

Minutes of the meeting of the Association of Drainage Authorities – South East Branch
held at Ashford Cattle Market, Orbital Park, Ashford TN24 0HB
at 10:00am on Wednesday 25th October 2023

1a. Welcome and Introductions:

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and invited all to introduce themselves.

1b. Present:

B Gower (Chairman), A Buchanan, E Burdett, G Bussley, R Carnac, D Chalcroft, P Coe, L Cooke, P Dowling (Branch Secretary – Outgoing), N Dyas, A Eastwood, D Goff, P Haselhurst, A Hicks, T Hills, P Howard, M Hurst, R Kinsella, D Ledger, D Lovejoy, R Monje, I Nunn, O Pantrey, H Rogers, A Solomon, G Steed, M Tant, I Thomson, J Williamson.

1c. Apologies for absence:

N Botting, N Claxton, H Davis, A Hammerton, A Lynch, G Meaden and N Ovenden.

2. Election of Branch Chairman:

The Branch Secretary thanked B Gower and asked for nominations for Branch Chairman. It was proposed by L Cooke, seconded by A Hicks and agreed by all that Mr Bill Gower continue as Branch Chairman.

3. Election of Vice Chairman:

The Chairman invited nominations for the position of Branch Vice-Chair. It was proposed by G Steed, seconded by B Gower and agreed by all that Cllr A Hicks be appointed as Branch Vice Chair.

4. Election of Branch Secretary:

The Chairman invited nominations for the position of Branch Secretary. It was proposed by P Dowling, seconded by P Howard and agreed by all that A Eastwood be appointed as Branch Secretary.

5. Confirmation of Branch Director for ADA Board:

The Chairman stated that P Haselhurst was appointed as Branch Director in October 2022, to represent the Southeast Branch on the ADA Board for 3 years (until October 2024). Ms Haselhurst confirmed that she is willing to continue in this role as planned, which was welcomed by all.

6. Minutes of the previous Branch Meeting:

The minutes of the Branch Meeting, held on 19 October 2022, were received. It was proposed by L Cooke, seconded by G Steed and agreed by all to be a correct record of the previous meeting.

I Thomson informed that ADA are updating their website to ensure that latest information is displayed on all Regional Branches.

7. Matters arising from minutes:

There were no matters arising.

8. Matters raised for discussion:

a. ADA – General Update (I Thomson)

- Revenue funding versus capital funding – recent flooding incidents in Lincolnshire, Cambridgeshire and Yorkshire have once again brought the EA, IDBs and Local Authorities to the forefront. There has been 2,300 properties flooded with multiple breaches of embankments,

particularly in Lincolnshire. The rivers Trent and Severn levels are still high and the knock-on effects for everything that drains into these river basins must be dealt with.

ADA has followed recent events, gathering information from Members and Operating Partners with a view to presenting the Government with significant challenges to their policy thinking. Successive governments have heavily favoured capital funding over revenue funding. Conversations are being had with Emma Hardy MP – the Shadow Minister for flooding – who has a genuine interest in what needs to be done in terms of managing and operating existing assets rather than building new structures. The Rt Hon Therese Coffey MP, Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs recognises that for every £1 spent on maintenance and operations the return is £11, whereas investment in new-build flood defences is estimated to only provide £5 return for every £1 spent.

- HRH The Duke of Gloucester is the Patron of ADA until August 2029, he has had a long-standing interest in ADA's affairs and has been a regular visitor to various events over the years.

- ADA's Committees Structure is to change from March 2024 subject to the ADA Board's approval. Currently there is a Policy & Finance Committee and a Technical & Environment Committee both with broad terms of reference causing overlapping between the two. The new structure is for an ADA Policy Committee which will include Technical, Environment and Finance of the wider ADA and its Members and alongside it there will be a second smaller ADA Audit & Advisory Committee that will look purely at ADA's affairs.

- Environment Act 2021 Secondary Legislation – ADA has continued to push for its enactment to enable the expansion of Internal Drainage Districts or the creation of new ones. ADA believes this to be beneficial to all their Members and Defra has worked closely with IDBs to draft the statutory instrument required. Consultation has been continuously delayed, but it's believed that it may be signed off shortly.

- Abstraction Licences – some IDBs are paying Abstraction Licences to the EA when their role is to transfer water to the end abstractor. ADA has pushed Defra on being more involved in the external advisory group for water abstraction Licencing with a view to correct this anomaly. The EA is receiving double licences for single abstraction and ADA is challenging this because IDBs are not Licensees, they are EA's partner helping them move water to the final abstraction points.

