

1. Governance

1.1 Declaration of Interest

Board Members are advised to declare a pecuniary or non-pecuniary interest on any item in the Agenda.

1.2 Apologies for Absence

1.3 Chair's Announcements

1.4 Public Forum

1.5 Minutes of the meeting held on 14 January 2026

Members Present	26.06.2024	27.11.2024	15.01.2025	25.06.2025	26.11.2025	14.1.2026
Elissa Swinglehurst Chair	√	√	√	√	√	√
Charles Pudge Vice Chair	√	√	√	A	√	√
Zita Chilman ZC	√	√	√	√	√	√
Richard Corbett RC	A	A	A	A	A	√
Malcolm Davies MD	√	√	A	√	A	√
Noorissa Davies ND	A	A	A	A	√	A
Nic Eynon NE	-	-	-	-	-	-
James Makin DM	√	√	√	√	A	√
Thomas Cawley TC	√	A	A	√	√	√
Andrew Owens AO		√	A	√	√	A
Yvonne Thomas YT		√	√	√	√	√
Cllr Nic Mason NM				√	√	√
Cllr Dan Hurcomb DH	√	√	A	√	A	-
Cllr Robert Highfield RH	A	-	-	A	A	A
Cllr Roger Phillips RP	-	A	A	A	√	√
Cllr John Stone JS	A	-	A	-	√	A
Cllr Mark Woodall MW	-	√	√	√	√	A
Tom Jolley TJ Wye & Usk Foundation	-	A	A	A	A	√
Rebecca Tully RB			√	√	√	A
Jamie Audsley JA	A	-	-	Resigned		
Vacancy 2 nominated						
*Jenny Bashford JB Wye & Usk Foundation	√	A	A	A	√	-

*Attends if TJ cannot

In attendance on behalf of JBA Consulting

Officers: Craig Benson Clerk
Anne-Clare Landolt Engineer
David Blake Finance Officer

Members of the Public:

Mr N Helme Ratepayer

Governance

Declaration of Interest

2026.1 None.

Apologies for Absence

2026.2 Apologies were received from Noorissa Davies, Andrew Owens, Robert Highfield, John Stone, Rebecca Tully and Mark Woodall.

Chair's Announcements

2026.3 Chair offered the Board's congratulations to Cllr Phillips who had received a very well-deserved honour in the New Year honours list.

Public Forum

2026.4 Mr N Helme was in attendance. He confirmed he had discussions with both RP and the Vice Chair and that there was a misunderstanding that the Ecology Report the Board had paid for was a contribution to the works he had carried out and he stated definitively that the Board had not made any contribution. He also confirmed he had received a letter from the Clerk outlining all the legislation as to why the Board could not contribute and yet he understood that all the Board were under the impression that they had contributed and therefore were acting illegally. Chair stated that was not the understanding of the Board, there was a misunderstanding from some of the parties he spoke to but the Board was not making a contribution to the works. Mr Helme then went through the letter and how he understood the implications of the legislation before adding that he was not happy to pay a levy for water to be removed from his land which was not being done. Referred to Section 47 of the Land Drainage Act which allowed the Board to not levy a rate on someone and said instead of giving a landowner a grant to do works they could state they would not levy a rate on the landowner for a number of years in return for doing the work and that the Board had those powers. He went onto state that at a meeting two and a half years ago an EA attendee said there would be a PSCA agreement in place shortly but he said it was apparent from Board minutes that this had not been implemented yet. He added that the aim of the Board should be getting the water moving and that he had provided a demonstration at his own cost of what could be achieved. The ecology report was fantastic and Will Watson was ecstatic with the outcome, adding that the money was not the major concern but the Board needed to set a precedent, either needed to make a contribution or waive the drainage rates for the next few years which would encourage others to go out and do works. Clerk thanked Mr Helme for his contributions and that he and the Board were all on the same side in that they wanted to get the EA to do more work on Main River. He advised that PSCAs were in place on several other Boards he dealt with and that those worked tremendously well and was surprised that the EA would not entertain them in this region. He then confirmed that he and the Chair had a meeting on 19 February with the West Midlands Area Director, Marc Liddeth, along with the ADA Chief Executive to try and iron this out. He assured Mr Helme that the Board were doing everything it could to enable this reiterating that the Board had no legal powers to work on Main River. RC raised similar issues with the Pinsley Brook and said that it floods his land due to it not being maintained and would be happy to undertake works but he only covers a small section of the River and without someone taking control of maintenance it would not happen. Mr Helme stated that was why the Board was set up in first place and they needed to grasp the nettle and make a start to get round the situation. Clerk advised the Board were in a difficult position and as a Public Body had to be very careful in what it does. Discussions ensued with the Chair stating that a decision needed to be made on how they moved forward. **The Eng added that the works Mr Helme undertook had not yet been promoted to others but that now the ecology report had been completed this should help. Chair suggested they draft something with his approval on the works undertaken and the benefits and that this would be issued to all ratepayers.** Mr Helme advised that the local MP was attending a "Love the Lugg" day on 14 February and this should be rolled out further. He concluded by stating that he was heartened by the attitude of the Board but that a letter needed to be sent to the EA and action taken. He then left the meeting. **Conclusion: Clerk to contact Mr Helme to advise he needs to write to the Board to formally request they consider a reduction to his drainage rates.**

