

Minutes of the meeting of the Welland and Deepings Internal Drainage Board held at Deeping House, Welland Terrace, Spalding on Thursday, 1<sup>st</sup> February 2018 at 11:00 am

- |               |                         |
|---------------|-------------------------|
| * G R Aley    | J F W Holdich OBE       |
| * A J Branton | * Mrs C J Lawton        |
| * W D Branton | * Mrs A Newton          |
| * M H Bratley | * T C Purllant          |
| R Broughton   | G W Sly                 |
| * A Casson    | * Mrs J Smith           |
| K C Casswell  | * Mrs E J Sneath        |
| R Clark       | * B Tidswell            |
| M Cooper      | * Mrs R Trollope-Bellew |
| P Coupland    | * J Ward                |
| * P Dilks     | * P N Watts MBE         |
| S J Dobney    | * E J Whitfield         |
| * T W Franks  |                         |
| * Present     |                         |

In Attendance:	Mrs K Daft	Chief Executive
	N Morris	Operations Engineer
	J Boden	Assistant Engineer

Prior to the meeting, the Chairman requested the Board observe one minute's silence for Mr Rob Clark who had recently passed away. The Chairman said Mr Clark had been a valued Board member since 2007 and had conducted himself in a wonderful manner.

#### **01/18 APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Mr Broughton, Mr Casswell, Mr Cooper, Mr Coupland, Mr Dobney, Mr Holdich and Mr Sly.

#### **02/18 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Mr W D Branton (Vice Chairman), Mr A J Branton, Mr J Ward, Mr E Whitfield and Mr P N Watts declared an interest in agenda item 9, 'Future maintenance of drains previously undertaken by specialist drainage machinery'.

#### **03/18 TO CONFIRM MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING**

The minutes of the last meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> October 2017, a copy of which had been circulated, were signed by the Chairman as a true record.

#### **04/18 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

##### **04/18/01 Other Meetings Attended**

The Operations Engineer advised that he and the Assistant Engineer have a meeting with the Environment Agency the week commencing 5<sup>th</sup> February with regard to packaged schemes for Flood Defence Grant-in-Aid (FDGiA), and was hopeful that further funding would be received.

**05/18 TO CONSIDER THE RECOMMENDATIONS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE HELD ON FRIDAY, 7<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2017**

The Vice Chairman presented the unconfirmed minutes of the Finance Meeting of the 7<sup>th</sup> December 2017.

**06/18 TO RECEIVE THE HEALTH AND SAFETY REPORT**

The Operations Engineer presented the Board's Health and Safety Report and advised Members that, through the continuing implementation of our stringent policies together with the co-operation and involvement of all employees, the following practices are addressed and maintained:

- All risks to health are addressed and maintained at the lowest level as is reasonably practicable.
- Specific risk assessments and method statements are produced for tasks as required (in addition to the COSHH (Control of Substances Harmful to Health) and generic risk assessment booklets).
- Participation of all employees is actively sought to ensure that any changes to policy or procedures are brought to the attention of staff.
- All new employees are given Health and Safety Induction training.
- Any issues relating to health and safety are brought to the attention of supervisors as soon as possible so that an early remedy can be made.
- Our policy is monitored and reviewed as required, and takes into account legislative changes or if best practice suggests improvements can be made.
- Employees are reminded of their own statutory duty to take reasonable care of themselves and others who may be affected by their actions.

The Operations Engineer ran through the hierarchy of responsibility for the implementation of health and safety, from the Board down to the Junior Engineer.

The Operations Engineer informed Members that as well as holding the position of secretary to the Cablesafe Forum, which is made up of representatives from local drainage boards and the local power company (Western Power Distribution), he was a member of the Institute of Occupational Safety and Health. Being a member of IOSH entitles the Operations Engineer to receive monthly magazines, relevant health and safety bulletins and also access to a free health and safety advice helpline.

The Chairman advised Members that ADA are intending to carry out a voluntary survey regarding 'near misses' in respect of potential accidents as they are keen to see where these have occurred. The Operations Engineer reported that the Board's operatives are encouraged to report 'near misses' and our findings could be passed on to Ian Benn of JBA Consulting, ADA's health and safety expert.

The Operations Engineer advised that a protective safety film is to be fitted to windows in the Board's tractor cabs. Once installed, this coating will ensure the integrity of the glass should it be struck by flying debris: i.e. the glass will shatter but the shards of glass will remain held within the frame – thereby guaranteeing the safety of the operator.

**07/18 TO SEAL THE RATE FOR 2018/19**

It was RESOLVED that the rate be set at 11.45p in the pound (1.33% increase).

**08/18 TO RECEIVE THE ENGINEERING REPORT**

The Operations Engineer and Assistant Engineer presented the report to the Board.

Matters arising from the report:

**08/18/01 Riddington's Pumping Station, Pinchbeck Marsh**

Investigations with regard to the cavitation issues are continuing at this pumping station. Flow analysis is to be undertaken to see if the pumps are actually pumping more water than originally thought. Any findings will be reported back to the Board.

