

C. Crunkhorn - asked if there had been any response received from SAAA? The Chief Executive confirmed that the bill had been moved and was now due in parliament in the autumn. Once the Hobhole Pumping Station big build was started there was the possibility that the limit would be surpassed.

The Chief Executive confirmed that he had chased the External Auditor for his report and had received a list of queries from them this morning. He had responded and hoped this would be signed off by the end of September deadline.

M. Leggott - said with regard to page 7 he had appeared to have asked the same question twice. The Chief Executive confirmed this was noted and would be corrected.

C. Crunkhorn - felt that the recommendation should be made clearer to clarify exactly what was said. The Chief Engineer said in any event it was highly unlikely that any contribution would be received from the EA.

5. **MEETINGS WITH OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS**

5.1 The Chief Executive confirmed that the RFCC Meeting on 18th July was a very flat meeting. The new Chair attended online but could not connect to speak to the group. The second Liaison meeting was much more positive as it set out details regarding the local government reorganisation. If this goes ahead some boards will need to reduce the number of Board Members. There were some concerns about SIG group as historically this had not included IDBs. However, Steve Larter, the Financial Director at the Witham and Humber Boards was now a member. The Chief Executive confirmed it had been a useful meeting.

K. Smith - asked how the split between Board Members would be made? The Chief Executive confirmed that there may be a majority of one between farmer/ appointed members. Having looked at the Board's valuations business rates were higher than agricultural land. The Board may need to look at changing next April but at present the Board was finding that councillors were not available to take up position on the Board.

T. Ashton - said he would like to remind councils that lay members are able to sit on the Board as representatives on behalf of the council. He felt that this Board had the right balance and there was a danger that only one council would be represented. He confirmed that elsewhere councillors had been whipped to vote in favour of councils and ignore duties as Board Member. The Chairman said that he had seen this at RFCC when Northampton County Councillors had voted against a rate rise. The Chief Executive added that there had not been any of that rhetoric at the meeting.

T. Ashton - added possibly not in Lincolnshire but it was a danger. The Chief Executive confirmed that the Board had had lay members before – Joan Ashton, Dr Kumar and indeed Richard Leggott.

M. Leggott - asked what the timeline was for Unitary Authority?

S. Evans - confirmed the deadline for submission for Boston Borough Council was November but he did not believe that anything would happen until 2028/29 as it had been rolled over.

C. Butler - Believed there may be a ghost year if the new authority was elected in 2027 then current councillors could possibly stay on until May 2028.

S. Evans - added the fundings of IDBs could be affected as the Special Levy would have a lesser impact. The Chief Executive added that as of last week the government had not even costed any of this out and yet the budget was imminent.

The Chairman felt the Board should stick to what it was doing long term and if changes come in and councillors vote against it, then the Board would deal with it at that time.

6. **CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND FINANCE MANAGERS REPORT**

6.1 **Cash Book Balances**

The Chief Executive that the bank balances looked very healthy, however, £1.4m of these funds was EA income in advance to spend on various projects.

The Chief Executive suggested that the Board deposit another £500k to CCLA which would return £5k monthly in interest and this was agreed by the Board.

6.2 Payments Made

The Chief Executive confirmed the majority of large payments related to the dredging work and that the recovery monies were being used to complete this work.

6.3 External Audit Report

The Chief Executive had already provided an update on the audit threshold.

6.4 Expenditure

The Chief Executive confirmed that schedule of costs looked a little odd. Cleansing showed an estimate of £427k but in fact £674k had been spent. This was because of the recovery fund monies and the Chief Executive confirmed that next month eh would show a more detailed breakdown. However, Board Members could rest assured that there was nothing in the figures to ring any alarm bells.

6.5 Income

The Chief Executive confirmed that again we are where we expected to be. Ratepayers were paying earlier and the balance outstanding had been reduced by £183k since the report had been compiled and payments continued to be received. One ratepayer with a previous history of poor payment had entered into a payment arrangement to which he had adhered so far. Where people had been refusing to pay their rates in the low-lying areas, a paper would be taken to the Committee in November for a decision on how to deal with this.

6.6 Sale of Land at Hobhole

The Board had purchased 7 acres of land at Hobhole in case it was needed when the new Hobhole Pumping Station project went live. However, the Chief Executive confirmed that it was not now needed. However, there was some land adjacent to the pumping station which the Board would like to purchase and make use of. The Chief Engineer showed the Board a visual of the land and confirmed that he would like to ask the Board's approval to sell the 7 acres that could not be used and appropriate the funds to the purchase of the other land.

