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)

NB The quorum for this meeting is 3 Members

Wednesday 21 October 2026 at 10:30am, IDB Offices/Hybrid

DRAFT MINUTES

Item		Lead
1.	**Apologies/Welcome** **Present:** Chairman Mike Barnes, Vice-Chairman Matthew Riddle, Roger Godwin, Jim Druett, James Thomas, Glenn Taute and interim CEO Phil Camomile. **Apologies:** None received.	Chair
2.	**Declaration of Members' Interest** RG declared an interest due to his land being used for work at Lapperditch Pumping Station.	Chair
3.	**Minutes of the last committee meeting for approval** All in favour - minutes accepted without comment.	Chair
4.	**Comments on brought forward Exec Actions** GT updated that:	CEO

	• All actions were marked green as completed. • Staff and operators had been reminded of the importance of reporting all near misses, including minor incidents, to help identify hazards and prevent future accidents. • MR shared feedback from an Avon Fire Authority Board meeting where it was suggested that near misses accounting for approximately 50% of accident book entries could indicate a successful reporting culture. • It was emphasised that reporting should include all relevant incidents, including minor cuts and potential exposure to infections when working in or around ditches and watercourses. • The importance of awareness of Weil's disease and seeking appropriate medical attention following potential exposure was highlighted.	
5.	**Management reports: -** **CEO update** PC had reviewed the requested items and would report back confidentially. **Finance Report** • GT explained that the Financial Regulations had been updated to propose increasing the target cash reserve from 25% of annual turnover (approximately £600,000) to between six months and one year's turnover, equivalent to approximately £1.2 million–£2.5 million. • The proposed increase would provide greater financial security in the event of emergencies, unexpected costs or additional projects. • GT reported that his review of other Internal Drainage Boards (IDBs) indicated that almost 90% held at least one year's turnover in cash, with some holding twice that amount. • The financial forecasts assumed borrowing the full £2 million. GT considered this affordable over the	Chair

	following five to six years, allowing for interest payments and repayment. • Borrowing £1 million instead would leave an estimated cash balance of £1.4 million at the end of March 2028. • GT recommended borrowing the full amount of £2 million as a prudent approach, provided it could be supported through modest increases in drainage rates. • The additional reserves would provide financial headroom if the overall programme cost increased beyond £11 million, potentially reaching £11.5 million. • The committee were advised that the borrowing had to be taken in January 2027 to meet the deadline set by Defra. • The committee discussed the possibility of borrowing £1 million initially and applying for a further £1 million later if required. It was noted that a further application could take approximately two to three months. • GT explained that borrowing rates were approximately 5.2–5.3%, while deposit returns were around 3.6% after investment and management costs. • The estimated net cost of borrowing was approximately 1.7%, equivalent to around £17,000 per year for every £1 million borrowed. • The Board's existing arrangements with BlackRock through Evelyn were considered satisfactory, with the net deposit return reflecting fund costs and an agent's fee of approximately £600 per month. • The committee discussed whether better returns could be achieved on deposits. GT explained that alternative options had been explored with Jim Nicholls, but suitable alternatives for a public body were limited. • GT explained that maintaining adequate reserves would help protect against unforeseen event. • PC noted that smaller, steady increases in rates were preferable to holding rates for several years and then introducing a substantial increase, potentially of 10–15%.	

	• The committee discussed the impact of Tranche 2B funding and the Environment Agency's questions about how this funding had affected drainage rates. • PC explained that government funding intended to compensate for increased electricity and energy costs was expected to have a favourable impact on rates. • The committee discussed the case of Great Yarmouth Borough Council where changes to an IDB's differential rating arrangements had resulted in a significant increase for one rating district. GT clarified that this was a separate issue that had become associated with wider concerns about IDB rates. • GT advised that the forecast indicated a rates increase of approximately 3.6% for 2027/28 would be sufficient to support the proposed borrowing arrangements. • MB observed that a rates increase of around 3.7% would be broadly in line with the reported inflation rate and reasonable from the ratepayer's perspective. • The committee noted that a 5% increase had previously been proposed for the current financial year and that this was broadly comparable with increases anticipated by local authorities. • The committee discussed the importance of maintaining adequate reserves to avoid the need for larger increases in future if reserves were depleted. • The Board's two largest paying authorities, South Gloucestershire Council and Bristol City Council, were noted to be unitary authorities with comparatively large budgets. However, questions had recently been raised by Bristol City Council and a councillor from the Forest of Dean regarding expenditure and the value received from the IDB's levy. • The committee acknowledged that local authorities were likely to scrutinise costs more closely in the current financial climate. • It was confirmed that the Executive Committee's role was to make a recommendation to the Full Board, following consideration by the Finance Committee.	

- A potential rates increase of 4.8% was discussed, but MB expressed a preference for 4.5%.
- GT agreed that +/- 4.0%-4.5% could be taken forward for consideration, noting that it would have little impact on the cash position.

Operations Service report

JD confirmed that he has circulated the Operations Report prior to the meeting and asked whether there were questions for feedback; none received although RG noted that the rhines in his area contain a lot of debris which the weed screens may find challenging.

