

WITHAM FOURTH DISTRICT INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

MINUTES

of the proceedings of the **Works Committee** at a Meeting held at 47 Norfolk Street on Thursday
14 November 2024

Present: P. Richardson (Chairman)

Messrs: P. Bedford
C. Crunkhorn
(Vice-Chairman)
S. Evans
A. Hall
D. Scoot
K. Smith

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from A. Saul, C. Hardy, R. Hall-Jones and J. Woods.

2. **NOTICE OF INTENDED ENTRY AND COMPENSATION POLICY**

The Engineering Manager confirmed a review had been undertaken in an effort to standardise the entry notices used to access land to complete operations and detail the compensation arrangements. One general letter will be sent out to all ratepayers with the annual rate demands so that all landowners are aware. The second letter will be sent to specific landowners to cover capital works like mudding/bushing etc and will set out details of the works, the land due to be entered and the standard compensation policy. The standard figures for compensation had been based upon figures provided by Fisher German

M. Leggott - asked if the land value would be reviewed annually? The Engineering Manager confirmed that the value of land changed each year and the onus would be on the landowner to provide proof of the value of the land.

The Chief Engineer added that the letter had been legally checked and the Board could therefore stand behind the letter. He added that this had arisen because of the capital works being carried out and the Board needed definite clarification. The Engineering Manager added that the Board were required to serve notice so it seemed ideal to include this notice with the annual rate demands sent out each May.

Following these discussions it was:-

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND

That the Notices of Entry and the Compensation Policy be approved by the Board.

3. **UPPER HOBHOLE DRAIN DREDGING SCHEME**

The Chief Engineer was certain that Board Members would recall the feasibility study carried out in 2023.

Page 1 of the report shows the estimated costs over a 3-year period. The Chief Engineer confirmed that phase 1 of the dredging project was urgently required. Phase 1 had been based upon actual estimates but phases 2 and 3 were based upon budget figures and required clarification.

Page 2 of the report shows the drain and the lagoon site and it was envisaged that material would be pumped to the lagoon. The red line represented a 6.5km stretch (3.25km each way to the lagoon).

M. Leggott - asked the last time this work had been undertaken? The Chief Engineer confirmed that it was in the 1980s.

The Chief Engineer confirmed that Storm Babet had had a minimal effect on these levels and in fact the Thorpe Drain had been tested pre and post Babet and there had not been any great change in the silt levels.

M. Leggott - asked if the lagoon could come in any cheaper than £82k? The Chief Engineer confirmed that it could not. The Engineering Manager added that, if approved, the lagoon would be designed by consultants.

The Chairman added that there was no funding in place for these works but that it was essential that this work was started. This was the reason that the project was being dealt with in small chunks rather than one large project. The Chief Engineer confirmed that once the Hobhole dredging project was underway consideration would be given to the same works on Fodderdyke, Bellwater and Thorpe drains.

K. Smith - asked how accurate suction dredger were compared to excavators? An option would be to use a dragline but this would cause an issue with the roads. He believed that the dredgers would be accurate and of course the Engineers would be monitoring the levels.

P. Bedford - advised that when the South Forty Foot drain was dredged they actually went back to the original bottom of the river bed. This was in line with the original design and had proved very accurate and much better than with a dragline.

The Chief Engineer stressed that this work could not begin soon enough. It was not a project that would have a definite end date but would be an ongoing commitment for the next 15 to 20 years.

The Chief Engineer asked the Committee if they would be prepared to recommend to Board the approval of the Hobhole Dredging scheme over a three-year period. There was a show of hands which was unanimous.

Following these discussions it was:-

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND

the approval of the Upper Hobhole dredging scheme c.£850,200 phased over 3 years. £500,500 estimated for 2025/26.

4. **CHIEF ENGINEER'S ESTIMATES 2025/2026**

4.1 **Channel Maintenance Estimates**

The Chief Executive confirmed for the new Committee Members that the Maintenance Estimate covered everything other than pumping costs.

The Chief Engineer went through the figures and confirmed that the increases were a true reflection of the work required in the District for the forthcoming year. A recent review of the plant recovery rates for the year so far has shown some plant items were over recovering, and some plant rates have been amended. Page 4 of his report showed the cleansing estimates which had dramatically increased because of phase 1 of the dredging works at Upper Hobhole as discussed. The Chief Engineer said that he had tried to compromise on certain areas and felt that the estimates were fair and realistic.