T. Ashton - asked if access was an issue? The Chief Executive confirmed that access was a right of way.

The Chief Engineer confirmed he had spoken to the landowner of the land adjacent to the Pumping Station and he was open to the Board buying the land.

K. Smith - said if the 7 acres were sold, he presumed the Board would not give access through the pumping station. The Chairman said this might devalue the land. The Chief Executive confirmed that residents use the road anyway.

The Chief Engineer confirmed that the other option would be to hold onto the 7 acres of land and purchase the other land. The 7 acres could always be sold at a later date.

J. Woods - asked who owned the strip of land? The Chief Engineer confirmed that the Board did.

This sale of the 7 acres of land was proposed by T. Ashton. There was a show of hands, and it was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND That the Board sells the 7 acres of land at Hobhole Pumping Station

6.7 Refurbishment of Electric Pump

The Chief Engineer confirmed that one of the electric pumps needed refurbishment and this had not been allowed for in the current year's estimate. He would like to ask the Board's approval to bring the work forward and to use funds from the Pumping Station Renewals Fund to cover the costs of the repairs to help us get through to the end of the year.

K. Smith - asked how much the repairs costs were? The Chief Engineer confirmed they were £30k.

There was a show of hands, and it was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND That the Board fund the electric pump repair costs of £30k from the Pumping Station Renewals Fund.

6.8 **Purchase of Land at Hobhole**

The Board was asked for approval to purchase the 10 acres of land at Hobhole. There was a show of hands, and it was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND That the Board purchases the additional 10 acres of land at Hobhole Pumping Station

C. Crunkhorn - asked how much the dry weather this year had saved the Board on costs? The Chief Executive confirmed he would not like to say at this stage but that costs were constantly monitored, but the picture had been clouded by the receipt of the recovery fund monies. The position at the end of the year would be scrutinised before the rate was set in February.

7. **CHIEF ENGINEER'S REPORT NO. 2/25**

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

7.1 **Pumping Hours**

The Chief Engineer reported an additional 20 pumping hours as things had been quiet.

7.2 **Sluice Hours**

The Chief Engineer confirmed that the Board was utilising sluicing as much as possible and sluicing had worked well this Summer.

7.3 **Hobhole Pumping Station**

The Chief Engineer confirmed the works listed had now been completed and all the pumps were available if needed.

7.4 **Rainfall Water Level Management**

The Chief Engineer confirmed the volume of rainfall in August was 12mm which was average for the catchment.

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. However, this year as it had been very dry the Chief Engineer was reluctant to pull the levels down too soon. The dark moon phase was now upon us, and eel migration was due to start this weekend so staff at Hobhole Pumping Station would be sluicing through the night. On Monday, the East Fen would be 50% towards the winter levels.

7.6 **Water Quality**

The Chief Engineer confirmed that he had already seen the benefits of the dredging works carried out and confirmed this was good news.

7.7 **Soil Moisture Deficit**

The Chief Engineer confirmed that August's figure was 154mm which was very dry. The previous reading had been 156mm. The rain was coming in 10mm-12mm burst so we were able to cope with it quite easily.

C. Crunkhorn - said that the salt levels had been really bad. The Chief Engineer confirmed that a lot was coming back through the structures. The Staunch Bars at the

rear of the station were rotting and this was allowing salt back into the system. Repairs were planned for next years and hopefully the situation would improve.

7.8 Channel Maintenance Operations

The Chief Engineer confirmed not much to report. There had been a slow start to the maintenance as a result of staff changes but there was now a full complement of staff so things will improve.

The mudding works this year had been reduced to accommodate the works which needed to be completed using the recovery money funds.

7.9 Planning

The Engineering Manager confirmed he would take his report as read but wanted to update Board Members on the issue of the installation of telegraph poles within the district. Information had now been received regarding 6 locations and the Board were currently in consultation.

7.10 Consenting

The Engineering Manager confirmed with regard to the Ossian project (6.6.4) there had been a slight change in pace as there was some uncertainty in the grid design.

7.11 Enforcement

The Engineering Manager confirmed that 3 of the issues had now been resolved and 4 matters were ongoing. The Engineering Manager had met with a member of the public regarding an issue. C. Butler confirmed that that had now been resolved.

The Enforcement Complaint (6.7.2) was now with the Ombudsman, and more information had been submitted on 17th September 2025.

