

**Minutes of the meeting of the Lower Severn (2005) Internal Drainage Board
Held on Wednesday 23rd December 2020 at 10.00am
virtual meeting**

Present:

Cllr M Riddle	Chairman	
Mr M Barnes	Vice-Chairman	Cllr P Howells
Cllr B Behan		Cllr J Jones
Cllr P Burford		Mr G Littleton
Mrs F Collins		Mr J Nichols
Mr T Cullimore		Mr G Simms
Mr R Godwin		Ald M Sykes
Cllr R Griffin		Ald C Williams
Miss R Hewlett		Mr K Withers
Mr J Hore		

Staff:

Kieran Warren	Principal Officer	PO
Martin Dear	Accounts Officer	AO
James Druett	Land Drainage Engineer	LDE
James Thomas	Civil Engineer	CE
Louise Reading	Minutes	

Guest:

Mr Richard Betteridge Motion Consultants

3153	<p>Apologies Apologies were received from Mr J Cornock, Mr R Hyslop & Mr R Thatcher.</p>	
3154	<p>Chairman's Announcements There were no Chairman's announcements.</p>	
3155	<p>Declaration of Members Interest None</p>	
3156	<p>Elmore Back Pumping Station Update The Chairman advised Members that the Engineering Committee were recommending that expenditure at Elmore Back be increased by £200k.</p> <p>The Engineering Committee also agreed that a project review report would be completed to understand the issues that had arisen at Elmore Back and provided recommendations for improved project management for the remaining pump station schemes.</p> <p>The Chairman stated that after consultation with the Engineering and F&GP Committee Chairmen and the PO, the report would be presented to the next full Board meeting in February so that all Members could evaluate the report.</p> <p>He went on to announce that Mr Simms had offered to support the Officers with the pump station replacement programme. Mr Simms expertise and support were positively welcomed.</p> <p>Mr Barnes advised Members that owing to various factors, unknown when the budget was first set, there had been a significant financial increase; however, confidence was high in the revised figure.</p> <p>The PO added that whilst a review of Elmore Back was essential, this should be done at the Board meeting in February. Today's meeting was to determine whether the additional funding was to be approved. The options were: a) approve funding or b) switch off the pumps.</p>	

The CE introduced the Boards consultant Mr Betteridge from Motion Consultant. Members noted Mr Betteridge's qualifications and valuable experience in drainage and water management. He had provided professional advice the Board for many years.

Mr Betteridge advised that the most important cause of increased expenditure was the non - completion of a feasibility study before costing the project. Without a feasibility study, the project scope of the scheme could not be fully understood and would undoubtedly result in low confidence figures that would be subject to change.

Miss Hewlett observed that some equipment had already been purchased in order to avoid any Brexit supply issues or increase in tariff charges.

The LDE confirmed that £150k had already been committed in the purchase of the conveyor, screen and 50% of the cost of the pumps.

Ald Williams had grave concerns about the implications for the Boards finances. He reminded Members that a 53% increase had already been approved in February of this year and sought reassurance that on approval today, the Board would not find themselves in this position again. He informed Members that should the rest of the programme increase in line with today's recommendation the Board would have to fund a further £1.2million of expenditure.

The CE advised that confidence in this revised Elmore back figure was high, it would be prudent for the Board to undertake feasibility studies on the remaining pump stations and revise the figures where appropriate.

The CE was also confident that a request for a further year extension from the EA would not pose the Board any issues.

The Chairman suggested that it might be beneficial to wait until after any pump station programme review before requesting any extension.

Mr Simms, whilst agreeing with the concerns of Members, supported the recommendation. He felt that in order to provide a higher confidence in the financial figures it was important to review and revise the pump replacement programme in order to better understand the scope of the work and provide more effective costings.

Generally, Members agreed that whilst the increase in expenditure brought some concerns the recommendation was supported so long as a review of the Elmore Back scheme was undertaken, the programme was revisited and figures were produced that could provide higher confidence.

Cllr Burford was unhappy that this situation had arisen again and had no confidence in the project. He said that equipment shouldn't have been bought, and there was zero project management. He felt that Officers had been incompetent and negligent, bordering on misconduct.

Mr Simms was confident that revised figures would provide a more accurate costing for future projects, he was uneasy with the reference to incompetence and negligence and suggested that these comments should be withdrawn.

Cllr Burford did not wish to withdraw his comments.

Miss Hewlett reminded Members that the Board had asked the Engineers to draw up a budget with very little information and at all times the Engineers were clear that these figures could not be held in high confidence. The Board should stand with the Engineers and she felt that the reference to misconduct was unfounded.

	<p>The Chairman agreed and advised Members that the increase in expenditure was a reflection on the Board's actions.</p> <p>Mr Nichols asked what impact this would have on ratepayers. The AO advised that delaying the project by a year would avoid any leap in the rate/levy.</p> <p>It was resolved that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Board approve the increase in expenditure for the Elmore Back Scheme to £700k; • Officers produce a project review report for consideration at the next Board meeting addressing the issues encountered at Elmore Back and containing recommendations for improved project management in respect of the remaining pumping station replacements. 	
3157	<p>Date of next meeting Members noted that the next Full Board meeting would be held on 3rd February 2021.</p>	
	The meeting closed at 10.45 am.	