ADA South East Branch

Minutes of the Meeting of the

ADA South East Branch held on

Thursday 25th April 2019 in the

Amos Meeting Room, Hobbs Parker Offices

Ashford Cattle Market, Monument Way, Orbital Park

Ashford, Kent. TN24 0HB

**Present**

D Botting, N Botting, B Buntine, Cllr M Burgess, Cllr P Coe, L Cooke, J Dilnot, P Dowling, A Eastwood, B Gower, P Hazelhurst, Cllr A Hicks, P Howard, H Langrish, D Linfoot, D Lovejoy, R Monje, Cllr H Rogers, Cllr D Smith, M Tapp, M Watson and M Wilkinson

**In Attendance**

I Moodie (ADA)

I Nunn (Environment Agency)

**Apologies for absence**

D Chalcroft, Cllr M Conolly, N Dyas, D Fuller, Cllr A Hills, Dr M Hurst, Cllr J Johnson, J Langrish, R Langrish, Cllr M Ovenden, R Patten, Cllr C Solly, G Steed, Cllr H Stummer-Schmertzing, P Williams, Cllr D Wimble and M Wrout

**Welcome and Introductions**

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked the attendees to introduce themselves to the Branch; special mention was given to Ian Moodie, Technical Manager of ADA.

**Election of Branch Chairman**

The Branch Secretary took the Chair and asked for nominations for the position of Branch Chair; it was proposed by D Lovejoy, seconded by Cllr P Coe and resolved unanimously that Larry Cooke be reappointed as the Branch Chairman.

**Election of Vice Chairman**

The Chairman then asked for nominations for the position of Branch Vice-Chair. After brief discussion it was proposed by M Tapp, seconded by D Lovejoy and resolved unanimously that Cllr Aline Hicks be reappointed as the Branch Vice-Chair.

**Election of Branch Secretary**

It was proposed by Mrs H Langrish, seconded by P Dowling and resolved unanimously that Nick Botting be re-appointed as the Branch Secretary.

**Minutes of the Previous Branch Meeting**

Minutes of the Branch Meeting held on 26th April 2018 were received and unanimously agreed to be a correct record of the previous meeting.

**Matters Arising from Minutes**

It was acknowledged that the meeting’s agenda covered any matters arising.

**Matters for Discussion**

Good Governance Guide

Ian Moodie explained the publication of the Good Governance Guide which had been written following criticism of a small number of Boards in the National Audit Office report of 2018. The idea of the booklet was as an introduction to new Board members on how a Board should show proper governance; additionally, it was viewed as useful guide for existing Board members and should be viewed as a living document where considered feedback would be welcome. Mr Moodie informed the Branch of the five recent Good Governance Workshops held nationally; of the 112 Boards in the country, 64 Boards had membership representation at the meetings with a total of 204 individuals attending. He continued that an audio recording had been made of the London workshop that would be made available to Boards along with slides from the presentations. Debate followed with members remarking on the Guide and querying some of its recommendations; Mr Moodie repeated his earlier comment regarding feedback from Boards and their members. Additional comments on Board composition and size were also discussed with emphasis placed on attracting younger members with a Broad spectrum of interests; lastly, Mr Moodie stated that Defra were currently looking into Board membership with a report due soon.

Defra Consultation of the Water Environment and River Authorities & Land Drainage Bill

Ian Moodie informed the Branch that the River Authorities and Land Drainage Bill had passed its second reading in the House of Commons in February, and its third reading in March along with its Committee stage. This now meant that the Bill would begin its progression through the House of Lords. Mr Moodie explained that the Bill aims to put the Somerset Rivers Authority onto a statutory footing as a precepting body, and would also enable the reform of IDB ratings annual value lists. He continued that the Bill recognised the need to ensure the way that land and property values could be updated sat on a sound legal basis. He added that the Bill was a Private Members Bill, which meant it had a limited time to be considered in Parliament and therefore its passage to becoming an Act remained uncertain. In conclusion Mr Moodie stated the recent Defra consultation on Water in the Environment included certain provisions from the Bil,l which may be incorporated into future legislation should the Rivers and Land Drainage Bill not succeed.