The Chief Executive confirmed that had the costs of the dredging been added to the rate it would have meant a 9% increase. The Chief Engineer also confirmed that if a claim were successfully made under Tranche 2 of the recovery fund monies it may not cost the Board anything. The Chief Engineer confirmed that almost £500k had been spent on slip repairs this year all paid for from the recovery fund.

P. Bedford - had heard that some Bedford Boards had received grants to get rid of Ragwort. He asked if this Board had heard about it and if they too could apply for a grant? **The Chief Executive said he had not heard of this but would investigate and report back at the December Board Meeting.**

Weed Control

Description	Movement	Estimate 2025-26	Approved Budget 2024-25
	£	£	£
W.Con. - Works Supervision	7,180	102,166	94,986
W.Con. - Spraying	6,253	10,489	4,236
W.Con. - Flailing Drains	(22,915)	43,396	66,311
W.Con. - Flailing Sewers	(33,589)	223,027	256,615
W.Con. - W/basketSewer	48,212	442,960	394,748
W.Con. - W/basketDrains	9,699	121,756	112,057
W.Con. - H/Roding Sewers	345	8,459	8,113
W.Con. - General	0	5,500	5,500
W.Con. - Weed Boats	7,891	22,716	14,825
W.Con. - Transport Plant	466	20,300	19,834
Total	23,542	1,000,768	977,225

Cleansing

Description	Movement	Estimate 2025-26	Approved Budget 2024-25
	£	£	£
C. - Works Supervision	4,648	50,071	45,423
C. - Sewer/Imp/Cleansing	14,873	96,811	81,938
C. - Drains/Imp/Cleansing	407,668	500,500	92,832
C. - Sewer Imp/outfalls	(65,203)	-	65,203
C. - Vermin Control	0	-	-
C. - CowBridge Lock/sluiice	0	4,200	4,200
C. - Slip Repairs	(30,093)	97,805	127,898
C. - Surveys	0	2,525	2,525
C. - Bushing	(36,478)	-	36,478
C. - Drain Access Works	18,730	34,524	15,794
C. - Transport Plant	0	6,270	6,270
Total	314,145	792,706	478,561

The Chief Engineer confirmed that based upon all the estimates it was suggested that the committee recommend the approval of the £1,793,474 estimate for Channel Maintenance Activities and Improvements for the years 2025/2026. There was a show of hands and it was unanimous.

Following these discussions it was:-

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND

That the 2025/26 Channel Maintenance Estimates for Weed Control and Cleansing Improvements be approved by the Board.

3. **Asset Improvement Programme**

The Chief Engineer confirmed the details of the estimate for asset improvements for 2025-26:

Description	Movement	Estimate 2025-26	Approved Budget 2024-25
	£	£	£
Watercourse Assets/Urban	0	50,000	50,000
Watercourse Assets/Ordinary	0	25,000	25,000
Bridge Repairs	0	-	-
Leverton P.St Feasibility	40,000	40,000	-
Total	40,000	115,000	75,000

The Chief Engineer confirmed that the Asset Improvement Programme had not been increased this year in an effort to hold the rate steady. He confirmed that there was sufficient funds within the estimates to cover the works especially as a result of other works being undertaken.

With regard to the Leverton Pumping Station Feasibility Study the Board had always been successful in obtaining Grant in Aid funding. However, at the present time this was not available to claim upfront so the idea was to keep the project moving and then the time comes, make claim for recover of the monies paid.

The Chief Engineer was confident it was a viable scheme either for repair or replacement. The Chief Engineer added that Leverton Pumping Station had been assessed in 2020 and it was mechanically sound for the next few years.

The Chief Executive added that it was an option for the Board to fund this increase from the Pumping Station Renewals fund and not add the cost to the drainage rate.

The Chief Engineer therefore asked the committee to approve that the estimate for Asset Improvements in 2025-26 be approved. There was a show of hands which was unanimous.

Following these discussions it was:

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND

That the 2025/26 Asset Improvement Programme be approved by the Board.

4. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There was no other business and the meeting closed at 2.40pm.

Chairman