With regard to paragraph 6.8, the Engineering Manager confirmed that he would need a decision from the Board. National Grid ("NG") have an existing switching station on Board owned land next to Hobhole Bank, Midville crossroads which is covered by an existing wayleave agreement.

NG wish to move H poles and cable stays north of the existing station and this could be covered by an updated wayleave agreement. NG also wish to obtain the freehold for the compound for a nominal figure of £1.00 plus costs. Alternatively, if this is not approved, they have requested a 99-year lease with a commuted payment of £500 on the new site and covering all associated legal costs.

M. Leggott - would recommend that an updated wayleave agreement be entered into. He felt the Board needed to retain control with very few rights granted because of the proximity to the main drains.

There was a show of hands, and it was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND That the Board enter into an updated wayleave agreement with National Grid to accommodate the changes required

7.12 Plant & Equipment

The Chief Engineer confirmed delivery of the Hitachi ZX180 which was now in the yard and being liveried.

K. Smith - queried the £21k discrepancy between the estimate and the actual cost. The Chief Engineer said that there had been no extras and that it was simply the difference between the estimate in October 2024 and the actual final price when the machine was delivered.

The Chief Engineer confirmed that the new Volvos were due for delivery in November. The Chairman added that one of the Volvos is GPS ready.

7.13 New Survey Equipment

The Engineering Manager said he would take the report as read but wanted to extend his thanks to Richard Wright and Jess Thomas for all their efforts. There had been a lot of work getting the drone ready but hopefully it would be out and used by the end of the month. Hopefully, the Board would soon be seeing the benefits of the drone.

7.14 **Recovery Fund Works**

The Chief Engineer confirmed that there was a breakdown of how the recovery fund monies would be spent, although these were just estimates at this stage.

7.15 **Dredging Works**

The Engineering Manager provided the Board Members with an update on the dredging works and confirmed that this was only the first year of a 15-year programme, so it was a long-term project.

T. Ashton - asked if once the dredging works were completed and the drains were back to design standard would the Board carry out regular maintenance or would it be a once in a 20-year programme? The Chairman confirmed they would need to be maintained, and he was satisfied that the Chief Engineer would keep on top of this. The Chief Engineer confirmed that once the work had been done it should be easier and cheaper to maintain. The Chief Engineer confirmed that surveying was key as the last survey was carried out 30 years ago.

The Chief Engineer added that it was fortunate that the funding monies had enabled some additional dredging work to be completed on the Fodderdyke drain. He was hoping that they would manage to reach the railway bridge in this current year. Capital Works Project Manager was currently working on the estimates for next year and the Chief Engineer hoped to bring them to the Committee in November.

The Chief Engineer confirmed that a lot of work had been undertaken this year and in his 8 years with the Board never has so much information about the district been obtained.

K. Smith - said if the catchwater over-ran again there was a danger that the silt could end up on the fields. The Chief Engineer confirmed that in that instance the drone could be sent up to identify the issues and hopefully be able to refer the evidence to the government to obtain help.

K. Smith - added he was very impressed with the suction dredging. The Chief Engineer confirmed the only downside was finding a landowner willing to take the muck from the lagoon. The Engineering Manager added that the benefit is that the Fodderdyke Drain has been done at no extra cost than the estimate

C. Crunkhorn - asked how the work was being monitored. The Engineering Manager confirmed that the EA had carried out surveys using sonar. The report had shown the achievements and also picked up a couple of high spots. A survey of the high spots had been done by boat to clarify.

8. **Hobhole Pumping Station Replacement**

The Chief Engineer read through his report and confirmed the construction start date was 2029 and the Board was working with Natural England to ensure this was met.

Page 2 of the report showed the financial summary. The FSoD study approval limit of £6.4m had been claimed to date and a further claim for £1m had been submitted. Also shown was the work instructed to date and the costs.

Page 5 of the report detailed the risks and there were a lot of risks as this was such a major project. The major risk was in relation to the possible EA funding changes which, if come to fruition, could mean the Board having to find a 10% contribution towards the cost of the new pumping station. The days of 100% funding may be a thing of the past but nothing definite had been decided at the present time. The Chief Engineer was hoping that, as the project was underway, the old rules would still apply.

There were numerous challenges associated with a project of this scale and one of those was pulling everyone together to ensure that everyone was working together and remain focused on the objective.