Minutes of the Meeting held 26 November 2025

2026.5 Minutes were considered and All Members approved as true and accurate record.

Matters Arising

2026.6 None

Complaints / FOI Requests

2026.7 None received.

Clerks Report

2026.8 Policy – Clerk advised of the update to the GDPR policies. **Approval proposed by Chair and seconded by CP.**

2026.9 Legislation – Information noted.

2026.10 Hydraulic Model – Clerk advised first update was still awaited with final checks currently being completed.

2026.11 Environment Agency – **Clerk confirmed he would try and ensure an EA representative was in attendance at each meeting as well as inviting Steve Hodges from Herefordshire Council.**

2026.12 ADA Conference – Information noted.

2026.13 Election – **Clerk confirmed further information would be provided at the June meeting.**

Financial Report

2026.14 Rate Report – FO advised 90% of rates now collected with £6,300 being pursued by Solicitors and two accounts were on hold, one being Mr Helme and the other awaiting registration by Land Registry.

2026.15 Rate Removal – **All Members agreed removal.**

2026.16 Audit Review Meeting – Information noted.

2026.17 Risk Register – **FO took Members through with approval proposed by Chair and seconded by YT.**

2026.18 Rates and Special Levies for the Year Ending 31 March 2027 – FO took Members through the current year figures advising that overall will be a forecasted deficit of £17,000, which will be offset by reserves. The new reserve level will be 98% against the target of 50%. He then advised Members of the budget set for the new year and stated if the rate was kept the same this would result in a deficit of £43,000, again utilising reserve levels with a reduction to 76% but still above the target set. He reminded Members that they had agreed they wanted the reserve level reducing so in conclusion he stated that for next year, in isolation, there was no need for a rate increase. **RC proposed a rate of 8.5p, this was seconded by ES. All Members agreed to keep the rate the same at 8.5p.**

Expenditure Budget Comparison for the year Ending 31 March 2027

The Board considered an Estimate of Income and Expenditure for the year ending 31st March 2027, copies of which had been previously circulated to members.

In accordance with Section 37 of the Land Drainage Act, the Board determined that aggregate annual value of chargeable properties in the district on the aggregate value of all other land in the district as at 31st December 2025 for the financial year beginning 1st April 2026 as follows: -

a) Aggregate annual value of chargeable properties	£ 1,652,107
b) Aggregate value of all other land	£ 1,071,789

It was agreed that for the purpose of defraying costs, charges and expenses etc. incurred by the Board under the Land Drainage Act 1991 for the period 1st April 2026 to 31st March 2027, and in pursuance of the Internal Drainage Board (Finance) Regulations 1992, that the Board make a drainage rate for their district in respect of agricultural land and agricultural buildings and a Special Levy as follows: -

The amount of the Board's expenses to be met by drainage rates was £91,102 by way of an Occupier's rate of 8.5p in the £ on the basis of the annual value of agricultural land and agricultural buildings in the district.

