Lower Severn IDB

MISSION STATEMENT

We provide land drainage, flood risk management and surface water management to achieve safe, prosperous communities that enjoy the amenity and biodiversity benefits of the water environment.

Executive Committee

Members: Mr M Barnes (Chair), Mr R Godwin, Mr J Hore, Cllr M Riddle (Vice Chair), Mr G Simms

NB The quorum for this meeting is 3 Members

Wednesday 24 June 2026 at 10:30am, IDB Offices/Hybrid

1.	**Apologies/Welcome** **Present:** Mr M Barnes (Chair), Cllr M Riddle (Vice Chair), Mr R Godwin, Mr J Hore, Mr G Simms, Glenn Taute. **Apologies:** None received.
2.	**Declaration of Members' Interest** RG noted that his previous declaration of interest had been incorrectly recorded as "Land at Lapperditch" and should read "Land at Wicks Green." This represents his standing declaration of interest for the Pump Programme.
3.	**Minutes of the last committee meeting for Approval** Add RG's amendment above. Minutes approved – all in favour. Minutes accepted.
4.	**Comments on brought forward Exec Actions – Glenn Taute** • It was confirmed that the request for the landowner to obtain a professional valuation has now been completed. A letter explaining the outcome, together with a cheque, has been sent. • As a courtesy, the landowner was contacted by telephone following the Board's decision to issue notice to enter his land to carry out the fencing works. Although there had been delays to the works, these were acknowledged and accepted. A separate governance issue was raised by GS concerning the rule requiring elected Board members who have not attended a Board meeting within six months to obtain Board approval before attending again. • It was noted that, because the Board now meets less frequently, more members are likely to fall within this rule unintentionally. • Members agreed that the current rule should be reviewed to determine whether it remains appropriate given the reduced frequency of meetings. • It was clarified that the rule applies only to elected Board members, not appointed members and that submitting apologies for a meeting, even if accepted, does not count as attendance for the purposes of the six-month rule. • Members discussed whether the rule should instead focus on consecutive missed meetings **(**for example, missing two or three Board meetings in succession) rather than a fixed six-month period. • Comparisons were made with local authority practice, where similar attendance rules exist, and where exceptional circumstances such as long-term illness can be considered by the Board in private session.

	• There was also discussion over whether attendance at committee meetings should count towards the attendance requirement, this aspect should be checked when this action to review this policy is undertaken. • The meeting agreed that the attendance provisions should be reviewed to ensure they remain fair and practical under the current meeting schedule, with potential amendments to be considered, if necessary, in November's Board meeting.
5.	**Management Reports** All Management Reports had been received and read by members. MR raised concerns regarding the low number of near-miss incidents being reported**.** Members discussed the importance of encouraging a stronger reporting culture, recognising that near-miss reporting is a key part of improving health and safety. It was suggested that staff would benefit from further guidance and practical examples of what constitutes a near miss, supported by positive awareness and education to encourage reporting without fear of blame. Members acknowledged that the organisation operates in a high-risk environment, making effective near-miss reporting particularly important. The committee noted that two new field staff members have been recruited**.** Members were informed of the recent death of a field team member**,** who passed away following a short illness. The Board expressed condolences, noting that the organisation is supporting the employee's widow and that a life insurance claim has been submitted and is currently being assessed. It was agreed that, due to the timing and sensitivity of the circumstances, the death had not been discussed in detail at the previous meeting. Members agreed that the employee's contribution should be formally recognised at the November Board meeting**,** including observing a minute's silence. It was also noted that letters of condolence had been sent to the employee's widow on behalf of both the Board and individual members. GT then provided an overview on his Financial Report and noted the following: • Income for the period was £6k above budget, primarily due to higher-than-expected interest earned on deposits. • Variances in fees and recharges were attributed to timing differences**,** with income relating to the Avonmouth development expected later in the financial year. • The committee noted that the Local Government Pension Fund has confirmed that no employer pension contributions will be required for the next three years due to a high level of surplus fund assets over liabilities, and this is resulting in a favourable payroll variance. • Members discussed the longer-term position of the Pension Fund, acknowledging that although it is currently in a strong financial position with assets significantly exceeding liabilities, future actuarial reviews could alter the position. It was agreed that the situation should continue to be monitored and consideration given to future financial provision if required. • Other expenditure variances were noted as largely being the result of timing differences. • The Balance Sheet was reviewed, with no significant issues or concerns identified. • The committee noted that investment in the Pump Programme stood at £6.9 million at the end of April. • Members were advised that the paperwork for the £2 million loan drawdown was ready drawn upon, this ensures that the facility was available when required. The timing of drawing down the loan would be determined at a later date. • The meeting was informed that an unspent balance of approximately £75k from a land-related grant would be returned to the funding body, following confirmation that an extension to spend the remaining funds had not been approved. Members agreed that returning the unspent grant demonstrated good financial governance and helped protect the organisation's reputation with funding partners. • It was noted that the planned Environment Agency site visit had been postponed. • The Pump Programme expenditure report showed limited activity during April, with expenditure largely relating to contract management services.