The Chief Engineer confirmed that he would like to discuss with Board Members the generator back up for the new station. The original scope had included 100% diesel back up generators for the new station. However, these had proved costly and would incur significant ongoing costs – for maintenance, running costs. The Chief Engineer had been weighing up the possibility of needing all 5 pumps running in a major event and the power going down resulting in the back up diesel generators being needed.

The Chief Engineer reviewed that currently 37 cumecs were being moved with the electric pumps and if there was a power outage the generator would automatically fire up the diesel engines and the station would be running at roughly 75% capacity. So bearing this in mind, he questioned whether 75% back up would be sufficient at the new pumping station which would reduce the back-up requirement and reduce costs. The Chairman added the design standard was 38 cumecs but 44 were pumped when dealing with an event.

The Chief Engineer added that 75% back up with the new generators would give us 33 cumecs which was better than what we currently have. The Management Team have agreed to instruct consultants to carry out a pro -v- cons report so that other options can be reviewed.

C. Butler - added that the Board needs to bear in mind these weather events were much more frequent now. The Chairman agreed but said that 100% was only required in a weather event.

C. Butler - added that the EA cutting costs makes the likelihood of overtopping more likely.

C. Hardy - added that the bank needed to be protected.

The Chairman added that the Pentair pumps are variable and will be much more efficient than the ones we currently rely on.

T. Ashton - supported the reduction to 75% but asked if there would be capacity to increase in the future if the need arose. The capacity will only increase not decrease.

C. Crunkhorn - asked if the costs of the generators had been included in the initial estimate? The Chief Executive confirmed the costs of installation had been, but the Board was trying to keep the costs of maintaining them as low as possible.

C. Crunkhorn - was minded to stick with the original idea of 100% generator back-up.

D. Middleton - asked if there was a district wide power cut how would the telemetry be viewed? The Chief Engineer stated that the new telemetry system as solar-powered.

M. Leggott - suggested keeping additional land and installing solar panels for battery storage.

J. Woods - confirmed the costs of solar panels and batteries would be astronomical and he agreed with the Chief Engineer's stance.

The Chief Engineer confirmed that consultants were carrying out the study now and we will not know until after that time whether the Board has been successful in securing the funding. The costs of setting up the generator back up was £5m. He said we could stick with the 100% but if we needed to reduce this at a later date there could be a cost implication for changing the design.

J. Woods - added that with the threat of cyber-attacks that the Board needed to be 100% self-sufficient or the implications for the Board could be horrendous.

The Chief Engineer confirmed that from the discussions he would take it that the Board wanted to proceed with the 100% option unless the reduction was significant. The maintenance costs would also need to be reviewed. The Chief Executive confirmed that proceed on the basis of 100% but also provide the figures for the 75% as a standby.

D. Middleton - urged caution and would prefer the 100% option.

The Chief Engineer confirmed that in his 8 years with the Board the back up generators at Hobhole Pumping Station had been used once when a swan had flown into the power lines.

There was a show of hands, and 5 members supported the option of 100% back up option with the others supporting the reduced 75% back up option.

C. Crunkhorn - confirmed the time for costs savings is if the project does not receive 100% funding.

T. Ashton - believed 75% was perfectly adequate but would need to see the costs involved. Peace of mind and resilience were important factors.

S. Welberry - added that surely the current maintenance of the assets and the dredging means increased water capacity. The Chairman added that capacity is limited to 38 cumecs and the Board could not control weather events. The new pumps will make a massive improvement to the Board's ability to deal with weather events.

The Chief Engineer confirmed that sufficient resilience measures needed to be in place to ensure that no point of failure resulted in the station being out of action.

J. Woods - added that if we run 2 generators and one goes down the capacity has instantly halved. The Chairman added that it was all down to costs. The Chief Engineer said that he will consider this further and will bring it to Board.

9. **Environment Report**

The Engineering Manager confirmed he would take the report as read. The first few pages of the report showed a snapshot of all completed matters and those underway.

M. Leggott - reported the shooting of 3 minks.

10. **Health & Safety Report**

The Chief Engineer confirmed that he would take the report as read and that there was nothing further to add.

11. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

C. Crunkhorn asked as there had been so many staff changes recently would it please be possible to have a new family tree showing names and faces. The Chief Executive confirmed that he would arrange to forward this to Board Members.

The Chairman reminded Board Members that the Committee Meetings would take place on 19th November 2025 and that there were still vacancies on some committees. A fresh list would be distributed to Board Members and if they could please indicate if they would like to join any particular committee.

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

Chairman