The amount of the Board's expenses to be met by Special Levies was: -

Herefordshire Council	£ 140,430
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The Chairman and Clerk were authorised to seal the rate and the Special Levy on the Local Authority in accordance with the Act and the Finance Regulations.

The Clerk, or their representatives, were authorised to negotiate and carry out proceedings for the recovery of any rates unpaid.

Members agreed that if additional expenditure is required above the agreed budget, it is taken from balances.

2026.19 Five Year Budget Forecast – FO took Members through and discussions took place.

2026.20 Schedule of Payments – **The schedule was considered with approval proposed by RP and seconded by CP.**

Engineers Report

Information noted with the following added.

2026.21 Maintenance Schedule – Eng confirmed the reasons for the additional spending. She then referred to the schedule for the following year at Appendix E & F, noting the de-weeding on the Lugg Rhea stating that had challenges due to it being SSSI and was not convinced that was productive longer term.

2026.22 Flooding – Eng confirmed that the culvert at Pontrilas would be cleared out. Discussions then took place. **Chair suggested asking the Contractors to do before and after shots so that these can be shared with Parish Councils etc to make parties aware what the Board as a Public Body undertake.**

2026.23 Eng confirmed that a flap valve had been installed at Sutton St Nicholas and that the landowner advised it was working better.

2026.24 Planning Consultations – Eng advised that there was a large housing development being built in Leominster and she had been invited to pass comment but the Board would not have any powers over the outcome as one of the outfalls fell just outside the district with one going straight into the River Arrow. Discussions took place. Chair asked why the EA were not in attendance. Clerk confirmed that Hermes Carlyon had given his apologies for this meeting but had previously been attending. **The Chair requested that the EA be asked if their representative could not be in attendance that someone else came instead. Clerk confirmed he would ask.**

Health, Safety and Wellbeing

2026.25 Information noted.

Environmental Adviser's Report

2026.26 Information noted. **Members requested a copy of the Wharton Court full report. Eng/FO confirmed it would be sent to Members.**

Any Other Business

2026.27 Management Services – Clerk confirmed to Members that they agreed to extend the Contract at the last meeting with the terms being agreed today. He stated that the Board could either choose to extend for two years then look to go out to tender or, as proposed at the last meeting they could invoke a variation under Section 31 of the Contract and extend for a longer period. Clerk also referred to the Hydraulic Model and the proposed results advising the Eng would be reviewing so would need more support with regards normal maintenance and planning responsibilities. He asked the Board to approve where the Eng needs support that JBA could provide the service and recharge as and when. Discussions took place to clarify the details and the Officers then left the meeting so that Members could consider. **Chair confirmed when**

Officers returned to the meeting that they had agreed to the two-year extension as per the existing contract terms and agreed the request for reasonable additional hours. The Chair did however ask that if this meant another person then would they be local to the area to start building their knowledge of the district and getting the added benefit in terms of resilience. Clerk confirmed that would ideally be the case.

2026.28 ZC asked why two meetings were held close together. FO advised the November meeting was held following Elections which were held every three years and then the Drainage Rate had to be set before the 14th February adding that the November meeting could be moved. Discussions took place with the suggestion to move the June meeting. Clerk advised that the Accounts had to be approved before 30th June and time was needed to prepare them. **It was suggested that the November meeting be brought forward with an appropriate date to be agreed at the next meeting.**

2026.29 Chair suggested the Board might start to consider the potential to extend its area and all the possible options. Discussions took place with the Clerk confirming the Land Drainage Act enabled the Board to extend its district but the issue being there were no rating valuations available and hence the Environment Bill currently going through Parliament to enable the use of up-to-date valuations. The Land Drainage Act was very specific and refers to those from the early 1990s and he added that the Board had, at that time, extended its district in Wellington which involved re-valuing all the land in the area. **Chair requested a short report for the next meeting.**

2026.30 Tour of the District – Discussions took place but still to be confirmed.

2026.31 Chair requested new venue be sourced for next meeting.

Date of Next Meeting

2026.32 24th June 2026.

1.6 Matters Arising Not Elsewhere on the Agenda

1.7 Complaints/FOI Requests

There have been no formal complaints or requests since the last meeting.