

**ROMNEY MARSHES AREA INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD**

A meeting of the Board was held at Brenzett Village Hall, on Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> November 2017 at 2.00 pm.

**PRESENT**

Elected Members:

D Body Esq., P Boulden Esq., A Clifton Esq., D Cole Esq., L Cooke Esq., J Langrish Esq., E Lovejoy Esq., C Ramus Esq., D Wheeler Esq., A Wellsted Esq., S Wright Esq. and M Wrout Esq.,

Appointed Members:

Cllr G Allison, Cllr R Bird, Cllr P Coe, Cllr J Johnson, D Lovejoy Esq., Cllr P Osbourne, R Patten Esq., Cllr Mrs S Prochak, Cllr Mrs C Solly, Cllr R Wilkins and Cllr D Wimble

Staff:

N. Botting Esq., Clerk/Engineer to the Board, Mrs D Chalcraft, Finance Officer and R Monje Esq., Assistant Clerk/Engineer to the Board.

**590. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from:

Elected Members;

A Clifton-Holt Esq., D Furnival Esq., E Langrish Esq. and Mrs H V Langrish.

Appointed Members;

Mr H Bates Esq., Cllr M Burgess, R Langrish Esq. and R Nickerson Esq.

**591. RETURNING OFFICER'S REPORT**

The Clerk referred to the *Declaration By Returning Officer When No Poll* form which had been previously circulated; he welcomed the new members in attendance and informed the Board of a number of members who had retired allowing new members to join, as well those who had filled existing vacancies. The new members who were present; Edward Lovejoy Esq., Charles Ramus Esq., Andrew Wellsted Esq. and Michael Wrout Esq. were subsequently introduced to the Board.

**592. REGISTER OF INTERESTS**

The Clerk thanked those who had returned their completed Registers of Interests and explained that stragglers would be chased up to ensure good governance.

**593. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

The Clerk took the meeting and asked for nominees for Chairman. After deliberation it was PROPOSED by L Cooke Esq., SECONDED by Cllr S Prochak and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY that D Lovejoy Esq. be re-appointed as Chairman to the Board for the year.

**594. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN**

The Chairman took the meeting and asked for nominees for Vice-Chairman. After deliberation it was PROPOSED by D Lovejoy Esq., SECONDED by S Wright Esq. and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY that L Cooke Esq. be re-appointed as Vice-Chairman to the Board for the year.

**595. APPOINTMENT OF FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE**

The Clerk stated that an F&GP Committee should be appointed and explained that Charles Jenkinson, a member of the out-going Committee who had represented Shepway District Council in the Romney District, was seriously ill and had regrettably resigned from the Board. He then referred to the previously-distributed report which showed the last Committee members and the district each represented. He explained that the

Walland District had low representation when compared to Romney and the Committee had asked that the Board consider if Mr Jenkinson's replacement should be from the Walland area but remain a Shepway DC representative. After due consideration it was agreed that this change occur; the Clerk then asked for proposals for such a member to sit on the F&GP Committee, it was PROPOSED by L Cooke Esq., SECONDED by D Lovejoy Esq. and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY that Mrs C Solly be appointed to the F&GP Committee. The Clerk then asked for proposals for the remaining eleven vacancies; after a short debate it was PROPOSED by S Wright, SECONDED by Cllr Mrs S Prochak and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY that the Finance and General Purposes Committee be comprised of Mr L Cooke (Committee Chairman), Messrs A Clifton, P Coe, F Cooke, D Furnival, Mrs H Langrish, Messrs R Langrish, D Lovejoy (Ex-Officio), R Nickerson, R Patten, Mrs C Solley and Mr D Thompson.

**596.** The minutes of the meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> June 2017, having previously been circulated to members prior to the meeting, were taken as read. The minutes were accepted as a correct record of the previous meeting and signed by the Chairman.

#### **597. MATTERS ARISING**

There were no matters arising.

