvement of Mendip District Council alongside the Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group SouthWest (FWAG SW) in Hills to Levels. He said that FWAG SW had tended to focus on relatively small-scale natural flood management (NFM) interventions, but in Mendip some larger-scale opportunities were now being pursued, perhaps including 'Stage Zero' techniques of river restoration. Countywide, the Trees for Water Action Fund was proving very successful, with a lot of community take-up. Mr Mitchell also welcomed the strong community impetus behind the proposed study into the feasibility of creating a large attenuation pond in the Wellhams Brook catchment upstream of Martock.

Several programmes of countywide extra maintenance would help to reduce flood risks along roads known to be susceptible to flooding. Mr Mitchell said that the next SRA Joint Scrutiny Panel meeting in February was due to receive a report from an officer in Somerset County Council's Highways Department about the success of SRA-funded programmes of extra maintenance in recent years. This report could also be brought to the Board.

Mr Mitchell said the proposed SRA annual budget for 2022-23 would be £3.047 million, including overheads and staffing for the equivalent of 4.4 full-time employees. The .4 related to the SRA technical advisor support role which began in 2021-22, and which

Mr Mitchell said had been really helpful, for example in matters concerning the River Brue. To cover the gap between the estimated shadow precept value of £2.972million and £3.047 million, Mr Mitchell proposed to use £75,000 from contingency. He also proposed to make a further sum from contingency available for extra schemes in the 2022-23 SRA Enhanced Programme, for presentation to the Board in March, alongside the current 16 schemes. The proposed remaining sum in contingency would be around half a million.

#### Points raised:

Cllr Hall thought that seeking to use contingency funding for extra projects was eminently sensible. He also asked Rachel Burden if Dunball sluice refurbishment would include removing all the sand that over the years had spilled over the edge of the wharf into the end by the gates. Dr Burden said that she assumed that material would need to be removed but would check with the project team.

Cllr Dixie Darch (Somerset West and Taunton Council) said that she was impressed with the list of projects, for example as regards natural flood management and community involvement. She asked about the timeframe for the study into Dulverton Weir and Leat, and whether the SRA was open to funding further works. Mr Mitchell said he did not have exact timings, but was aware that Somerset West and Taunton Council officers were seeking to resolve matters as fast as possible with consultants. To the second question, Mr Mitchell said yes, if a scheme hit the necessary objectives. He added that further match-funding would be needed from elsewhere for a scheme, because of its likely overall cost.

Tony Bradford said that he was worried not about planting trees, but about rapidly losing existing ones to ash dieback, Dutch elm disease and a new disease just being recognised in Devon and Cornwall. Mr Bradford argued it would make sense to try to preserve the trees that Somerset already had, as well as just planting new ones. He asked if anyone knew of any research that the SRA could tap into.

Cllr Hall said this was a very good point, and he did not know the whole answer. However, from a Somerset County Council and climate strategy point of view, a lot of effort was going into making sure that the right trees were planted in the right places.

Michele Cusack (Somerset County Council) agreed that a lot was going on, also through district councils. Ms Cusack picked out partners' involvement in a local nature recovery strategy and the development of a canopy strategy, focused not just on replacing indigenous trees, but trees that could sequester carbon quickly and some that would sequester carbon in the longer-term. She agreed with Mr Bradford that research should feed into this work.

As Steve Mewes of Somerset Wildlife Trust was attending the meeting as a member of the public, Cllr Hall also invited him to speak. Mr Mewes thanked Mr Bradford for raising an important issue, and agreed with Ms Cusack that strategic efforts were being made to get the right trees in the right places in Somerset, and address problems like ash dieback.

Cllr Hall concluded by saying that the SRA should seek to keep abreast of developments regarding trees, and assess how it could help.

As recommended, the SRA Board:

1. Provisionally approved the proposed 2022-23 SRA Enhanced Programme and budget, subject to final approval after funding is confirmed in February 2022.
2. Approved making use of the £0.336m not required for contingency by requesting further project proposals for approval by the Board at the March 2022 Board meeting.

