

# WITHAM FOURTH DISTRICT INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

## MINUTES

of the proceedings of the **Environment Committee** at 47 Norfolk Street on Wednesday  
**19 November 2025**

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Present: - B. Bowles (Committee Chairman)  
Messrs: S. Evans  
M. Leggott (Vice-Chairman)  
P. Richardson (Chairman)  
A. Saul

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for non-attendance were received from T. Aston, N. Jones and C. Butler.

2. **RECORDING**

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

3. **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.

4. **ENVIRONMENT AND CONSERVATION ESTIMATE 2026-27**

The Engineering Manager referred committee members to the estimate for 2026-27 which was straight-forward. The recommendation to the committee is for approval of an estimate in the sum of £99,100, a reduction of £5,903 from last year, which is primarily due to some changes in the form and travel elements of the estimate

The items included were the same as previous years, in terms of the tree and bushing management and the control of invasive species and various conservation projects in terms of the surveying that the ecologist carries out on behalf of the board. Membership fees of £3k are included in the estimate in relation to projects such as the Wash EMS, GLNP and the mink control. The Engineering Manager confirmed that a recommendation was sought for the estimate of £99,190.

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 £99,190. S. Evans proposed the estimate of £99,190 be recommended for approval by the Board and this was seconded by A. Saul. There was a show of hands, and it was unanimously agreed :-

**RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND** That the Environment estimate for 2026/2027 at £99,190 be recommended for approval by the Board at the December 2025 Board Meeting.

The Chief Engineer confirmed that the £5k decrease from last year was in relation to package supervision, a change in management structure had resulted in 1 less person and 1 less vehicle.

4. **ENVIRONMENT OFFICER'S REPORT**

The Engineering Manager apologised for the thickness of the report that had been posted out, together with the additional reports each member had on the desk in front of them. This was to give a flavour of the work undertaken by the Board's Ecologist, Tim Smith.

Members also have sight of the condensed BAP Tracker. The Engineering Manager has provided a traffic light system to highlight the activities that are being achieved throughout the life of the BAP from 2022 to 2026. Taking the report as read, it highlights the targets achieved throughout the year. On pages 5 and 6 are some notes explaining some of the long-term projects not achieved. Whilst they are no longer applicable, which he assumed members had read, hopefully it could be seen that others were well underway with a of the few smaller ones yet to be finished.

The Board's aim is to get all items completed by the end of the March 2026. The report clearly shows the work the Ecologist has been doing. There has also been additional works, i.e. the Hobhole drain stoning works. These works are due to start within the next week, working with The District Operations Manager's team.

American mink are now being managed elsewhere and we make a small contribution which had taken the risk away from the board. At the recent GLNP meeting they confirmed over 14 million species had been researched since 2014.

The last page of the report gave details of all the renewals/ updates on what the Board is working through in standard licences, inspections and surveys. This shows the Board is up to date and ahead of schedule. Only one item is overdue and that is the Eel regulations.

Renewal requests have been submitted in 2024 and 2025, but the EA have some administration issues which they're dealing with, but they are aware of the Board's application. The Engineering Manager has since received a meeting request from the team to discuss what the way forward.

The Chief Engineer confirmed that the current BAP runs out in 2026, it has been running for 5 years. Next year there will be a roundup of what has been achieved over this time and the new BAP will need to align with the new targets. The Ecologist will again be involved in this. The Chief Engineer confirmed that the environment is as important to the as Health and Safety. This Board is very proactive towards environment and demonstrates that we are taking it seriously.

The Committee Chairman extended his thanks to the Engineering Manager and asked him to congratulate all involved, especially the Ecologist for some very comprehensive reports.

## 5. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

S. Evans asked what Japanese knotweed was? He is aware from the reports that it is nasty, in our district and can impede flood defences.

The Engineering Manager confirmed it is an invasive species and The Board is aware of the affected sites, and they are under control. They are sprayed on a regular basis under the direction of the Ecologist, and the sites are clearly identified, so the district staff know where they are, so they can be contained as best we can. It is a weed that can spread quite actively and not one that anyone would want anywhere near their property as you would not be able to sell your house.

The Vice-Chairman confirmed with repeat sprayings, if you do it enough times, you could possibly eradicate it in a year and a half. He believed that it was worth spending money on this to try and eradicate it once and for all.

There was no other business, and the meeting was closed at 3.35pm

**Chairman**