

RIVER LUGG INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD

Held on Thursday 9th October 2014 at 10.30 a.m. at 7Y Business Centre, Leominster

PRESENT:

Board Members:

Mr C Pudge – Chairman
Mr J Smith – Vice Chairman
Mr M Davies
Mr W R Davies
Mr N Helme
Major J Hereford
Mr J Makin
Mr K Mitcheson
Cllr C Pritchard
Mr G Sparey
Cllr J Hardwick
Cllr F Norman

Hoople Ltd Officers in Attendance

Mr G Evans – Responsible Finance Officer
Mr L Harrison – Area Engineer
Mr J Bruton – Junior Marketing Executive
Miss K Allen – Clerk to the Board (minute taker)

APOLOGIES FOR NON-ATTENDANCE

Apologies had been received from Board Members Lord J Cawley, Ms Z Chilman, Mr R Corbett, Cllr M Cooper and Cllr J Millar, as well as Mr D Trumper of Hoople Ltd.

14/019 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

14/020 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman apologised to those Board Members who felt that an item under minute 14/016 should have been handled differently.

14/021 CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 10TH JULY 2014

The minutes of the meeting held on 10th July 2014 were unanimously approved as a true and accurate record.

14/022 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Irish Bridge

Following the Board's decision to decline the request for a contribution to the "Irish bridge" in Moor Brook, the Chairman, in discussion with Area Engineer, had also declined a request to waive the Land Drainage Consent fee. The Area Engineer will check progress of work. **Action: Area Engineer**

Board's Logo

The original logo design had been the most popular choice and will be adopted as the Board's new logo.

Bills

The RFO advised that additional payment options would all involve a set-up and/or ongoing cost, which is unquantifiable and could not be passed on to ratepayers. After discussion, it was decided not to pursue alternative options any further.

14/023 REPORT OF THE AREA ENGINEER/ENGINEER TO THE BOARD (INCLUDING RAINFALL DATA) **(RL/14/0000/08a-b)**

The Area Engineer presented his report on works carried out during the period, including a number of photographs that illustrated spraying activity. Spend to end September was £76,421.38 and 126 km of flail-mowing had been completed. A Board Member congratulated the Area Engineer on the latter figure.

Rainfall figures were circulated.

The Area Engineer then reviewed the planning applications.

14/024 FINANCE REPORT **(RL/14/0000/09a-f)**

Budget Monitoring Report

The RFO reported that we are on course to come in on budget. As explained in his report, there are a few variances on the budget profile.

Rating Report

The balance includes two large accounts (a company which usually pays late and one individual ratepayer) as well as some sums in respect of unidentifiable ratepayers. Second reminders have been issued this week.

With regard to unidentified areas, the Chairman asked if maps could be brought to a future meeting to see if Board Members could help identify - an exercise that had proved useful in the past. **Action: Area Engineer and GIS Engineer to produce maps**

The RFO updated the Board on the breakdown of costs in connection with the Freedom of Information request, and the position regarding Mr Hammett (Minute 14/016).

Medium-Term Budget Planning

In readiness for the budget setting in January, the RFO had carried out some work as set out in his report.

The Chairman felt it was appropriate to have reserves of between £90-100,000 i.e. half the annual income. A Board Member said that two years ago he had suggested leaving rates as they were and the Chairman said there was also a long-standing wish to reduce reserves.

14/025 UPDATE ON TRANSFER OF IDBS IN WALES TO NRW

A report was circulated updating the Board on a meeting attended by the Chairman and Hoople Officers on 24th September 2014, together with a map showing Lower Wye drainage boundaries.

The Chairman advised that no Lower Wye IDB representative had been invited to the meeting. RLIDB has a net rate of 3.10p per acre compared with 0.665p in Lower Wye and, to be equitable, Lower Wye's rate would rise by a factor of 5. A separate rate would, in practice, be required, which is more difficult.

There are about 80 ratepayers, and the Welsh Government wishes the transfer to proceed and will cover one-off and other reasonable costs.

The Area Engineer explained that the water courses are marked red on the map, and that they have historically benefitted from grants. Of the estimated income for 2014/15, the Area Engineer estimates that £5,500 would be required for maintenance. He also highlighted a major problem at Pontrilas where maintenance access to one of the watercourses is impossible because of a high road-side hedge on one side and a security fence on the other. It is suggested that the 100m length is culverted at a cost of up to £30,000, notwithstanding the difficulty in carrying out the work.

A Board Member expressed his concern at this prospect and asked if a different rate could be charged. He felt that we should not take on the LWIDB if there was a cost to RLIDB ratepayers, as the desire not to subsidise had been the Board's stance from day one.

LWIDB's current income is made up of £1,936 from ratepayers and a levy of £3,976, and a Board Member asked if multiplying income by a factor of 5 would cover the costs incurred. The Area Engineer replied that it would cover basic annual maintenance but not the potential cost of this Pontrilas culvert, although the Welsh Government has indicated that would be covered.

As part of the consultation, LWIDB ratepapers had been written to and advised there would be no increase in rates for one year only.

Taking on LWIDB would entail a review of the Board structure and approval by DEFRA. Based on past experience, a Board Member felt DEFRA will ensure it happens.

There may be lessons to be learned from other authorities and the Chairman will ask Jean Venables for any guidance on this. **Action: Chairman**

A Board Member felt that maintenance over time is an issue, there could be a differential rate over time and the Welsh Government could make up the rest.

It was asked if Herefordshire Council are aware and whether they are legally required to pay the levy. The RFO was asked to contact the appropriate department with a draft plan and request a response. The appointed Members should be copied in. **Action: RFO**

In conclusion, it was agreed to proceed in a positive manner including maintenance costs.

14/026 CORRESPONDENCE AND ANY OTHER BUSINESS

A Board Member highlighted that we are no longer a member of an ADA branch and no existing branch is relevant to us. Our annual subscription is due shortly.

Cllr Norman then left the meeting.

The Chairman undertook to discuss ADA membership with Jean Venables. One possibility was felt to be the formation of a new Severn & Wye branch which would send a representative to ADA. **Action: Chairman**

The Area Engineer advised that he had viewed an excellent culvert, installed by Alan Parker, which had been subject to Land Drainage Consent approval.

No Board Members wished to attend the ADA conference on 12th November 2014; the RFO will represent the Board.

An Extraordinary Board Meeting may be required to discuss the LWIDB.

Major James Hereford submitted his apologies for the January Board Meeting. Options for rates will be discussed at this meeting.

It was agreed that financial papers would be emailed before the 9th April Board Meeting as they will not be ready in time to be circulated a week before.

The RFO introduced James Bruton to Board Members, and advised that Jane Hemingway is no longer employed by Hoople.

The next Board Meeting will take place on Thursday 15th January 2015 at 7Y Business Centre.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 12.15 pm.

Chairman

Clerk