## **8. KEY PROJECT UPDATES**

### **8a. River Sowy-King's Sedgemoor Drain (KSD) Enhancements Scheme**

Graham Quarrier, Environment Agency Project Executive, gave the Board a presentation. He said the Sowy was a relief channel from the River Parrett, and the Environment Agency controlled the amount of water that came into the Sowy-King's Sedgemoor Drain (KSD) system through a big sluice called Monk's Leaze Clyse. The purpose of making Sowy-KSD enhancements was to increase the amount of water that could flow down through the system, under managed conditions. Wide benefits came from increased capacity, which helped to reduce the duration of flooding for many people.

Mr Quarrier outlined some of the works done since 2015, such as removing obstructions, dredging, and upgrading nearly 100 water level control structures, for example at Moorlinch and Westmoor. Works on structures were important because they helped to make the overall scheme legally compliant, by allowing for appropriate management of water levels for nature conservation purposes on wetlands designated for their environmental value.

Mr Quarrier then described more recent works in autumn 2021, such as bank-raising downstream of Beer Wall. He showed photographs of specialist plant brought in, like tracked dumpers, suitable for use in fairly damp conditions. He showed the mix of materials being used, for example imported clay to give a nice secure core to a raised bank, and make it capable of withstanding water pressure. Mr Quarrier stressed again that the main point was to get consistent channel capacity all the way down through the system.

Concerns had been expressed by Historic England about the possibility of finds of archaeological interest. As an example of how these concerns had been addressed, Mr Quarrier said that material had been extracted for bank-raising from areas which desk studies suggested were of lower archaeological risk. All excavations were monitored by archaeologists, and so far nothing of any great note had been found. Mr Quarrier noted in passing that all the archaeologists had gone down with Covid.

The biggest difficulty with this autumn's works had been the scarcity of skilled plant drivers. Mr Quarrier said that hourly rates for bulldozer drivers had doubled in about three months. So whereas the contractor had been hoping to start work on five different fronts, in practice two gangs got going, which meant that all of the work planned for this year had not been completed. About 40% had been done. However, Mr Quarrier said that what had been achieved this year boded well for resumption next August, which was the right time of year for this kind of work. There would be three months to complete the remainder, which should be more than enough. Inflation was a risk to the cost of KSD work, but efforts would be made to keep prices down by booking necessary resources well in advance.

Points raised:

Cllr Hall expressed concerns about the amount of time being taken by bank works, and the short window of opportunity available for those works. He knew that cast-iron guarantees could not be given, but sought reassurance that these works would be completed next year.

Tony Bradford said that he felt very, very sorry for the Environment Agency, because of the ground conditions that people had to work in. He thought the weather in the late autumn – early winter months was a bigger issue than drivers. He therefore asked if Natural England, for one year only, could grant a derogation allowing works to happen at other times, say June or July. He thought this could be a win-win situation, because works could be completed more quickly and that would benefit people and the environment. Flood risks would be reduced – Mr Bradford cited summer flooding that could devastate wildlife – and there would be fewer environmental problems of the sort that could arise from trying to complete works in wetter, muddier months.

Claire Newill (Natural England) said it would not be possible to treat the Sowey-KSD project differently to any other. It was a very public project in a very sensitive landscape. However, Ms Newill added that Natural England was working really actively with the Environment Agency to see whether it would be possible to allow contractors to go back on site potentially a bit sooner in July. She emphasised that birds would need to be actively monitored, and that Natural England and all concerned had to be seen to demonstrate best practice and to operate in ways that would be expected of others.

Cllr Hall agreed it was a sensitive landscape, but he said this project had been going on for a long time and it needed to be finished, not just for the good of wildlife but for people who lived there and worked there.

Graham Quarrier said that trying to keep everyone happy was pretty tricky. He said the project team was working with Natural England to see if there could be a bit of flexibility on certain tasks but he cautioned that matters were being closely observed. For example, he said the RSPB – a big local landowner – did not want works to resume before 1 August. Mr Quarrier said that with more time available next year, with archaeological issues largely done and dusted, and with preparations being made to move in with more resources, he felt more confident that the job would be finished by next October.

