

3. **DECLARATION OF INTEREST ON ANY GENERAL ITEM**

C. Crunkhorn – Outer Dowsing.
K. Smith – Outer Dowsing
B. Bowles – Outer Dowsing
J. Woods – Outer Dowsing

4 **MINUTES**

4.1 **Board Meeting – Wednesday, 12th June 2024**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Board held on 12 June 2024 were submitted and signed by the Chairman. The Chairman ran through each page and asked members for comments.

The Chief Executive confirmed that on page 4, A. Saul had queried the lubricants charge and a full breakdown of the charges was provided which included lubricants and fuel.

Page 4, paragraph 8.23 regarding the External audit, the Chief Executive confirmed that both SAAA and ADA had made statements to the relevant Government Departments to remove IDBs from the process and were looking to carry out a consultation. If the current position remained then the Board will be subject to a large on-site audit visit.

J. Ward - asked what the difference in cost was between our usual audit and a larger audit? The Chief Executive confirmed that a normal audit was £4k and a larger one would be in the region of £100k. This alone would put a 3% increase on the rate.

Page 7, paragraph 9.15 reference Wrangle Pumping Station.

B. Bowles - requested an update regarding the outfall channel and asked if this would be resolved before the winter. He was unhappy with the quality of the fences erected around the wrangle see bank pits and hoped that the quality of the fencing at wrangle pumping station would be better... The Chief Engineer confirmed that Natural England had now agreed to the work and we are waiting for the MMO sign off, at this stage the work is unlikely to be completed before the winter. The Chairman confirmed that the Board were as frustrated as the landowners with the slow progress of the MMO and Natural England and were doing all they could do to expedite matters.

T. Ashton - asked if it was anticipated that the Board would be allowed to actually do the required work? The Chief Engineer confirmed it was.

5. **MEETINGS WITH OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS**

5.1 The Chief Executive confirmed that with regard to the ADA meeting there was not much to report aside from the proposed update to the DRS Drainage Rate system. The current system has been in use for 15 years and the plan is to progress to an Office 365 based system which would be supported by Water Management Alliance which we would be adopting as soon as possible.

The findings of the S19 investigations into Storms Babet & Henk were supposedly due in August but to date have still not been released.

M. Leggott - confirmed that following the RFCC meeting there had been a discussion about how best to inform the public of flood events. He believed it was a worthwhile discussion and was awaiting the Minutes. The use of text messages was one point of discussion and ensuring people whose first language was not English understood the message was another.

B. Bowles - added Parish Councils were creating “emergency service” groups in the villages.

T. Ashton - added that between RFCC and Fens 2100 there was a feeling that it was necessary to look at what we need the Fens to look like in 100 years’ time. The Environment Agency would simply not have enough money to do everything that is required. The drainage system and structure was already in place but it required maintaining and improving.

M. Leggott - added that it was exceptionally fortunate that funding had been secured for Hobhole Pumping Station as Black Sluice IDB had a pumping station near Swineshead which was in a bad state of disrepair but the EA had confirmed there were no funds available to carry out the repairs.

6. CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND FINANCE MANAGERS REPORT

6.1 Cash Book Balances

The Chief Executive that 4 months into the financial year the Board was at 33% of the budget estimate and the bank balances had increased. However, £1.2m of these funds was EA income in advance to spend on various projects.

The Chief Executive asked the Board if they would be prepared to give the Chairman/ Vice-Chairman delegated powers to enable funds to be transferred to the CCLA account which attracts a good rate of interest. There was a show of hands and the Board agreed unanimously. The Chairman added that no EA held funds would be transferred to this account.

6.2 Payments Made

The Chief Executive confirmed the majority of large payments related to Wrangle Pumping Station.

6.3 External Audit Report

The Chief Executive confirmed that a clean report had been received from the External Auditor. There were no qualifications. This means both the Internal and External audit were clean.

6.4 Expenditure

The Chief Executive confirmed that schedule of costs showed our position as expected and this was because we had not suffered too much rainfall to date.

6.5 Income

The Chief Executive confirmed that again we are where we expected to be, and an aged debt of £35k had just been recovered. The rates outstanding had totalled £326k at the time the report was prepared and payments continued to be received.

7. CHIEF ENGINEER'S REPORT NO. 2/24

The Chief Engineer would take his report as read and updates for Board Members as required.

7.1 Pumping Hours

The Chief Engineer confirmed there were 75 pumping hours as at the end of August on all sites. This increase on last year was due to the wet start to the year.