#### **598. ENGINEER'S PROGRESS REPORT**

The Engineer briefly covered the previously-distributed report and raised ongoing concerns with the lack of significant rain and low groundwater levels affecting both the Walland and Denge districts, he then asked if members had any questions. Mr A Clifton recalled that a mobile pump was once used by the EA to pump water from the White Kemp Sewer into the Walland District via the Kent Ditch Petty Sewer. The Engineer replied that this idea was again looked at in 2003/4 but at the time Natural England had not felt it necessary and the EA had stated that they would not supply a pump, he added that although the Board now had its own pump it would need to liaise with the EA to discuss this option again. L Cooke stated that he was in contact with Natural England and the EA and was expecting a reply in the near future on the matter. Mr R Patten asked if staff had had any indications from the EA on the timetable for the refurbishment of the Northpoint outfall; the Assistant Engineer replied that it was due to be picked up in the Eastern Wall Scheme. Mr D Cole asked the Engineer to explain a drainage enquiry for the Brook Petty Sewer as an arable farmer had suffered from wet ground in October. The Engineer replied that the situation had been rectified to all parties' satisfaction but the needs of both livestock farming and arable farming had to be balanced, and to drain the arable land meant draining the grazed land first which then caused issues for the livestock farmer.

#### **599. CONSENTS**

The Engineer and Assistant Engineer gave a brief overview of the consents issued or refused since the last meeting. The consent refused was based on concerns over a repair on a road culvert which would entail raising the invert by some 150mm which, in the opinion of Board staff, would likely cause issues upstream.

#### **600. MINUTES OF THE FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE**

The Vice-Chairman made comment on the minutes of the last meeting of the F & GP Committee. He focused on the Engineer's Report which referenced the then water situation and again expressed his concerns for Walland Marsh including the possible side effects of gravel extraction on the hydrology on the area including the SSSI. The Engineer repeated that the Board were in contact with the EA and Natural England to investigate the matter.

#### **601. ACCOUNTS VOUCHERS**

The Vice-Chairman presented the list of accounts paid that had already been thoroughly checked by the F&GP Committee, he declared an interest in the payment made to WM Cooke & Sons for tractor hire for work on behalf of the Board, there were no issues raised.

## **602. INCOME & EXPENDITURE**

The Financial Officer gave a comprehensive breakdown of the Income and Expenditure Report for the year to date; no questions were raised.

## **603. EXTERNAL AUDITORS CERTIFICATE AND OPINION.**

The Financial Officer informed the Board that the Audit had been completed. The External Auditors, PKF Littlejohn, had raised no issues with the Audit Return.

At 1445 hrs Cllr R Wilkins left the meeting.

## **604. ENVIRONMENT AGENCY DE-MAINING PILOT SCHEMES**

The Vice-Chairman updated members on the five schemes being piloted nationally for the de-mainment of Main River to IDBs. He stated that these stretches of Main River were considered to be of “low risk or consequence” by the Environment Agency as, in their opinion, they did not protect sufficient numbers of people or property but generally served local interests. The River Stour (Kent) IDB were in one of the pilots and had recently held drop-in sessions for interested parties; one of which the Chairman and Vice-Chairman had attended. He reported that the River Stour IDB and the EA are negotiating some transfer funding but there is expected to be a shortfall in that the likely transfer sums will not cover the costs of future maintenance. The Stour IDB is therefore looking to reduce maintenance on some IDB maintained watercourses to cover this shortfall. The schemes would be monitored and, if deemed successful, further demainment programmes would be rolled out, possibly including our own Board. The Engineer reported that ADA are very keen that the pilot schemes work out and viewed the adoption of demained watercourses as a positive for IDBs as it would ensure the watercourses would receive correct maintenance. He also added that the EA had, in some cases, suggested that little or no maintenance would occur on these watercourses if they remained as Main River, which would undoubtedly impact on IDB interests.

Further debate questioned the extent of the demaining process, what assets might be included and the cost of maintaining those assets; the Vice-Chairman stated that the Board would likely face difficult financial and maintenance decisions in the future.

## **605. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

It was resolved that the next meeting of the Board would be held at 2pm on Wednesday 31<sup>st</sup> January 2018 at Brenzett Village Hall

## **606. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Cllr Prochak asked if staff were aware of changes to the Data Protection Act that were due in May 2018; the Clerk replied that he knew changes were likely but would look to ADA to provide guidance on how Boards may be affected.

The Clerk informed members that the Board’s Byelaws needed updating to account for changes identified in the IDB 1 return; he explained that the changes would require ministerial approval.

The Assistant Clerk/ Engineer updated Board members on the progress of the Fifth Continent scheme which is now in the delivery phase. He explained that there is funding available for watercourse restoration projects within Walland, Denge and Romney Marshes, and land occupiers were encouraged to engage with the Kent Wildlife Trust as there are potential benefits for both the conservation of nature and the land drainage system.

There being no other business the meeting ended at 1515hrs.