

RIVER LUGG INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD

Held on Thursday 15th January 2015 at 10.30 a.m. at 7Y Business Centre, Leominster

PRESENT:

Board Members:

Mr C Pudge – Chairman
Mr J Smith – Vice Chairman
Lord J Cawley
Mrs Z Chilman
Mr M Davies
Mr W R Davies
Mr J Makin
Mr K Mitcheson
Mr C Pritchard
Cllr J Hardwick
Cllr P McCaull
Cllr F Norman (Minute 14/028 onwards)
Cllr J Millar (Minute 14/030 onwards)

In Attendance

Mr J Lawrence

Hoople Ltd Officers in Attendance

Mr G Evans – Responsible Finance Officer
Mr L Harrison – Area Engineer
Miss K Allen – Clerk to the Board (minute taker)
Mrs H Maidman
Mrs L Chandler

APOLOGIES FOR NON-ATTENDANCE

Apologies had been received from Board Members Major J Hereford, Mr G Sparey and Mr R Corbett, and Mr D Trumper of Hoople Ltd. Cllr Millar had advised that his arrival would be slightly delayed.

14/027 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

14/028 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Cllr McCaull had replaced Cllr Bowen as a Board Member and was welcomed to his first meeting. A welcome was also extended to Hazel Maidman and Liz Chandler, who will be taking over responsibility from Kay Allen when she steps down shortly as Clerk to the Board.

The Chairman advised that Cllr Pritchard has recently had a book published.

Lower Wye IDB

The takeover process had been expected to be effective from 1st April 2015 but, in fact, took effect from 27th November 2014 following signing of the Order by the Minister on 26th November. There are currently no Lower Wye representatives on the Board and the Chairman had invited its Chair, Jim Lawrence, to this meeting.

(Cllr Norman then joined the meeting.)

Since there are vacancies on the Board, it was proposed by Mr W R Davies and seconded by Mr J Makin that Mr Jim Lawrence be co-opted on to the Board. This proposal was unanimously agreed.

14/029 CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 9TH OCTOBER 2014

Some minor changes were suggested to minutes 14/024 and 14/025. Subject to these amendments being made, the minutes of the meeting held on 9th October 2014 were unanimously approved as a true and accurate record.

14/030 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Irish Bridge at Monkland (14/022)

The Area Engineer believes this project has been abandoned.

Lower Wye IDB (14/025)

The Chairman has contacted ADA regarding lessons to be learned from other authorities but has not yet received a response.

Pontrilas Culvert (14/025)

The Area Engineer has this work in hand, for completion by end of the financial year. The Welsh Government is funding the culvert out of the £60,000 available; this contribution will also cover the cost of subsidising a gradual rate increase to equalise with River Lugg figure.

(Cllr Millar then joined the meeting.)

ADA (14/026)

The Chairman had received an email stating that the Lugg branch would be reinstated, and the situation will be monitored.

14/031 UPDATE ON TRANSFER OF IDBs IN WALES TO NRW

The Chairman, Area Engineer and RFO, together with Mr Jim Lawrence, will be attending a meeting on 20th January to finalise the arrangements. RLIDB has assumed responsibility for the Lower Wye with effect from 27th November although no formal handover has yet taken place.

A proportion of the budget is available to carry out some works and we will also receive a proportion of LWIDB's reserves. Administration obligations will be light. Caldicot & Wentlooge have split out billing information and it is hoped to agree the practicalities and collect maps at the forthcoming meeting.

The RFO outlined the proposed spending plans for the £60,000 from the Welsh Government:

- £21,000 will be spent on a culvert at Pontrilas.
- Up to £30,000 will be used to gradually increase rates to harmonise with RLIDB over time. It proposed to use up this sum over 10 years. The current rates would not cover costs.

It will be necessary to put in place a Differential Rates Order, which has to be agreed by DEFRA and then advertised for one month. After this month, and before 1st April 2015, an Extraordinary Board Meeting may be needed to vary the Lower Wye penny rate from the overall rate agreed today; these arrangements will be finalised on 20th January. The Chairman would like to call a full meeting to approve the rate change.

A Board Member asked if there will be administration efficiencies by joining the two boards and it was confirmed that these would be minimal. A little catching up is required on the maintenance programme. Mr Lawrence felt that it would be sensible to demain the Worm Brook.

