

**WITHAM FOURTH DISTRICT INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD**

**MINUTES**

of the proceedings of the **Plant & Pumping Stations Committee** at a Meeting held at 47 Norfolk Street on **Wednesday 14 November 2025**

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Present:- M. Leggott (Committee Chairman)

Messrs: P. Bedford  
B. Bowles  
A. Carr  
P. Richardson  
A. Saul  
J. Ward

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

K Smith and T. Ashton sent their apologies.

2. **RECORDING**

Members were advised that the meeting was being recorded for the purpose of minute taking.

3. **NEW MEMBERS**

S. Evans and C. Crunkhorn indicated that they would like to join this Committee.

4. **OPERATIONS MANAGER**

The Chief Engineer introduced Darren Odams to the committee. Darren succeeded Andy Clark as District Operations Manager and had now been in his role for almost 6 months. Darren has had significant input into the plans for the next year and will be a familiar figure at future Board meetings.

5. **CHIEF ENGINEER'S ESTIMATES 2026/2027**

5.1 **Plant Replacement Programme 2025/26 – Current Year Update**

The Chief Executive confirmed for new members that the Committee looked at the costs of the pumping stations, plant and the depot. The Chief Engineer added that only pumping costs have any impact on the rate.

The Chief Engineer confirmed that all plant approved in 2025/26 had been ordered and that the Board had taken delivery of all items except for the two Volvo excavators, which were now due for delivery in the New Year. The Herder Rapier had been delivered and had been working very well. The Avant Loader and weed baskets were all in use. The heavy-duty pile hammer was effective although it did struggle with the big steel gauge piles, so it was still necessary to hire a heavy-duty hammer when dealing with these. However, the Board's tendency was to use large timber piles, and it coped with these well. The tipping trailers have been ordered and are due for delivery, hopefully before Christmas.

The Ford Ranger was in service and the drone has been delivered. It was hoped to be able to share some of the footage from the drone in due course.

The Chief Engineer said that he did not intend to go through the Plant Replacement Programme in any great detail as this was all set out in his report.

6 **Plant Replacements 2026-27**

The Chief Engineer referred Committee Members to his report and the items which needed to be replaced in the next year. The Chief Engineer confirmed that all plant items would be offered for sale by tender unless the part exchange value was higher. Members were informed that the replacement of plant comes from the fund and not from the rate.

The workshop manager has assessed the flails and the weed baskets and had assured the Chief Engineer that they were in good enough condition not to need replacement. Committee members will recall when the two SPVs were purchased, the intention was to replace the flail heads halfway through their working life because that is the element that gets the most use, being in the bottom of the water courses and they get damaged. The Board did not purchase Spearhead heads but opted for Herder heads and they appear to be lasting well. The Chief Engineer had suggested replacing them now rather than when they were a year away from being replaced, but the workshop manager was adamant that they would see the machines out. Accordingly, they have not been put into replacement,

The Chief Engineer confirmed he had tried to predict where replacements were coming in, to provide a forecast of future expenditure. At the bottom of the list, committee members could see the expenditure for this year at around £190,280. The next year's expenditure would be approx. £280k and then year 3 would be £800k, which includes 3 baskets, flails, excavators and tractors making it an expensive year.

The Chief Engineer confirmed that next year he will consider whether some of the third year's expenditure could be bought forward, so not so much would be spent in that year. This will be monitored through the year. At the bottom of the table is the estimated balance brought forward, that is the balance in the plant replacement.

6.1 **JCB JZ142 Excavator**

The JCB JZ142 excavator purchased in 2018 has completed 9,082 operating hours to date, its estimated hours at date of actual trade in 2026 will be 10,500 hours.

This machine is utilised on a regular basis throughout the district carrying out channel maintenance operations such as weedcutting, mudding, piling and culvert laying. The machine has a net book value of £1,680 to the Board as of the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025, with an estimated value of £0 as of 1<sup>st</sup> April 2026

\*Therefore, based on the information detailed above it is suggested the committee recommend to the Board the approval to purchase a replacement excavator complete with buckets at a net estimated cost of **£150,000 plus VAT.**

This was proposed by A. Saul and seconded by B. Bowles. The Committee Chairman asked for a show of hands, and it was unanimously agreed to recommend to the Board that this item be purchased.