- Association of SuDS Authority (ASA) – ADA is moving forward with discussions for collaborative working with ASA and both Boards have agreed to develop a closer arrangement. Deliberations are taking place over the next 12 months and the intention is to achieve a common working platform between the 2 Associations that will further engage Local Authorities in ADA's work. This cooperation will afford ADA a general wider influence at central government level, and it is believed that it will enable a full catchment scale approach from source to sea covering rural and urban areas.

- Lowland Agricultural Peat Small Infrastructure Pilot (LAPSIP) – Defra awarded ADA this £5.5M contract to manage 20 to 25 small scale projects by IDBs, aimed at providing better control of lowland water levels for the preservation and rewetting of peat soils. This grant will fund up to £250,000 per project for all or part of the costs with works to be completed during 2024.

- Drainage Rates System (DRS) – the platform on which this system operates will not be supported beyond 2025. Therefore, ADA are in discussions with South Holland IDB and Phil Camomile (the technical creator behind DRS) for the Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) of DRS. Once the IPRs are acquired ADA will become the effective owner for the industry and initially it will be the same, albeit operating on a different platform. Future changes may include web driven access.

- Flood & Water Live 2023 – I Thomson thanked all those who attended and stated that it was a great event enjoyed by all who attended, though it only made around £2,000 profit and weather conditions are always a risk.

- ADA are looking to take on another member of staff to concentrate on administrative tasks, membership services and data and information, enabling I Moodie to focus more on technical issues.

- ADA Conference 2023 is on 21 November 2023 at One Great George Street, Westminster with the following speakers: Emma Hardy MP, Shadow Minister for Flooding, Julia King DBE, Chair of the Climate Change Committee’s Adaptation Committee and a cross-bench Chair of the House of Lords Select Committee on Science & Technology, Alan Lovell, Chair of the Environment Agency, Lisa Pinney MBE, Chief Executive of the Coal Authority, Ian Titherington, Senior Adviser on Sustainable Drainage for the Welsh Government and Adriano Battilani, leading expert in irrigation and water management in Italy, Secretary General of Irrigators d’Europe, and a technical expert for ANBI.

Questions

- P Coe stated that some people are concerned that a Labour Government may be inclined to reduce the number of IDBs across the country. I Thomson squashed this notion, stating that all political parties are looking at service delivery and IDBs are showing excellent examples of providing a single service delivery on Water Management and Flood Risk. Whilst local authorities are up against it in delivering Health, Education, Social Services and more, including management of flood risk and water management, IDBs have a unique delivery remit that is recognised across the political spectrum.

- L Cooke informed of the non-receipt of the ADA Gazette by the Romney Marsh Office. I Thomson asked for them to get in touch so that details can be updated, he further stated that due to GDPR, ADA is losing touch with Board Members because to keep their personal details each individual’s authorisation is needed. D Chalcraft stated that individual’s consents can be sought by each Board and passed onto ADA. **Action: All IDBs to seek agreement to share IDB Members’ contact details for the purpose of issuing the ADA Gazette.**

b. EA – General Update (I Nunn)

I Nunn began by explaining that whilst local teams are still working hard to deliver a good service, there continue to be a number of difficulties and frustrations.

- Budgets and Working Programme
£18M was allocated to routine maintenance this year with a further £900K from IDB Precepts. However, from 1 April 2023 all frameworks were unusable, putting huge pressure on the team to find alternative ways of delivering this work. In-house works were not directly affected but there is no framework contract for maintaining pumping stations nor operational framework for routine maintenance activities. The impact of this was not felt within the Stour area because the RSIDB are doing most of the contracted work under the PSCA, but in the other catchments where the EA has not been able to take this option, it has taken more time, effort and resources.

Following the success of PSCA working, it is being conveyed back to the framework team that value should be placed on the use of smaller, local contractors and partners, who can get on with the job in hand for a fraction of the cost.

The maintenance programme is behind but being delivered gradually. Issues with fleet machine breakdowns contribute to this as it is a drawn-out process to get anything repaired. Increasing funds have been spent on plant hire to cover plant that is broken down awaiting repair.

- Other Works

Significant emergency works at Rye, Isle of Sheppey and the North Kent Coast where there have been real failures needing to be repaired, fortunately the capital programme's framework is operational, but resourcing is difficult.