**08/18/02 Maxey North Fen Pumping Station**

As part of planned maintenance, both pumps have been lifted for inspection.

Pump 1 was showing signs of impellor wear although the bearings were in good order. This pump is to be booked in for refurbishment the week commencing 5<sup>th</sup> February.

Pump 2 appeared to be in need of more urgent attention so it was removed by Fenflow Ltd (previously Shoebridge Engineering) and taken back to their workshops for assessment. Repairs have been carried out and the pump has been reinstalled.

The Operations Engineer advised that the new weedscreen had now been installed.

**08/18/03 Fourth District Pumping Station**

Works by Interlec Ltd to install the new electrical panel and associated wiring commenced on the 15<sup>th</sup> January. Western Power Distribution have also undertaken works to the incoming supply.

The Assistant Engineer advised Members that the anticipated lifespan of the new electrical panel should be in the region of 25 years.

#### **08/18/04 Risegate Eau Pumping Station**

During an inspection by the Board's Electrical Engineer some 'pitting' was found on the discharge pipe of Pump No 2. However, upon closer scrutiny, this 'pitting' revealed itself to be weep holes through the discharge pipework.

The pump has been taken out of service whilst further investigations are made and options for repair are being considered.

#### **08/18/05 Wygate Park, Pennygate Drain Relining Work**

The Assistant Engineer advised Members that the combined fifth and sixth phases of the Board's drain relining at Wygate Park had been successfully completed. This was the final section of the project that has seen the rehabilitation of 880 metres of surface water sewer.

Carrying out the two phases together meant that costings were reduced and the project was completed a year early.

#### **08/18/06 Bell Tunnel Drain, Cowbit Wash**

A Memorandum of Understanding in respect of future obligations of South Holland IDB and the Board with regard to the proposal to adopt a private riparian drain has now been submitted by South Holland IDB. Once terms have been agreed, the landowners will be contacted and the wheels put in motion to undertake this scheme after harvest this year.

#### **08/18/07 Environment Agency Water Extraction**

Correspondence has been received from the Environment Agency in respect of water abstraction licences for previously exempt activities.

Discussion is to take place with neighbouring IDBs and the Environment Agency.

Applications for new licences will need to be submitted by 31<sup>st</sup> December 2019. Details of payment are not known at this time.

#### **08/18/08 Conservation**

The Operations Engineer reported that the Environment Agency are having issues with badger setts in the raised flood banks of the River Glen near Tongue End, and the Board has been asked to supply any information they have of badgers in this area.

The Board's ecologist has provided a report based on past records, and findings revealed that badgers have now become quite commonplace within the Fenland environment. It is hoped that the information we have provided to the Environment Agency will help them better understand the badgers' spread.

The Operations Engineer mentioned that 800 hedging saplings have been planted along the North and South Drove Drains.

09/18

## **TO RECEIVE THE REPORT ON FUTURE MAINTENANCE OF DRAINS PREVIOUSLY UNDERTAKEN BY SPECIALIST DRAINAGE MACHINERY**

The Chief Executive presented her report, based upon a full and thorough internal investigation as to how the drains previously cut by the defunct Berkenheger Spider can be maintained in the future.

Up to its demise, the Berkenheger had annually maintained 108km of drains within the Board's area, with 85% being within the Deeping Fen catchment. As Deeping Fen was the largest area cut by the Berkenheger, the Chief's Executive's findings concentrated on this catchment.

The Chief Executive's findings were:

### **09/18/01 Frequency of Maintenance**

Drains cut by the Berkenheger have been cut twice yearly, in some cases three times; two Board operatives control the Berkenheger – one to operate the machine and the other to control the knives. Drains maintained by tracked machine, grenadier, boat or mini digger have been cut once or twice; one Board operative is used in these methods.

The majority of Berkenheger-maintained drains have had an early season cut in May/June and a second cut from mid-July onwards. On certain drains this maintenance schedule was considered justified. However, on other drains the early season cut would appear to serve little purpose.

No clear reason has been identified as to why Berkenheger-maintained drains have historically been cut twice. General consensus is that the second cut was undertaken because the machine was available. It was also noted that the Berkenheger was unable to cut heavy vegetation growth, and it was therefore easier for it to undertake two cuts.

### **09/18/02 Weir System**

The Board operate a weir system that is unique to Deeping Fen. There are approximately 40 manually-operated control structures that regulate the water level for irrigation purposes. Despite not having any particular drainage advantage, this method is critical to many farmers who irrigate. This system is fully funded and operated by the Board, at an annual maintenance cost of around £30,000 per annum: this amount does not include capital costs of the weirs.

Defra are planning to end water abstraction licensing exemptions, and licences will now be required which may incur extra costs to the Board.

### **09/18/03 Access**

Whilst the Berkenheger had no access problems due to it travelling in the drain, tracked machines and grenadiers travel on the drain-side over agricultural land. This method is proving to be increasingly inefficient as a higher number of machine moves by low loader are required, landowners are leaving fields bare for less time and one Board employee is required to monitor

for uncropped fields. The optimum method would be for tracked machines and grenadiers to travel on the drain-side, whether there be crops or not.