After discussion it was

**RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND**

That the Board purchase:  
a replacement excavator, complete with buckets at a net estimated cost of **£150,000.00 plus VAT.**

6.2 **Ford Ranger 4x4**

The Ford Ranger purchased in 2020 has completed 75,000 miles to date, its estimated mileage at date of actual trade in 2026 will be c.100,000 miles. Table 2. details the costs and cost recovery for the vehicle over the six-year operational period to date.

This vehicle will be utilised by the Operations Manager around the district to attend site meetings on behalf of the Board. This vehicle is designated as Emergency Response Plant, considered critical in times of emergency in the district. The vehicle has a net book value of £7,370 to the Board as of 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025, with an estimated value of £2,500 as of 1<sup>st</sup> April 2026.

\*Therefore, based on the information detailed above it is suggested the committee recommend to the Board the approval to purchase a replacement vehicle at a net estimated cost of **£40,000.00 plus VAT.**

This was proposed by J. Ward and seconded by A. Carr. The Committee Chairman asked for a show of hands, and it was unanimously agreed to recommend to the Board that this item be purchased.

After discussion it was

**RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND** That the Board purchase:  
a Ford Ranger 4x4 at a net estimated cost of **£40,000.00 plus VAT.**

### 6.3 **Sale of Surplus Plant**

The Chief Engineer confirmed that, subject to the Board's approval to purchase the items detailed in the Sections 6.1 and 6.2, it was suggested that the committee recommends to the board the approval for the sale of surplus plant by tender.

This was proposed by P. Bedford and seconded by A. Carr. The Committee Chairman asked for a show of hands, and it was unanimously agreed to recommend to the Board that surplus plant be sold by tender

After discussion it was

**RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND** That the Board sells any surplus plant by way of tender

## 7 **Pumping Stations Estimate 2026/2027**

The Chief Engineer drew members' attention to item 6. This provided a snapshot of the overall budget being considered this afternoon. Pumping stations are shown on the third line down and are showing a £41,521k increase in the estimate.

A detailed estimate of the pumping operations had been itemised showing where monies were being spent. The Chief Engineer said he would not go into this in detail, suffice to say that there were additional pump refurbishments in there for next year:- an electric pump refurbishment at Hobhole Pumping Station and pump refurbishment at Benington Pumping Station. The Board does have a maintenance/refurbishment programme on all the pumps, being proactive to maintain the pumps rather than waiting for the need for replacement hence the reason there is money allocated for next year. Everything else in the estimate is as expected, a reasonable allowance for diesel energy costs. So far, the electric costs had been in line with an average year.

The Chief Engineer confirmed he was looking at the pumps at Hobhole electric station and is trying to keep them going. However, with the new pumping station not looking likely before 2031 he is looking to see whether new pumps could be purchased to see the Board through till then. The costs of the new pumps would be circa £160k but these would see the Board through to the new pumping station being completed.

Estimate Summary				
Code	Description	Movement (£)	Estimate 2026-27 (£)	Approved Budget 2025-26 (£)
200100's	Weed Control	(1,108)	999,660	1,000,768
200200's	Cleansing	186,899	938,356	751,457
202500's	Pumping Stations	41,521	1,111,815	1,070,294
200400's	Assets	86,508	242,757	156,249
202800's	Depot	47,020	100,020	53,000
30100's	Environment	(5,903)	99,190	105,093
	<b>Total</b>	<b>354,937</b>	<b>3,491,797</b>	<b>3,136,861</b>

Therefore, based on the information detailed above it is suggested the committee recommend to the Board the approval of the Chief Engineer's estimate for 2026-27 in the sum of £1,111,815. This was proposed by A. Saul and seconded by P. Bedford. The Committee Chairman asked for a show of hands, and it was unanimously agreed to recommend to the Board that Chief Engineer's estimate be accepted.