There is a huge capital programme underway in Kent & South London, involving 5 large projects at a cost of £90M and no extra staff to deliver it, suppliers are struggling to recruit quality staff and the EA's Project Management Support Team have been on a constant recruit for the last 2 years.

- Asset Management is also affected by limited resources, with inspection programmes getting behind and some conditions being considered poor, which increases the risk of failure.

- Other News, Challenges and Achievements

Industrial action has also been going on for most of this year, affecting the standby rotas and the knock-on effect from the fatality in Thames is still being felt. Minor piling works are still 'red carded' even though a dedicated team of people have been working on this since May.

The EA is always re-organising to gain efficiencies and there are a couple of strengths in place such as the Operator, Maintainer & Responder. Directors work on a portfolio approach, independently setting out their findings but this causes challenges at area level. Staff are struggling with this uncoordinated approach.

The EA is aiming to be carbon net zero by 2030, so a fleet of 100 electric vans were purchased for the field teams and delivered to depots, but in most cases charging points still need to be installed.

CCTV equipment has been purchased to carry out our own CCTV inspections on culverts and underground assets. There is still a need for contracting out for big culverts that involve temporary works, but we may expand in the future.

Storm Babet tested, and in many locations exceeded, defences and a lot of work needs to be done to cope with future events. Some river levels reached higher than during the 2013 floods.

- New Appointments and Job Fulfilment/Work Gratification

Alan Lovell and Philip Duffy are respectively the EA's new Chairman and Chief Executive and hopefully they will visit Kent to get acquainted with the issues faced by this area.

Russel Bagshaw was appointed Operations Manager for East Kent and Ian Nunn will be spending 6 months trying to solve some of the previously mentioned issues at a national and local level. Seb Bishop will be taking on some of Ian's responsibilities during this time.

2023-24 Pay rises are still not settled. National campaigns for field teams have been successful and the Environment Management Apprenticeship Scheme is a good high-level scheme that has attracted young candidates.

The EA is a complex organisation, possibly trying to achieve too much nationally which has a knock-on effect to delivery at the local level. Rightly, during Covid there was a focus on staff wellbeing, but it is proving difficult to get people back in the office. Locally, EA teams are fantastic and try hard to get the job done but it is often frustrating. The relationship between the EA and IDBs is excellent and very much appreciated.

- Future Budgeting

Next year's indicative programme is still to be received. The expectation is that the field teams will contract out more work and will spend their time inspecting and operating assets and responding to incidents. There is a concern on how these teams will be funded in the future and precept contributions may need to be increased.

There is consideration around reducing the revenue budget for next year and increasing capital expenditure.

Questions/Comments

- D Goff expressed his concerns over all the issues raised and stated that it may be an opportunity to increase collaboration with IDBs going forward. I Nunn stated that collaboration is key as shown by the success of the Stour PSCA and the EA may want to extend these agreements to provide value for money and because they may not have the capacity to do the work.

- M Hurst observed that the EA are under fire due to sewer overflows and as an organisation they would do better to grasp the issues and work on solutions rather than being defensive. He further agreed that the EA's fixation on national frameworks is deterring it from using local contractors. I Nunn stated that this is driven by the fact that negotiating one framework is less labour intensive.

- M Hurst further stated that District Council and third-party assets are generally in a bad condition and the EA urgently needs an overall asset strategy because their new assets will be ineffective if associated assets fail. I Thomson stated that ADA has pushed for the Asset Replacement Allowance – which was £250M – to be extended across all RMAs. The EA has spent the majority of this fund but there are still funds available and ADA will continue to push for more funding to be made available in the future.

- T Hills stated that he has been very impressed with the EA's staff knowledge in respect of water quality, but the EA's byzantine system needs sorting. I Nunn agreed and commented that people who work for the EA are committed and believe they can make a difference.

- P Dowling reiterated the value for money provided by local contractors and opined that EA local managers should be given the flexibility to manage. I Nunn agreed and stated that the East Kent Partnership do fantastic work for the EA at a fraction of the cost, but they are also under resourced. P Dowling replied that if they were given a longer-term indication/commitment of works, they would be better placed to resource it.

- R Kinsella stated that Pevensey & Cuckmere WLMB would welcome a PSCA, but local EA staff are unwilling, even when work becomes critical as demonstrated recently. The Board had to use its own resources to fix a breach that would have impacted on their commitment to an SSSI even though it was the EA's responsibility. This work's cost was exacerbated by the need to obtain EA permissions.

