

# WITHAM FOURTH DISTRICT INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

## MINUTES

of the proceedings of the **Works Committee** at a Meeting held at 47 Norfolk Street on Wednesday  
**19 November 2025**

Present: P. Richardson (Chairman)

Messrs: P. Bedford	C. Hardy
A. Bush	M. Leggott (Vice-Chairman)
C. Crunkhorn	D. Scoot
S. Evans	A. Saul
	J. Woods

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from R. Hall-Jones. No apologies were received from A. Hall.

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 a significant input into the plans for the next year and will be a familiar figure at future Board meetings.

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

4.1 **Channel Maintenance Estimates**

The Engineering Manager confirmed that his report had been set out slightly differently this year and showed planned works, together with a budget and works programme so that members could clearly see where money would be spent and this year, with the assistance of the Engineering Manager, the District Operations Manager and the rest of the team, it had been possible to produce a full works planned programme for 2026/2027.

The Chief Engineer referred members to page 1 of his report which set out a summary of the channel maintenance & assets inspection and repair estimates which showed a slight reduction of £1k.

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>

The Chief Engineer confirmed that based upon the estimates it was suggested that the committee recommend the approval of the £999,660 estimate for weed control for the years 2026/2027. This was proposed by A. Saul and seconded by A. Bush. There was a show of hands, and it was unanimous.

Following these discussions it was:-

**RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND**

That the 2026/27 Weed Control Estimate be approved by the Board.

#### 4.2 **Cleansing Estimates**

The Chief Engineer confirmed that, again, a full list of works which were detailed on the attached spreadsheet included within the papers. This comprised of a full drain cleansing and slip repair programme.

The District Operations Manager had spent a lot of time going around the district with the foremen identifying sites that require attention. Everything has been included in the estimate which is itemised by sewer and then by slips that require repair together with a full bushing programme. The Chief Engineer confirmed that to keep on top of the bushing works, access on one side of all the drains and water courses would be required.

The Chief Engineer confirmed that £135k had been spent on the upper Hobhole dredging and £408k on the Fodderdyke dredging this year. The £135k included the Hobhole lagoon reinstatement. The Chief Engineer confirmed that the Board had been fortunate this year in that the dredging work had been fully funded from the recovery monies received.

The Chief Engineer confirmed that the first and second years' compensation for Dyson's had been paid out of this year's money, which had come from the recovery funds received and not from the income generated from the rate. As much work as possible has been pulled forward into this current year and there was a possibility that some of the reinstatement work could be pulled into the current year, depending on how the year pans out.

The new Capital Works Project Manager has been busy looking at all work required on the Fodderdyke drain including bushing work and reconstruction of the banks to return them to design standard.

The Capital Works Project Manager has been preparing the estimate and committee members could see that a lot of work and thought had gone into quantifying the amount of money needed to complete the project. The Chief Engineer confirmed that the Fodderdyke drain was the next priority on the dredging list, looking at surveys, it is the largest sub-catchment covering 2800ha so fully justifies the investment.

The Chief Engineer confirmed that he was already seeing the benefits from the dredging works completed this year and drainage in that area has been greatly improved. Considering this, the Chief Engineer would be asking for approval to spend £408k on improvements to the Fodderdyke Drain from April 2026.

*B. Bowles- asked if the water could be extracted from the Fodderdyke through to Hobhole without pumping?* The Chief Engineer confirmed that once the drain has been returned to design standard and the silt removed from the bottom, the water will flow as it should.

The Chief Engineer confirmed he only had anecdotal evidence of the benefits of the dredging work from the telemetry but following the weekend's rainfall it was evident how much more quickly we were able to get the levels down and pull water out of the Thorpe drain.

The intention was to return the Fodderdyke its original design standard, as it was when originally constructed in 1980s or 90s. The bed of the watercourse would not be lowered. With the silt removed and the embankments put back to design standard it will work as it should.

The Chief Executive confirmed last year some money was put aside to do drain cleansing however it had not been spent because of the funds received from the recovery fund. The money put aside was put into the capital investment fund, and more was added at the end of the year. The Chief Engineer confirmed he wanted the committee to see the overall estimate and if approved to recommend to Board, the funds would be pulled from the capital investment fund.

*C. Crunkhorn- asked how much of the Fodderdyke had been completed?* The Engineering Manager confirmed 1800 metres up to the crossroads at Midville. It was hoped to reach the railway line but because of water levels the boat needed to be removed.

A discussion ensued and the Chief Engineer asked if there were any further questions. The Chief Engineer confirmed that based upon all the estimates it was suggested that the committee recommend the approval of the £938,356 estimate for Cleansing Improvements. P. Bedford proposed the estimate, and this was seconded by D. Scoot. There was a show of hands, and it was unanimous.

Following these discussions it was:-

**RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND**

That the 2026/27 Cleansing Improvements estimate in the sum of £938,356 be approved by the Board.

4.3. **Asset Improvement Programme**

The Chief Engineer confirmed the details of the estimate for asset improvements for 2026-27 were shown on the last pull-out page in the information pack. Again, this was in a new format which made sure all the work streams were included. Consideration needed to be given to those areas which the Board felt required investment, this might include all of them, but they were highlighted. Everything had been included from pipeline cleansing to CCTV work, and this has replaced the asset urban and assets ordinary estimates previously presented to the Committee.

The District Operations Manager has been round the district with the two foremen looking at all the defects. The report was very detailed including details of sluices, pen stocks and flow control. Even though the funding priorities for next year are elsewhere, a risk-based approach to how the Board invests is needed. The Board are prioritising investment in works that are needed now and anything that is not urgent can be deferred.

Some of the priorities are a couple of headwall replacements, some pipeline refurbishment, some CCTV jetting and inspection work. And then there's obviously the supervision of that work. So again, a whole list of works.

The Chief Executive added most of the movement was taken up by pipeline refurbishment. In the past when The Board carried out similar work at Tower Rd, funding was obtained from FDGiA. He asked if this would be possible again? The Chief Engineer confirmed that this was not possible because the Hobhole Pumping Station project was taking everything available to fund it. Therefore, the Board would need to fund the works.

The Engineering Manager added this is all in line with the asset management plan. The Board had categorised all assets and had quantified them on a rolling programme. The Technical Officer had been out inspecting the Board's assets doing surveys with GPS and will start to use the drone for this as well.

Every month the Engineering Manager meets with the Technical Officer and looks at proportioning the work for this forward programme alongside the District Operations Manager. This is very much a joint approach between Operations and Engineering.

The Chairman believes that the Board has gone from a reactive to a proactive approach. As he stated in the Governance meeting, if the Board has an approach for everything which is clear and transparent this leaves ratepayers in no doubt about the Board's ultimate goal, which is to have a forward programme of work and budgets put in place accordingly.

The Chief Engineer therefore asked the committee to approve that the estimate for Asset Inspection and Repairs in 2026-27 in the sum of £242,757 be approved. D. Scoot proposed this, and it was seconded by C. Hardy. There was a show of hands which was unanimous.

Following these discussions it was:

**RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND**

That the 2026/27 Asset Inspection and Repairs estimate in the sum of £242,757 be approved by the Board.

The Chairman confirmed the Committee needs to understand this is what's going to drive any future rate rise.

5. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There was no other business and the meeting closed at 2.25pm.

**Chairman**