After discussion it was

**RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND** That the Chief Engineers estimate of £1,111,815 for 2026/27 (202/26 £1,070,294) be approved.

#### 7 **Workshop and Depot Estimate 2026/2027**

The Chief Engineer confirmed an increase in expenditure at the depot this year of £47,000 over the improvement budget from 2026. This is largely made-up of works required to the chimney there, which is a listed structure. The chimney needs some survey and repair work. A budget estimate for that work is £23,000. All the windows and doors at Lade Bank Depot require repair and painting. This has not been done for a long time and an allowance of £25,000 is included in there.

*M. Leggott - added as a listed structure it forms part of our heritage and at times funds have to be found to keep it in good repair.*

Therefore, based on the information detailed above it is suggested the committee recommend to the Board the approval of the Chief Engineer's estimate for 2026-27 in the sum of £100,020. This was proposed by J. Ward and seconded by A. Saul. The Committee Chairman asked for a show of hands, and it was unanimously agreed to recommend to the Board that Chief Engineer's estimate be accepted.

After discussion it was

**RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND** That the Chief Engineers estimate of £100,020 for 2026/27 (2025/26 £53,00.00) be approved.

#### 8 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

8.1 The Chief Engineer said members may recall that a resolution was made to move the offices to the new Hobhole Pumping Station but that at the same time there had been a plan to create an office hub at Lade Bank Pumping Station. With the operational changes and the new District Operations Manager in place, now seems to be a good time to start talking about this in more detail. The Chief Engineer confirmed that next year seems to be optimal and estimates will be bought to the Board in due course.

The Chairman confirmed that the Pumping Station Renewals fund stands at £500k but this needed to last until 2031.

8.2 The Chief Engineer confirmed as members were aware, Royal Smalls had been engaged to carry out the suction dredging works on behalf of the Board at a total cost to date of £315k. The Chief Engineer had been looking at the areas still requiring work and the likely costs and estimated that a £2.5m spend would be required in total to complete all the work. The Chief Engineer confirmed he had made some phone calls to establish the costs of the possible purchase of a boat which could be used to complete the Boards' work but could then possibly be charged out to other Boards to complete work on their behalf. The Chief Engineer confirmed that a company in Holland had provided a rough cost estimate of £850k for a new diesel boat.

*S. Evans* - asked how long the working life of the boat was? The Chief Engineer confirmed he did not have full details but would estimate 50 years.

*B. Bowles* - said it was a lot of money to spend and asked if other considerations had been given? The Chief Engineer said his idea was to enhance the Board's operations, using our own equipment which could then be sold to other parties.

The Chief Executive confirmed that the Board's low loader was recharged out to other parties and likewise, the Board's weed boat was used for EA work and recharged. A discussion followed and the Chief Engineer said that this was just a thought and asked members if they would him to obtain further information to bring back to the Board or not to explore this further. It was agreed that the Chief Engineer should obtain more detailed information and bring the costings to the Board.

8.3 The Chief Engineer confirmed that there were a few small items of plant required which totalled around £13,600. This included a slugging bucket for the excavator at £2,860.00, a sprayer for the tractor at a cost of £6,120 and an Ifor Williams trailer at a cost of £4,600.00. The Chief Executive confirmed that there was £10k in the fund for tools which had not yet been spent.

Therefore, based on the information detailed above it is suggested the committee recommend to the Board the approval of the Chief Engineer's estimate for 2026-27 in the sum of £13,600.00. This was proposed by J. Ward and seconded by B. Bowles. The Committee Chairman asked for a show of hands, and it was unanimously agreed to recommend to the Board that Chief Engineer's estimate of £13,600 be accepted.

After discussion it was

**RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND** That the Chief Engineers estimate of £13,600 for small plant items 2026/27 be approved.

There was no other business, and the meeting was closed at 3.10pm.

**Chairman**