Programme and Civil Engineer Report

JT commented on the following points regarding the Programme and Civil Engineer Report:

- Works are nearing completion at Lapperditch and Marshfield Pumping Stations with key elements now operational. Pumps, weed screens and telemetry are running and data is being received at the office. A few minor issues remain to be resolved.
- CCTV cameras are expected to be installed shortly.
- The forthcoming storm was expected to provide an important test of the new pumping arrangements and telemetry systems; performance will be monitored closely.
- Work is beginning to take shape at Oldbury Pumping Station with some in-channel works already completed. The intention is to retain the pumps on site for as long as possible, subject to the weather and the effectiveness of the current pumping arrangements.
- RG queried the earlier decision to progress Oldbury before Wicks Green, as he had understood that Lapperditch, Marshfield and Wicks Green would be delivered together. It was explained that the programme had been changed around 18 months to two years previously for several reasons, potentially

	including highways approvals, contractor resources and cost. • Discussions were ongoing about retaining and using the available lay-down area and other nearby sites for materials and welfare facilities. The aim was to coordinate resources efficiently and reduce unnecessary transport of materials between sites; final arrangements had not yet been agreed. • It was suggested that the Board could mark the successful completion of Marshfield and Lapperditch (potentially with a ribbon-cutting event at Marshfield.)	
6.	**Risk Register review and update** PC presented the Risk Register and commented that it was a good illustration, and thanked GT for his work on this. Two new risks were proposed: • Risk 1.2: Programme Board: With the Programme Board being suspended there isn't the normal governance, transparency and reporting. PC is reviewing its terms of reference and delegated authority, with a view to proposing a solution at the next Board meeting. In the meantime, James, Jim and Geoff continue to manage immediate programme issues. • Risk 4.2: Change of CEO: The departure of the previous CEO and recruitment of a permanent replacement were identified as a significant risk. The interim CEO (PC) will support the recruitment process. GT advised that the risk register must be presented to the Full Board for review and approval at its next meeting. It was noted that there were no risks rated red. No further comments or amendments were raised during the meeting.	CEO
7.	**Policy Reviews – Schedules for review and support for next board meeting approval:**	CEO

	- **Environmental Statement** (already reviewed by the ExCom) • MR suggested strengthening the Environmental Statement; suggested revising the statement to focus not only on preventing environmental harm, but also on actively enhancing wildlife and biodiversity wherever possible and where consistent with the Board's functions. • PC emphasised the need to comply with environmental legislation and protect habitats and species, while taking a proportionate and practical approach. The Board should avoid making commitments it may be unable to deliver. • RG reiterated the potential benefit of having dedicated environmental support either through an assigned staff role or an external consultant. This could help identify environmental considerations in advance, such as nesting birds and the presence of otters and facilitate works rather than unnecessarily delay them. Any arrangement would need to be appropriately resourced. • It was noted that the Board already supports environmental initiatives, including work with a local group to control invasive mink. However, these activities are not always formally recorded. • It was agreed on the importance of keeping clear records of environmental actions and improvements. This would allow the Board to demonstrate what it has done and respond effectively to enquiries about its environmental performance. - **Financial Regulations** • Financial Regulations were reviewed with proposed minor amendments, including increasing the general cash reserve provision from 25% to 100% provided drainage rate and levy increases remain at reasonable levels. The revised provision was recommended for approval by the Full Board.	

	• The permitted value of staff gifts and hospitality would increase from £25 to £30 to reflect inflation and align with other drainage boards. • Duplicate Treasury provisions were consolidated into one section and minor grammatical corrections were made. • The committee agreed to progress the three policies listed under the relevant agenda item, alongside the introduction of a new Sexual Harassment Policy, prepared by solicitors to reflect current legislation. Reviews of other policies, many relating to HR, would be deferred until early 2027. • The Whistleblowing Policy was identified as due for review. The review will be deferred until early 2027 as part of the Board's planned programme of policy reviews. • The committee discussed referencing the Board's existing environmental policies and plans, particularly its Biodiversity Action Plan and any relevant Water Level Management Plans. The wording would be checked to ensure it accurately reflects existing commitments without creating unrealistic expectations. **- Health and Safety Policy** An external consultation advises on the Health and Safety Policy for LSIDB and no significant changes are proposed.	
8.	**Any Other/New/Update Item which the Chair/CEO decide is urgent/be mentioned** John Hore had raised detailed questions about the Programme, which JT had answered from a programme perspective PC requested a Business Services Committee to discuss the recruitment of a permanent CEO; a BSC meeting was agreed for 4th November 2026 ahead of the Full Board meeting on 18th November to allow the matters to be considered through the appropriate process.	Chair/CEO
9.	**Confirmation of new Actions**	CFO

	• Continue to encourage near-misses in Health and Safety recording • To recommend taking the £2 million loan at Board meeting in November • Fin. Regs.: cash holdings be set at one year's turnover as a minimum • Look at setting the rate increase to 4-4.5% for next year's budget • BSC on 4th November to discuss CEO recruitment • Add a sentence to the Environmental Statement on how LSIDB can contribute the environment where reasonably practical. RG suggested talking with FWAG for advice on this.	
10.	**Date of Next Meeting:** 2nd December 2026.	Chair
11.	**Close.**	Chair