A large number of drains have grass strips running alongside them, with some farmers planning to install more. The Government's "25 Year Environmental Plan" has established a move towards further environmental benefits and requirements in future for farmers to demonstrate this to receive subsidies. The Board owns many strips of land alongside Board drains, with these rented to farmers at around half commercial rate. These arable agreements allow for the Board to travel through these crops without payment or compensation.

#### **09/18/04 Culverts**

Recent surveys have identified redundant culverts in a number of drains. As fields have become larger, some culverts have become unused and are in a poor state of repair.

We are currently working with farmers to remove the redundant culverts during cleansing operations when a machine is already present. Removal of these unwanted culverts will create a drainage advantage as flow will be increased. Future speed of maintenance will also be increased through a lack of obstruction.

#### **09/18/05 Conclusions**

Deeping Fen catchment is unique and receives cost-free benefits from the Board that no other catchments receive.

Some maintenance has had little or no benefit. In the majority of these cases, there is no reason for continuing with an early season cut.

If all critical drains within Deeping Fen receive two cuts and all others one this will reduce maintenance distance by 90km. This method is to be used as the basis for the new maintenance programme in Deeping Fen.

After the Chief Executive had presented her report, discussion then took place.

(\* - Member who has declared an interest; however, continued to take part in discussion.)

Mr Whitfield\* was of the opinion that a Berkenheger machine would be the preferred option but appreciated the fact that during its service the now defunct Berkenheger had been out of commission a great deal of time.

Mr Watts\* mentioned that at October's Board meeting he was of the understanding that the Board had been in favour of purchasing a new Berkenheger. In his opinion, he would prefer the Board not to buy a replacement model.

Mr A Branton\* stated he was disgusted with the Chief Executive's report and believed the report had been written 'backwards', in that the decision to use a tracked machine had already been made by her.

Mr A Branton\* pointed out that a drainage rate increase had been approved during this Board meeting. He stated that Deeping Fen ratepayers will have a tracked machine going through the crops but that they will not receive any compensation. It was Mr Branton's belief that Deeping Fen ratepayers would receive less of a service than the one that had been enjoyed by them over the last twenty years.

Mr A Branton\* mentioned that Deeping Fen ratepayers had previously enjoyed a very harmonious existence with the Board.

The Chief Executive explained that the Deeping Fen catchment's needs were accommodated whenever possible; however, the purpose of the Board was not for irrigation but for drainage.

Mr A Branton\* was of the view that the full cost of running a tracked machine had not been shown in the Chief Executive's report. He stated certain ratepayers will bear a crop cost which has not been shown in the figures. He further stated the report, in his opinion, was a fundamental disgrace and compensation should be included.

The Vice Chairman\* stated he accepted that he had a vested interest in this issue; however, he believed that the Chief Executive's report was misleading and unfair in the way it had been presented.

Mr J Ward\* commented that the issue of using a tracked excavator in the Deeping Fen catchment was always going to be contentious; however, in his opinion, the Berkenheger had made a mess of some main drains and outfalls. He further remarked that, in his view, the Berkenheger had never been particularly satisfactory.

Mr P Dilks declared he was not as knowledgeable as some but it seemed to him that there were three issues being discussed: whether a new Berkenheger or a tracked machine should be purchased, and, if a tracked machine is used within Deeping Fen catchment, whether compensation should be paid.

In summing up, the Chairman put forward that:

- the Board does not purchase a new Berkenheger;
- the use of tracked machines on previously Berkenheger-maintained drains (travelling over crops, if necessary) will be trialled for a year;
- The Chief Executive will report back to the February 2019 meetings on the trial working. The actual crops travelled through will also be collated during the season and reported back to Members.

Proposed by Mrs J Smith and seconded by Mr P Dilks, it was RESOLVED the Chairman's suggestions be adopted.

## **10/18 TO RECEIVE THE FINANCIAL REPORT**

The Chief Executive presented the Finance Report for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017 to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2017.

It was RESOLVED that the Finance Report be adopted.

**11/18 TO RECEIVE AND APPROVE THE RISK REGISTER**

The Chief Executive presented the Risk Register, and advised that no amendments had been made to the document.

It was RESOLVED that the Risk Register be adopted.

**12/18 TO RECEIVE AND APPROVE THE FINANCIAL REGULATIONS**

The Chief Executive reported the Financial Regulations had been reviewed, and advised that only two small amendments had been made to the 'Payments' section in 'Banking and Treasury Management'.

It was RESOLVED that the Financial Regulations be adopted.

**13/18 ADA UPDATES**

The Chairman reported to Members that:

- Technical & Environmental Committee and Policy & Finance Committee meetings had been held in January.
- Ian Thornton will be standing down as Chairman of the Policy & Finance Committee and Tim Farr will be taking on the role.

**14/18 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The Chief Executive advised Members that Board elections are to take place this year.

There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 1:35pm.

Chairman