Cllr Hall concluded by saying that all SRA partners should recognise that “when we're looking at ways that we can achieve what we all want to achieve, that the people of Somerset would never forgive us, if heaven forbid there was a repetition of 2013-2014.”

As recommended, the SRA Board noted that:

1. The works contract to enhance the Sowey-KSD channel is well underway.
2. The remaining funding allocation from the Local Enterprise Partnership has been spent.
3. Progress on site has been impacted by the scarcity of plant drivers and weather.
4. The works have been re-programmed. Minor works will continue during the winter, but bank-raising will be completed during August to October 2022.

## **8b. Taunton Strategic Flood Alleviation Improvements Scheme**

Ann Rhodes, Somerset West and Taunton Council (SWTC), gave the Board what she called a whistle-stop tour of her report. She outlined the development of the Taunton

Strategic Flood Alleviation Improvements Scheme (TSFAIS) and its current focus on three elements: Left Bank River Tone defences, Firepool Lockgate and associated bund between river and canal, and improvements at the existing Longrun Meadow flood attenuation area. Ms Rhodes said she was now reporting back to the Board to explain why TSFAIS had been suffering some delays, and how those delays were being addressed.

Within SWTC, since March 2020, she said the council had needed to second people into responding to the Covid-19 pandemic. The Watchet harbour wall collapse and emergency work at Blue Anchor had also taken up significant resources.

As regards the Left Bank Tone flood defences, Ms Rhodes said that extensive detailed discussions were held with a contractor, picked out through the Environment Agency's collaborative delivery frameworks, but then in October the contractor unexpectedly withdrew. The SWTC and Environment Agency project teams reacted quickly by moving to an alternative tendering process. Four companies were now due to respond by the end of December and the project teams still hoped that it might prove possible to stick to a construction start date of 2023-24, as originally planned.

As regards Firepool Lockgate and associated works, Ms Rhodes said that project managers had been appointed but there had been delays in finding a suitable contractor. However, one had been selected, a lot of necessary studies were now underway and design work had begun. It was hoped to submit a planning application in 2022 and then start construction in 2023, as originally planned.

As for Longrun Meadow, a project manager had not yet been appointed, but would be in due course, as the council was still committed to making improvements. Delays here had been caused by the need to respond to the Covid-19, Watchet and Blue Anchor emergencies, and a more generalised problem, which was that specialist contractors were being very selective about taking work on, and prioritising very high value contracts. Ms Rhodes said this phenomenon had been noticed across a range of council activities.

Points raised:

Cllr Dixie Darch confirmed that other Somerset West and Taunton Council activities were being affected as Ms Rhodes described. Cllr Darch said a very difficult balance needed to be achieved between getting work done within a reasonable deadline – and paying a reasonable amount. She hoped that matters would settle down, but thought this could take a little while.

Graham Quarrier agreed that it had become incredibly difficult to get the right amount of resources on projects. He said that regular suppliers to the Environment Agency were turning down work. He thought the effects of HS2 and Hinkley Point were starting to bite.

David Mitchell asked if designs for the Left Bank Tone flood defences could be shared with the SRA Board. Ms Rhodes and Mr Quarrier happily agreed, though Mr Quarrier cautioned that as one aim of the scheme was to blend in as much as possible with the walls that currently existed, people should not expect to see dramatic differences.

Cllr Hall thanked Ms Rhodes for a clear and comprehensive update. He concluded by saying that he knew from his own experience how difficult it currently was to get contractors for jobs ranging from very large major projects right down to almost the DIY level.

As recommended, the SRA Board:

1. Noted and acknowledged the changes to the programme, specifically the timeframe of the detailed design, consents and permission, for the three initial short-term measures of the Taunton Strategic Flood Alleviation Improvements Scheme (TSFAIS).

## **9. RIVER BRUE**

The Chair agreed this item should be taken out of sequence to allow for the participation of project adviser Andy Wallis of AW Water Engineering, who had to leave at 12 noon.