14/032 MAINTENANCE CONTRACT

Cllr Millar reported that re-tendering of the maintenance contract had been subject to an OJEU (Official Journal of the European Union) process. Two contractors had expressed an interest but only one submitted a tender and the sub-committee was seeking approval to award the contract to John Meredith Plant Hire. This proposal was unanimously approved.

Hoople had managed the procurement process and it was their Procurement Officer's view that the other contractor was likely to have withdrawn because, on reflection, the size of the contract was not worth their while. Hoople will be seeking to clarify this.

The Area Engineer commented that some small contractors were not aware of, or able to submit, a tender and that John Meredith's rate had increased on average by 10%. Cllr Millar advised that it would not be necessary to re-procure for 5-7 years.

14/033 REPORT OF THE AREA ENGINEER/ENGINEER TO THE BOARD (INCLUDING RAINFALL DATA AND WORKS PROGRAMME 2015-16) (RL/14/0000/10a-b)

The Area Engineer presented his report on works carried out during the period, backed up by a number of photographs. He reported that more flail mowing had been completed than ever before.

It was pointed out that the bankside tree management works mentioned in the report were on the River Lodon.

Rainfall figures were circulated.

Maintenance Programme

The 2015-16 Maintenance Programme was unanimously approved. Figures for Lower Wye had been omitted in error and will be circulated after the meeting. **Action: Clerk**

NFU Briefing Note

As outlined in the Area Engineer's report, a ban on cutting hedges and trees from 1st March to 31st August came into effect from 1st January 2015. Some areas of Wales are exempt for August only. The Chairman has written to ADA and Bill Wiggin MP and been advised by ADA that this is enforced by a Statutory Instrument and will be reviewed this year. The Chairman has an email ready to send to DEFRA to ensure input in the consultation.

The Area Engineer explained that it not possible to do the work properly in the winter months and the maintenance budget will be underspent as a result. It is possible to seek written permission for, say, one tree. Flail mowing is not mentioned in the document.

Planning Applications

The Area Engineer then reviewed the planning application involving solar panels on agricultural land, which was the first of its kind in the Board's area.

Ecological Consultant

The Area Engineer advised Members that Tony Pickup, the Board's very able Ecological Advisor, had decided to retire and we would need to seek a replacement. A number of Board Members are aware of possible candidates and were asked to forward names to the Area Engineer. **Action: All**

14/034 FINANCE REPORT

(RL/14/000011a-f)

Budget Monitoring Report & Summary

In view of the tree/hedge cutting restrictions outlined earlier, it will be necessary to revise the maintenance budget and an overspend is no longer likely. The RFO confirmed that the variance to budget in the Budget Monitoring Report Summary should read £2,380 not £3,280.

Rating Report

Due to the busy agenda, the unidentified land discussion had been deferred until the next meeting.

Schedule of Bills

Board Members unanimously approved signing of the Schedule of Bills.

Responsible Finance Officer's Report

Action was proceeding to recover the outstanding rates subject of recent court action.

14/035 BUDGETS/RATING ESTIMATES 2015-16

(RL/14/0000/12)

The RFO had set out a number of options for the penny rate. These figures had been prepared before the hedge/tree cutting period change was known but it was still considered prudent to plan on the old basis for now. The Area Engineer estimated that the budget could be reduced by between £15,000-£20,000. There was then some discussion on whether work could be concentrated in the available months and activity therefore not affected.

The rate of £.0800p was proposed by Cllr Millar and seconded by Lord Cawley and Mr K Mitcheson and all Board Members voted in favour.

14/036 CORRESPONDENCE AND ANY OTHER BUSINESS

ADA Membership

An invoice for renewal of membership had been received. On the basis of no membership without representation, it was agreed to hold fire on renewing membership and the Chairman will write to ADA. **Action: Chairman**

Leominster Flood Alleviation Scheme

At a meeting with the Environment Agency at the beginning of January, the Chairman and Area Engineer were advised that consultants had reported that the Leominster Flood Alleviation Scheme did not meet the required 1 in 100 year protection standard. As a consequence, work is currently in progress detailing the required improvements and these would be displayed at a public open meeting in Leominster, scheduled for the end of February.

Meeting Dates

12th March 2015 will be held as a potential date for Extraordinary Board Meeting to approve change of penny rate for Lower Wye ratepayers, to be confirmed in due course by Hoople.

The next quarterly Board Meeting will take place on Thursday 9th April 2015 at 7Y Business Centre.

The annual inspection will be arranged for 14th May 2015.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 12.05 pm.

Chairman



Clerk