- G Steed stated that there is a lot of equipment down-time due to the difficulty in resourcing parts and a long-term plan for resourcing equipment and parts is essential to our work. I Nunn agreed.

Action: All IDBs encouraged to enter into a PSCA in order to support local EA staff. I Nunn to advise how IDBs can further assist.

c. General Update – Southern RFCC (M Hurst)

- M Hurst echoed his support for everyone who has been affected by flooding and stated that for the first-time surface water flooding has been properly recognised as a cause. The EA are increasingly knowledgeable about this and projects of less than £3M can now be approved by area teams.

- Natural Flood Management Programme – EA leading this £25M funding programme for improving flood resilience with bids being currently invited. Planning to fund 100 projects and the fact that any legal person or identity can apply is positive and may lead to some good local practice and alternative thinking projects.

- Southern Water – have several pilots on how to stop rainwater getting into sewers with the furthest advanced in the Isle of Wight. Joint working is promoted, and a group is being set up to include property developers, LAs and Water Companies with a view to getting a leadership statement to tackle surface water.

- Coastal Defences – the coastal surge in 1953 caused over 2,000 deaths, and he feels that we are not prepared were a south coast tidal surge to occur and it would not just affect the coast. He urged everyone to think about what small things they can do to prepare as it will happen.

- Guide to Sewer Flooding – now available written by Dr M Hurst.

- T Hills agreed that the culture has changed at Southern Water and stressed that District Councils need to better acknowledge Climate Change and find means to adapt. He opined that the Shoreline Management Plans are not adequate, and residents need to be better informed about the risks and educated to adapt and survive. I Nunn stated that the Folkestone to Cliff End Strategy is a good effort but more needs to be done.

d. Demaining & Decommissioning of Assets – Lower Medway IDB (P Haselhurst)

LMIDB was approached by the EA regarding the allocation of part of next year's precept on the decommission of some key outfalls on the North Kent Coast. The Board is working closely with the RSPB and others, looking at the future water levels across the marsh and outfalls so this could be an opportunity to think differently about how to manage, transfer and discharge water. Therefore, the Board is not discounting it but is trying to input into the project in a way that helps with the wider visions and aspirations for the area.

I Nunn stated this is to do with asset condition checks, and rather than fixing or maintaining failing assets there is consideration to decommissioning them, a complex process with no funding so precept funds are sought. The decommissioning processes have not been agreed but where a landowner has agreed to take on the maintenance, assets have been de-mained. O Pantrey reported that the UMIDB's precept is being used to decommission sluices on the river Teise.

I Thomson stated that when dealing with coastal assets you must consider the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) which could do more to cooperate with IDBs and the EA. T Hills stated that he sits on the Kent & Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority and believes the MMO would be more cooperative if IDBs were represented on it, as this would improve understanding and knowledge sharing.

P Haselhurst pondered on the effectiveness of gravity outfalls around the coast versus the alternative use of pumps that may be considered unsustainable but in the long term may be less expensive. She reported that she has been working with P Britton, who is leading on this model, to see if the Board can contribute to some funding to look at that as an option.

P Dowling asked if de-maining and transfer of assets is likely to be back on the agenda. I Nunn stated that maybe but possibly not to the scale that it was before. O Pantrey opined that it would be easier if de-maining could be done on reaches rather than whole stream lengths. I Thomson advised that sections of Main River cannot be 'orphaned' upstream of a de-mained section downstream (it must remain fully connected).

e. Extending IDD's – River Stour IDB (P Dowling)

The RSIDB has a very narrow upper district which follows the river system, with some larger areas in the lower reaches of the district – the Lower Stour marshes – but most development is in the upper reaches where there is more of a split of responsibilities: EA responsible for Main River, the IDB responsible for all the watercourses within the IDD and KCC consenting on works on any ordinary watercourse outside of the IDD. The RSIDB is exploring the possibility of extending its IDD to the

full catchment boundary but there are issues and concerns around how this may affect special levies and drainage rates. Therefore, the possibility of zero rating this additional area is being explored, which would have no impact on special levies or current drainage rates but would extend the RSIDB's district. The aim is to improve consultation with the District Councils and to have more influence and control over drainage from new developments. Land Drainage Consents, which are currently outside of the district, are processed by KCC, would then transfer to the IDB so this needs to be quantified and properly understood.