David Mitchell reminded the Board of a previous lack of consensus about precisely what interventions might be required along the River Brue, in terms of flood risk benefits and disbenefits. Mr Mitchell therefore proposed that the SRA should work on producing an evidence base so that constructive conversations could be had about issues such as the current condition of the river and the implications of water going out of bank. Existing River Brue modelling did not allow people to learn what they wanted to learn, particularly as regards the performance of the system in the lower reaches of the Brue.

Different options had therefore been looked at. Modelling the whole Brue catchment would be too expensive. Focusing just on the river downstream of Westhay would cost a lot less, but would leave too many questions unanswered. Mr Mitchell believed the best option would be to improve the model for the entire lower reaches of the Brue. This would cost about £95,000 and take up to nine months after commissioning.

When Mr Mitchell's internet connection then failed, John Rowlands (SRA) continued by saying that an updated model of the sort proposed would be a really good, useful tool, which could also help other bodies working in the Brue valley. Mr Rowlands said it was important to note that the act of updating Brue modelling would not in itself tell the SRA and its partners exactly what should be done where, that no delivery partner was currently in position, and that many other factors such as environmental requirements and responsibilities would have to be fully considered. However, there was ambition and appetite from the Internal Drainage Board and Environment Agency to engage with inputs and outputs. Andy Wallis agreed with Mr Rowlands that a lot else would need to go on alongside modelling.

Cllr Hall said that speaking as a relative layperson it seemed common sense to seek a strong and comprehensive evidence base.

Iain Sturdy (Somerset Drainage Boards Consortium) said that an improved model would be one key tool in moving towards a consensus. He thought that it might help people to find multiple benefits, so their gaze was lifted from just dredging and conveyance to other catchment-based measures, and a bigger picture of what might be possible. Mr Sturdy also hoped it would be possible to look at the consequences of asset failure, for example of the Brue banks, with real data and information. He concluded by saying that he was very

supportive of this initiative, especially as the alternative was just to wait for a jolly big flood to happen – not a course of action he was prepared to countenance. Cllr Hall agreed.

Jeff Fear (Axe Brue IDB) asked about figures given in Mr Mitchell's report and questioned what would happen after the estimated £95,000 for modelling was spent. Mr Mitchell – now back in the meeting – said the point of spending that estimated £95,000 was to get an absolute solid baseline. After that, further stages of the kind outlined in his report could be decided upon by the Board, especially as £280,000 had already been previously allocated to this overall Brue project. Andy Wallis agreed.

Mr Mitchell added that – in his view – once the SRA got to the point of looking at scenario testing and thinking about what other studies might be required, it would behove an SRA partner to lead that work, because it would require more technical expertise than was possessed within the SRA's own small team.

As recommended, the SRA Board:

1. Noted the latest position in relation to progressing the aspiration to undertake dredging on the River Brue.
2. Approved the recommended actions in relation to agreeing desired outcomes for the River Brue and updating of the River Brue model.

### **8c. Mitigation Action Plan**

John Rowlands said the most essential part of his paper was the second paragraph on page three, which updated the Board with the latest news about Mitigation Action Plan (MAP) progress. Summarising further, Mr Rowlands said that the delayed completion of Phase One of Sowey-KSD works gave partners in the MAP technical group some breathing space for trials, some opportunities to look at challenges ahead, and grapple with the complexities of the Somerset Levels and Moors. The MAP was thus moving ahead.

Points raised:

Cllr Mike Stanton asked if keeping up winter water levels in the Westmoor Raised Water Level Area, part of his district council ward, would have any effect on flooding in School Street, Drayton. John Rowlands said that he would supply Cllr Stanton with exact details later, but his initial view was that problems with flooding in Drayton could not be attributed to the operation of water level control structures on Westmoor, especially as the differences between summer and winter water levels were fairly minimal.

As recommended, the SRA Board:

1. Noted the updated position with the Mitigation Action Plan (MAP) project.
2. Acknowledged further mitigation actions will be required to fully deliver the MAP.
3. Noted the risks associated with non-delivery of the "full" MAP.

## **10. FLOOD ACTION PLAN REVIEW**

In a verbal update, David Mitchell asked the Board to support a revised timetable for the review and revision of Somerset's 20 Year Flood Action Plan (FAP).