Association of SuDs Authorities (ASA)

Bronwyn Buntine, SuDs Engineer for Kent County Council, introduced herself to the Branch and highlighted the work of KCC, as a Lead Local Flood Authority, with regards to the application of sustainable urban drainage principles in the planning process. She informed the Branch that she led a team of four officers who were currently handling in the region of 2000 applications a year, up from 500 previously. She noted the need for liaison between County and IDBs to avoid potential fragmentation between authorities when dealing with applications; as there was a danger that confusion may lead to erroneous assumptions by consultants. It was agreed by all that early consultation between flood risk authorities was essential in the planning process. Ms Buntine then explained the formation of the Association of SuDs Authorities which had arisen to facilitate communication between Lead Local Flood Authorities, and provide a platform for LLFAs to contribute to, much like ADA with Internal Drainage Boards. She added that ASA would be operational from 1st May 2019, and was receiving administrative aid from ADA; A Hicks expressed support and praise for the formation, a sentiment echoed by B Gower.

De-Maining of EA Main River

**Ian Moodie updated the Branch on the current 4 pilot schemes being pursued by IDBs and the Agency and acknowledged the efforts made locally by the River Stour (Kent) IDB who were due to finalise their own scheme. He states that ADA were looking to simplify the process of de-maining and were looking to provide further guidance on the matter and the EA were due to provide feedback to the Minister. P Dowling informed the Branch that his Board had found local negotiations productive but the legal side was more onerous, and the Board had found it necessary to take professional advice on certain matters. Ian Moodie agreed that legal agreements had caused the most delays and asset ownership had also presented problems. L Cooke asked what the future financial liability would be, P Dowling replied that the Board had had to rationalize on certain current maintenance works to allow for future maintenance of de-mained stretches. M Watson asked if the Stour Board had negotiated a reduction in their precept payment to the Agency, P Dowling answered that the Board had secured a permanent reduction, helped by the fact that the Board’s costs on working on Main River had already been identified through their PSCA. Lastly Ian Moodie said ADA were keen to report back to Defra if other Boards were interested in further demaining.**

**Environment Agency Operations**

**Ian Nunn, Operations Manager at the EA, confirmed full allocation for funding for maintenance works and capital schemes for the financial year; he added that the EA’s works programme was available online. He voiced caution on the water levels, which although currently acceptable, may cause issues with maintenance should the area experience a prolonged dry spell. L Cooke expressed concern on water resources, Mr Nunn replied that the EA were aware that although reservoirs were currently in good health, and again it would only take a dry spell to potentially begin to cause problems. The issue of water transfer licensing was raised; Mr Nunn told the Branch that the Agency was liaising with the Stour IDB in this regard but identifying what could be classed as an actual transfer was proving problematic.**

**Public Sector Co-operation Agreements**

**Ian Moodie reported that ADA were keen to hear of local views on PSCAs and their effectiveness. Ian Nunn stated that his experience with the Stour IDB was generally positive; Priscilla Hazelhurst informed the Branch that the North Kent Marshes IDB had signed up to a PSCA with the Agency but had experienced stumbling blocks with professional indemnity insurance valuation, which the EA considered too low. Mike Watson thought the process of arranging a PSCA was too long-winded, Ian Moodie replied that the framework was in place, Mr Watson replied that he believed it wasn’t sufficiently flexible. L Cooke asked how many Boards had signed up to PSCAs, Ian Moodie replied that out of 112 IDBs nationally around 70-80 had PSCAs in place.**

**Rewilding/ Beaver Reintroductions**

**Martin Tapp expressed concern over the newly-protected status for European beavers in Scotland which were now considered naturalized after their re-introduction, and asked for ADA’s opinion on the matter. Ian Moodie replied that whilst ADA acknowledged that European beavers did not construct dams on a scale similar to the North American beaver, they did tend to dig burrows below the waterline on rivers and therefore could undermine banks and cause collapse.** He suggested that, should the beaver population spread, Boards will need to take measures to make critical areas and infrastructure less attractive to beavers to mitigate their damage. This would require having a regulatory system in place that enables flood Risk Management Authorities to take proportionate measures swiftly where beavers cause damage and thereby endanger safety. Ian Nunn said that evidence existed of beavers chewing tidal doors and stop boards at structures and the cost of protecting infrastructure was another concern. Ian Moodie stated that ADA were monitoring the efforts of the Dutch Union of Water Boards who were conducting research into the behaviour of beavers to better understand how to protect against them.

Date of Next Meeting

It was agreed that the River Stour (Kent) IDB would host the next ADA South East Branch meeting. The date to be Thursday 30th April 2020; venue to be The Amos Room, Ashford Cattle Market.

Any Other Business

Ian Moodie informed the room that copies of the Good Governance Guide were available for members to take with them. There being no further business the Chairman declared the meeting closed at 1240pm and thanked all members for their attendance.