	• Overall, the committee noted that the organisation remains in a strong financial position. The Financial Report was received without further questions.
6.	**Pump Program Report/Update** GS reported that: • A report had been circulated, providing a review of the project now that it has reached approximately 50–60% physical completion, broadly in line with financial expenditure. The review examined project performance to date, key variances and lessons learned to help inform the remainder of the programme. • Members noted that experience gained during the project had highlighted the importance of effective project management systems. Whilst the FastDraft project management system had proved valuable for managing project activities and maintaining a comprehensive record of design information, it was emphasised that the system requires knowledgeable users and ongoing active management rather than relying solely on the software. • The meeting heard that the proactive approach taken to pursuing grant funding had been successful. Officers will continue to seek funding opportunities whenever possible, even where funding bodies have indicated that no funding is currently available, recognising that circumstances can change. • Members reviewed stakeholder engagement and communications. It was noted that communication with Executive Members, the Board, parish councils and key stakeholders, including the Environment Agency, had generally been effective. However, some local opposition had been experienced, particularly in the Lapperditch area, and it was agreed that continued engagement and flexibility would be required to address concerns as the project progresses. • It was reaffirmed the decision to operate with minimal contingency within the project budget. Members noted that this approach promotes transparency, maintains Board oversight of budget changes and ensures that any significant financial variations are brought back to the Board for approval rather than being absorbed through large contingency allowances. • An update was provided on the operational challenges experienced over the Christmas period relating to temporary over-pumping and flooding. Officers advised that extensive discussions had taken place with the contractor to review the issues, resulting in agreement that the contractor would absorb elements of the additional pumping and diesel costs. Changes to the contractor's staffing and management arrangements had also led to a significant improvement in performance. Members noted that, whilst the period had been challenging, a satisfactory compromise had been reached regarding the associated costs. • Members sought clarification on consultancy support provided by Motion. It was confirmed that the consultants possess the necessary engineering expertise and have undertaken specialist work, including factory acceptance testing. However, officers will continue to monitor their involvement closely to ensure resources are used efficiently and that work remains within the agreed scope. • It was noted that relationships with the Environment Agency continue to be positive, with no significant delays in obtaining approvals or permissions. Regular liaison meetings remain in place, although meetings are postponed where there are no matters requiring discussion. • Members discussed costs associated with the over-pumping works and noted that while some additional costs had arisen due to operational requirements, others resulted from contractor issues, including a blockage caused during the works. The Board was assured that contractor costs had been robustly scrutinised and challenged where appropriate. • Issues with grid/ internet cables delaying the programme discussed. Highways Agency permission is being sought as hidden cables and connections are disruptive to the Programme; potential road closures discussed. • The meeting noted the report and the lessons learned to date, recognising that these would help improve project delivery during the remaining phases of the Pump Programme.
7.	**Pump Programme investment forecast update** The Board received the Pump Programme Investment Forecast Update from GT and noted the following: • Members considered a revised investment forecast comparing the current projected outturn against the budget approved in January. • The Board noted that the current forecast indicates an overall project variance of approximately £307k over budget, or 3%**.** However, officers advised that this is not expected to have a significant impact on cash flow due to the level of grant funding secured and the availability of approved borrowing.

	• Members discussed the anticipated requirement for borrowing through the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB). It was noted that, whereas the project had originally anticipated borrowing in excess of £6 million, successful grant funding had substantially reduced this requirement. The current estimate is that between £1 million and £1.5 million of the approved £2 million loan facility may ultimately be required. • The committee acknowledged that there remains approximately two years of the programme to complete and that further changes could occur. However, members were advised that the principal project elements and associated variances have now been identified, providing increased confidence in the overall forecast. • Members noted that, should the programme be completed ahead of schedule and avoid extending into 2028, significant savings could be realised through reduced project overheads and inflationary costs. • The committee discussed the importance of long-term asset management and financial sustainability. Members noted that the Board's Treasury Management arrangements include provision for establishing earmarked reserves from future operating surpluses to fund the eventual replacement of the pumping infrastructure. • Officers advised that, based on current forecasts, setting aside surplus cash relating to depreciation would provide sufficient funding over the expected 40-year life of the assets to contribute towards their replacement, reducing the financial burden in the future. • Members welcomed the improved financial outlook for the programme and noted that the investment would leave a lasting legacy through modernised, more resilient infrastructure, incorporating improved engineering solutions that address shortcomings in the original designs.
8.	**Any Other/New/Update Item which the Chair/CEO decide is urgent/be mentioned** • RG brought up the issue of long-term impact of climate change on the Board's pumping infrastructure, particularly at Wicks Green, Oldbury and Marshfield. Concern was expressed that, as sea levels rise and overtopping of river defences becomes more frequent, the existing pumps may no longer have sufficient capacity to cope with the increased volumes of floodwater. A potential long-term solution was suggested involving the installation of a tidal sluice or flap within the river defences to allow floodwater to drain naturally once river levels fall. Members agreed the concept had merit but acknowledged it would require partnership working with the Environment Agency and long-term planning, given the likely timescales involved. • GS gave a view on his future with the board after the completion of Lapperditch, Marshfield and Elmore Back. • Members were informed that four new appointed Board Members had joined the Board and would attend an induction session on 8th July, including presentations and a site tour. Board Members were invited to attend if they wished.
9.	**Confirmation of new Actions** The Board noted the following actions and discussion points arising from the meeting: • It was agreed that the six-month non-attendance rule for Board members should be reviewed, including clarification as to whether it applies solely to Board meetings or also extends to committee meetings. • Members requested a review of the definition and understanding of “near miss” reporting within the organisation. It was agreed that further work should be undertaken to clarify expectations and to support improved health and safety reporting culture, encouraging openness and viewing reporting positively rather than as a weakness. It was noted this would be particularly important for new operational staff joining the organisation. • It was agreed that, at the next Board meeting, reference should be made (under Chairman’s Announcements) to the recent deaths of two former colleagues. It was further agreed that this would be noted informally rather than recorded as a formal action, given the sensitive nature of the matter and the publication of minutes. • Members agreed that the strategic plan should include consideration of a tidal sluice/flap system in the relevant area as a potential long-term measure to mitigate the impacts of increased tidal overtopping and flooding. This would be explored further as part of future planning work.
10.	**Date of Next Meeting:** 22 July 2026

11.	**Close:** 12.10pm