Mr Mitchell proposed that the date for the Board's final sign-off of a revised FAP should be March 2023, instead of September 2022. This would allow for a good 12 months of activity with consultants WSP and – crucially – would allow for useful interaction and alignment with the process of bringing together local councils' flood and water management responsibilities as part of local government re-organisation across Somerset. Mr Mitchell said he was aiming to present in January a programme worked out with WSP for the actual course of the FAP review.

Points raised:

Cllr Mike Stanton said that he would like the FAP review to be completed before district councils ceased to exist in April 2023, as by that point he would have been on the SRA Board for four years. He warned that he would be very upset if the process got delayed any longer. Cllr Stanton also asked for a reassurance that there would be something in the revised Flood Action Plan dealing specifically with flooding on the upper reaches of rivers – such as the River Isle – and with flooding in Chard. David Mitchell said that he had absolutely noted down Cllr Stanton's point about timetables. He added that he wanted partners and stakeholders to tell the SRA what they thought FAP priorities should be, before matters had to be finally decided upon by the SRA Board.

Cllr Hall noted that Somerset County Council – as well as the district councils – would cease to exist. He said the aim of a new council was to take the best elements from all existing local authorities and combine them in a more streamlined operation. As far as the SRA was concerned, Cllr Hall said the detail was yet to be worked out, but the intention was that the breadth of representation would be the same and that it would cover the same areas. He hoped that the simplification and streamlining of the new Somerset Council would make partnership working even easier than it was at the moment, and at the moment he believed it was already very effective.

Cllr Stanton agreed that the introduction of a unitary authority would be a huge improvement for Somerset, although he believed it would have been nicer to have had two.

## **11. RISKS AND ISSUES**

David Mitchell asked the Board if they felt there was anything on the risk log that should no longer be on it, or whether anything was missing. No points were raised.

## **12. 2022-23 ADMINISTRATION**

### **12a. Calendar of Meetings**

David Mitchell said it was good to get dates in the calendar nice and early. He mentioned that one meeting was scheduled for an afternoon start, to avoid a clash with a Somerset Waste Partnership meeting.

As recommended, the SRA Board:

1. Approved the proposed meeting dates for the financial year 2022-23.

## **12b. Local Memorandum of Understanding and Constitution**

Mr Mitchell said that the Local Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and Constitution was not due to be signed until the March meeting, but he liked to give people plenty of time to read things through. He said the revisions proposed were just minor updates, for example to reflect a Government departmental name change.

Points raised:

In response to a question from Cllr Darch about how the MoU would actually be signed, David Mitchell described how last year's document had been dealt with digitally, because of the coronavirus pandemic. Cllr Hall said he hoped the situation would be different by March, but there was currently no telling. Cllr Darch agreed.

As recommended, the SRA Board:

1. Reviewed changes in preparation for signing at the March 2022 SRA Board meeting.

## **13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS (AOB)**

David Jenkins reminded the Board that the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) had commissioned him to write a report about surface water flooding. The report's publication had prompted interest from several reputable bodies, the latest being the National Infrastructure Commission (NIC), which intended to study whether surface water flooding was being tackled in the right way. The NIC now wanted people and organisations to help it scope this study by responding to an initial series of questions. Mr Jenkins felt this was an important opportunity for the SRA to assert its presence and its concerns about problems with surface water flooding, and to encourage the NIC to get into the subject. Mr Jenkins said he was not calling for the SRA to take a sort of doctoral thesis approach to the NIC's call for evidence: he thought bullet points would suffice.

Cllr Hall said he would be very keen to put a stake in the ground as regards this subject.

David Mitchell agreed that with colleagues he would draft and submit some suitable responses, if the Board supported this idea. The Board did.

## **14. PAPERS TO NOTE**

### **14a. Bridgwater Tidal Barrier**

No points were raised.

### **14b. Strategic Approach to Mitigation**

No points were raised.

SRA Chair Cllr David Hall thanked the Board for attending, and wished everyone a very happy Christmas, a prosperous New Year, and a safe and healthy holiday.

The meeting closed at 12.22pm.