7.2 Sluice Hours

The Chief Engineer confirmed that the Board was utilising sluicing as much as possible although the hours were down from last year due to the levels in the Hobhole Drain being at a low winter level making sluicing unachievable

7.3 Hobhole Pumping Station

The Chief Engineer confirmed the works listed had now been completed and the site was "winter ready." Routine maintenance of the outfall sluice was due to be completed this week.

The Chief Engineer confirmed that the Lincolnshire Heritage Day held on 7th September at Hobhole Pumping Station had been a highly successful day with sixty visitors, some travelling from as far afield as Devon. Refreshments had been provided with a request for donations for the Butterfly Hospice. People were very generous and £100 was raised for this worthy cause. The Chief Engineer thought it would be a good idea to do this on a more frequent basis to publicise the progress of the new pumping station.

B. Bowles - extended his thanks to the Engineering Manager for the slides of Wrangle which had been presented at the historic society. They had been very well received. The Chief Engineer confirmed that this was all good publicity for the Board bearing in mind the last rate increase.

7.4 Rainfall Water Level Management

The Chief Engineer confirmed the volume of rainfall in August was 25mm.

7.5 Water Level Management

The Chief Engineer said that members would recall they had agreed to change the levels routine in the East Fen area and the levels had started to be lowered on 1st September and should be at winter levels by the end of the month.

7.6 Water Quality

There had been an increase in salinity levels and water had been flushed through the system to reduce them.

7.7 Planning

The Engineering Manager confirmed he would take his report as read but confirmed that 91 planning applications had been received in the period of May - July. One major project was the Ossian Windfarm project which ran from Aberdeen through Lincolnshire.

M. Leggott - said that there were too many projects – National Grid with pylons overland, others with cables underground. Why could they not all link up? The Chief Executive confirmed that there had been 5 such projects over the past 6 years. The Chief Engineer added that when the Triton Knoll project had started he asked if there could not just be one easement available for all cable projects and was told no. That project had run right through the Board's district which was very time consuming and added additional pressure to the teams workload.

7.8 Enforcement

The Engineering Manager confirmed with regard to the Section 23 issue, the Board had sought advice from solicitors who confirmed this was a common law matter and suggested writing to both parties. Letters have been sent and to date one response had been received.

7.9 Plant & Equipment

The Chief Engineer confirmed that the Hitachi machine had been considered the best fit for the Board's requirements. The purchase of the 2 pumps was being funded by recovery funds and the purchase of the light tower was currently on hold.

7.10 Technical Matters

The Chief Engineer confirmed work had commenced earlier on the East Fen Catchwater Drain.

R, Hall-Jones - asked if the drain mudding work was being carried out? The Chief Engineer confirmed that the Environment Agency had confirmed there was no money available to fund this work.

7.11 Other Engineering Matters

The Chief Engineer advised the reduction in meterage under PCSA Health & Safety cuts in the table at paragraph 9 was because the work had been carried out under the heading for flailing.

7.12 Recovery Fund

The Chief Engineer confirmed that the Board had submitted a bid in May for the Government's Recovery fund. An ambitious bid for £5.9m from Tranche 1 and £260k from Tranche 2. The Board were fortunate to obtain £1.2m from Tranche 1. Details of how the funds will be spent are set out in the table on page 22 with £549k being paid to the General Reserve to replenish the funds held.

The Chief Executive confirmed that the General Reserve had been £200k down but by the end of this financial year, the General Reserve will be at 22% which will provide resilience for future flooding events. This will be discussed in greater depth at the Committee Meeting in November.

The Chief Engineer was hoping for funding to enable suction dredging to be carried on the Upper Hobhole Drain north of Lade bank Pumping Station. At present he was awaiting an estimate of the

likely costs. If the works were completed the silt would be put into a lagoon that would be constructed on land owned by Dysons.

An e-mail had been received with regard to IDB funding asking if there was any further works the Board would like to complete as funding was available. However, the work would have to be completed by end of March 2025. The Chief Engineer confirmed he would like to complete revetement stone at the side of the roadside on the Fodderdyke Drain for which he would employ contractors.