P Dowling reported that he discussed this with a Defra representative and this approach is likely to be supported if District Councils are on-board. Other local IDBs are thinking along the same lines because they have similar narrow districts and experience the same problems.

M Tant stated that consenting volumes are not high and UMIDB would most likely see the highest increase. He added that other aspects of Land Drainage would need to be considered, such as public enquiries, enforcement and general information as KCC would like to remain involved. He asked who would be responsible for Darent Valley? P Dowling replied that the RSIDB is only looking to include the Stour Catchment, but it is for individual IDBs to consider their own position, and even if all extended to the watershed there would still be areas for KCC to manage directly. I Thomson stated that Lincolnshire and Witham IDBs already operate in a similar way so they could provide information based on experience.

P Dowling asked if there is a need to wait until the Environment Act is enacted before taking this forward. I Thomson replied that as there is no intention of creating additional charges, which could be legally challenged, interested IDBs could move forward with KCC under Defra's guidance. O Pantrey stated that the UMIDB wishes to be involved in this pilot.

R Kinsella stated that their Board has also discussed extending the district to take in some of the upper reaches but there are numerous enquiries and enforcements in this area. They do however have a joint agreement with the Lead Local Flood Authority, where they advise the planning authority on any development within their catchment.

Action: Interested IDBs to pursue IDD extension with KCC.

f. Biodiversity Net Gain & Local Nature Recovery – Romney Marshes IDB (R Monje)

There is a large amount of planned development in the south-east and it is not going to be possible to offset the losses caused by these developments within the bounds of the sites. There have been enquiries from companies ready to deliver BNGs and funding from these may help towards local nature recovery targets. Undoubtedly there will be a double land loss – development and land to offset it – and there are also concerns over the future classification of this land when calculating rates and levies.

I Thomson replied that he believes the default position is that anything that moves into BNG will remain rated as 'agricultural'. He stated that under the Land Drainage Act, IDBs' main remit is to drain water, but their role has evolved and more and more they manage water on a day-to-day basis. ADA has identified, and Defra has accepted, that the Land Drainage Act needs to be updated and an All-Party Parliamentary Group for Sustainable Flood & Drought Management has been set up. Currently it is not understood whether Primary or Secondary Legislation will be required, but this group is in initial discussions to update the Land Drainage Act to enable IDBs to raise rates for transferring water and there could be consideration to introducing a new land classification for BNG.

M Hurst pointed out that there are three strategies at play: BNG, Nutrient Neutrality and the Regional Habitat Compensation Programme and ADA should consider writing a simple guide on what to do

if there is development in your patch and how these feed into the Local Authorities' development strategies.

R Carnac asked if land can be used as wetlands under this scheme. M Tant replied yes and explained that when the government released the guidance on BNG it also released a guidance on stacking, explaining that various things can be stacked, Nutrient Neutrality being one of them with different rules for different situations.

g. EA Flood Alerts – Upper Medway IDB (D Goff)

As a result of the ongoing industrial action by its workers, the EA activated back-up systems for flood alerts, and this has raised concerns amongst the community. I Nunn stated that he has raised this with the National Team, but the current system is unlikely to be changed. He advised people to phone the Incident Room and log their concerns, as this will have to be considered if a common issue. Mr Nunn further commented that the Alert level is to give LAs and Operators forewarning, so people should consider whether they need to be on it.

h. Byelaws – Lower Medway IDB (P Haselhurst)

Crops are being planted within IDB Byelaw margins and this is impacting maintenance operations which are being managed as much as possible through negotiation and communication with landowners. The previous payment mechanism meant that there was a cross compliance condition that farmers had to keep their Byelaw margins clear for water quality purposes but that isn't in the new Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS). R Monje reported that they also have this problem therefore prior to annual maintenance commencing the Board's Water Bailiff scopes routes for the machinery based on which crops will be harvested first. It's impossible to eliminate the problem entirely and some low-loader moves are always required which are expensive and time consuming. As a result of trying to work around cropping year to year our weed cutting routes are never the same.

I Thomson reported that ADA is working with Defra on the definitions on ELMS, especially regarding maintenance works from/on river/channel embankment, as there are concerns that not enough information is given to make landowners aware of all the scenarios, which means they may unknowingly transgress or miss out on benefits.