- M. Leggott* - asked if the County Council would help finance this? The Chief Engineer confirm that they would not and that it was increasingly hard to obtain money from them. However, if the funding were successful it would be a win for all partners.
- J. Ward* - referred back to page 17 regarding the relaxing of the by-law on the Gride. He asked if there was a way to make the Gride more sustainable? The Chief Engineer confirmed that a utility company had made the request to install services in the road adjoining the Gride. Utility authorities have superior powers over drainage boards and do not legally have to apply for consent. The Board cannot refuse their request but can work with them to ensure the 9m relaxation is carried out on the carriageway and not the bank side.
- T. Ashton* - expressed his thanks for the work carried out on the watercourses around Wrangle. He confirmed it was very clear and a job well done.

The Chairman added that whilst the financial elements and the pumping finances were looking good looking out in the district it was clear that at least £6m required spending. The district had suffered at least £4m of damage as a result of last winter's storms.

The Chief Engineer confirmed his biggest concern was to obtain the funding to enable the dredging work to be carried out. There was no government funding available for this and whether the work was completed over the next 5 years or the next 20 years it **had** to be done. This will be discussed further at the Committee Meetings in November.

- A. Saul* - asked would the Board not be better carrying out its own work instead of £300k for the EA? The Chief Engineer confirmed that was not a resource issue but a funding one. The rates would need to increase to cover the £300k and the Chief Engineer believed that the Board was best placed to carry out the required works in the district and that it was important to maintain a good relationship with the EA. The Chief Executive confirmed that the EA were not giving the Board income but the Board did manage to get cost recovery for the Chief Engineer and the District Operations Manager's time.
- T. Ashton* - believed the PCSA Agreement was a good thing for the Board and ensured that a high standard of work was carried out. The EA money goes further and the work is completed to the Board's standards. He fully supported investment to get on with the work needed and felt the Board had done very well obtaining funding and grants. Had the Board had to fund this themselves then the work would probably still be outstanding.
- J. Woods* - added that the Board needed to get started on this work as soon as possible. He could not stress enough the importance of conveyance. This had been a problem for the past 4-5 years and had still not been solved.

The Chairman agreed that conveyance was of the utmost importance and would be discussed at the Committee meetings in November.

8. **Wrangle Pumping Station**

The Chief Engineer confirmed that this project was proceeding well and contract completion was due on 30th September. The electric panels/heating vent works should all be completed by the end of October. An outside contractor will be required to deal with the channel and the roadway repairs but good progress was being made and the site had been landscaped and seeded. The station had extra capacity of 1.45 cumecs. From a financial stance, the project had gone over the contracted sums by £350-£400k but this had been included in the risk contingency. There was a

long list of CE's which were outside of contracted works which would need to be agreed. The Chief Engineer was planning a Members' inspection visit for April but if anyone wanted to visit before then he would be happy to take them.

9. **Hobhole Pumping Station**

The Chief Engineer confirmed that £5.6m pre-construction funding had been approved and these funds were guaranteed. Nationally, the EA had restricted GiA funding which means that no new projects will be funded until March 2027. As things stand, the Board would not be in a position to proceed until August 2026 so this extended time period affords an opportunity for more detailed design work to be carried out before the business case is submitted. The Chief Engineer confirmed that this is a viable scheme with lots of benefits.

The Chief Engineer confirmed that he was trying to get the design sorted with Stantec and Balfour Beatty and a detailed scope was required. A large number of risk items had been identified and required management. Ecology works in excess of £250k required completion over the winter period a number of bird surveys were planned. The outline design was more or less complete and it was a case of making sure the economics were right to obtain the 100% funding. There was a nervousness with the EA for projects in excess of £50m hence the reason the risks require careful management.

M. Leggott - asked if a lot had been learnt from the recent Wrangle Pumping Station project? The Chief Engineer confirmed a lot of work had been carried out, the total of which was in excess of £1m. A lot of projects of that size had overrun by 50-60% so risk mitigation was essential.

The Chief Executive added that this case was actually unique because of the £5.6m pre-construction funding. By April/May next year the survey and National England results should be in so the information contained with the business case should be as accurate as possible. The Hobhole Pumping Station Project Board had held their first meeting on Monday, 9th September and the team would be meeting every 3 months.

10. **Environment Report**

The Engineering Manager confirmed he would take the report as read but confirmed the Board's operatives were no longer being called out to deal with mink traps. The Board had agreed to fund the project but without involving the Board's staff.

11. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

M. Leggott confirmed that he had attended a very comprehensive Health & Safety meeting on 25th June. Topics raised included awareness training, stress and mental health training and method statements. A request had been made regarding the supply of skin cream which had been rejected and a further request had been made for the supply of a water cooler. The Chief Executive confirmed this had now been installed.

There was no other business and the meeting was closed at 4.00pm

Chairman