R Monje stated that they looked at championing buffer strips, but Defra's guidance is black and white, whilst Sustainable Farming Initiative Schemes do allow for occasional trafficking. I Thomson stated that Natural England Officers at National Level have verbally agreed to cooperate in respect of this.

i. Nutrient Neutrality – KCC & River Stour IDB (M Tant)

Government has proposed some amendments in the Levelling Up and Regenerations Bill that would have removed the requirements for nutrient neutrality. However, this was not passed by the House Lords and there has not been any further official statement since – consequently development has not been able to go ahead within the Stour catchment.

Nutrient Neutrality covers the issues around phosphorous and nitrogen both present but phosphorous is the main issue in the Stour, with 91% originating from wastewater – so managing it by managing agricultural land differently is not an option (just around 4% from agriculture). It must be managed by either not introduce it from the treated effluent, or it must be removed from the river.

Large developments will need to build onsite treatment works to the highest standard, but it still needs to go into a wetland to further clean it before final discharge into a watercourse. This is only viable on large developments and the treatment works have to be adopted. Options for smaller developments is to use existent treatment works and then wetlands before going into the river. The problem with this is that all the main treatment works in Kent are being upgraded to the highest level of phosphorous stripping, making wetlands less effective.

The next option is a wetland scheme that removes the water from the river, treats it and then puts it back but this will be considered an abstraction and it is a consumptive process and with the Stour water being stressed the EA will not issue a licence hence it can only happen during the winter. This requires a large area that would need to be managed, with a high upfront cost, and once built smaller developers would buy credits. Government intervention has increased uncertainty and risk on this which is keeping initial investment at bay – clear government guidance is urgently needed.

A Hicks asked how long will developers be tied into the maintenance of a wetland. M Tant replied that it is effective from the project start, in perpetuity and paid as a commuted sum upfront. The other issue is that it applies to any planning permission including any outstanding conditions.

R Carnac asked if Southern Water Wastewater Treatment Plants could remove a higher level of phosphorous if that was mandated by the government. M Tant replied that the current mandate is the old technical achievable limit (TAL) – 2mg per l – however there is drinking water technology which can remove more. The new TAL is 0.25mg per l and the forecast level of phosphorous in the Stour will still be higher than it is desirable with the new TAL.

M Tant stated that Nutrient Neutrality is a way of getting around the regulations but not a solution to the problem. The solution needs to result in Stodmarsh recovery, meaning that we need to manage these nutrients more effectively across the catchment, both phosphorous and nitrogen.

j. Joint/consistent working (permissive powers) – Romney Marshes IDB (R Monje)

As the only IDB in the south-east not charging Surface Water Development Contributions (SWDCs) on developments disposing of surface into IDD, the RMIDB would like some clear guidance as consistency across IDBs is desirable.

I Thomson stated that if there is a local agreement with a strong laid out policy with clear reasoning why funds are being paid to another body to manage/maintain or offset additional water coming into an IDD there is less risk of it being challenged.

P Dowling commented that whilst consistency is ideal, not all IDBs are the same so it is for Boards to consider and decide on their own policies.

R Kinsella agreed and stated that even within the WMA all Boards are different and Pevensey and Cuckmere WLMB are seeing a lot of sizeable development on the periphery of the district, so the Board took the decision that if they charge the developers, they will be informed at planning stage and have more control on the discharge into the district.

G Steed agreed that a consistent approach is preferable because developers work across all IDBs and they will query inconsistency. One of the reasons why the RSIDB is looking at extending its boundaries is to provide greater consistency across the Stour catchment.

k. Future role of ADA SE Branch – Upper Medway IDB (O Pantrey)

O Pantrey queried how best these Branch meetings can result in practical delivery. I Thomson replied that all IDBs have different requirements and that is one of the reasons for having Branches

around the country. He stated that today's attendance is a good example of the range of ADA Members from all RMAs and a wide range of issues have been discussed. These meetings should help to reach a consensus and specific issues can be further discussed and progressed.

Action: Draft (unapproved) minutes to be provided and all to play a part in progressing issues and actions discussed.

9. Date of next meeting:

The Chairman asked if everyone was happy for next year's meeting to be around the same time and at this venue and everyone was agreeable. The date of the meeting will be set and sent out with the draft minutes via email.

10. Any other business:

L Cooke announced that B Maylam passed away on 18 October 2023 aged 86, he was on the Romney Marsh IDB for 41 years. I Thomson asked for a short obituary to be submitted for inclusion in the ADA Gazette.

11. Meeting Closed

With there being no further business, the Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting.