

# WITHAM FOURTH DISTRICT INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

## MINUTES

of the proceedings of the **Board** at a Meeting held at the Board's Offices, 47 Norfolk Street, Boston on **Thursday 9 February 2017**

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Present: - J.E. Grant Esq. (Chairman)

|         |               |               |               |
|---------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Messrs: | T. Ashton     | M. Cooper     | R.F. Leggott  |
|         | R. Austin     | C. Crunkhorn  | P. Richardson |
|         | P. Bedford    | R. Hall-Jones | R. Williams   |
|         | B. Bowles     | C. Hardy      | J. Ward       |
|         | M. Brookes    | A. Harrison   | J. Woods      |
|         | C. Brotherton | N. Jones      |               |

Apologies for non-attendance were received from:-

|         |               |              |
|---------|---------------|--------------|
| Messrs: | Mrs M. Dennis | Mrs C Rylott |
|         | H.C.Drake     | A Saul       |

1. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

None.

2. **DECLARATION OF INTEREST ON ANY GENERAL ITEM**

B. Bowles declared an interest in discussions about Sea Banks.

J. Grant and P. Richardson declared an interest in discussions about Triton Knoll

3 **MINUTES**

3.1 **Board Meeting – 14 December 2016**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Board held on 14 December 2016 were submitted and signed by the Chairman.

**Matters arising:**

3.1.1 **Reglone - application to the HSE – update – Page 36**

The Chairman confirmed that the application had been submitted to CRD and he had spoken to Dr James Newman who advised him that he would be leaving The Centre for Ecology and Hydrology and setting up independently to specifically assist IDBS. The Japanese company who were the possible alternative suppliers of chemicals had decided that they did not want to put any chemicals into water as this might have an effect on other chemicals being used above ground in the rest of Europe.

- ♦ *R. Austin advised Matt Warman (MP) was gathering evidence in support of the retention of the use of chemicals. Black Sluice would be sending a letter in support and perhaps Witham Fourth should do the same e.g. Glyphosate.*

The Chairman agreed this was a good idea and asked the CEO to arrange.

3.1.2 **Irrecoverable Debts – page 41**

*J. Ward -asked why £23k was being written off*

The Chief Executive said that he would deal with this question when he read through his report.

3.1.3 **Anglian Water Study Tour of Northern Holland – page 44**

The Chief Executive added the only other point he wanted to mention was the proposed trip to Northern Holland. The Flood-Ex Euro exhibition is due to be held in Amsterdam from 31<sup>st</sup> October -1<sup>st</sup> November 2017 and, having discussed the idea with Welland and Deepings IDB, it was felt that perhaps a two day trip could be organised to coincide with the Flood-Ex. One day attending

Flood-Ex and the other day for a trip round the Drainage area. The Chief Executive said that he would provide an update regarding costing at the next Board Meeting.

*R. Leggott - advised that Black Sluice had also added a budget for a trip to Portugal in 2017.*

#### 3.1.4 **Other Matters**

- ♦ The Chief Executive confirmed that the error contained with the Works Committee Minutes had now been rectified.
- ♦ *R. Williams stated there was an error at 11.3 of the Minutes and the date should read 23 January 2017.*
- ♦ *J. Woods confirmed there was no update in relation to glasshouses and that in the event no update was received within the next ten days he would chase the matter up.*

#### 4 **Minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee- 18 January 2017**

The Minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee Meeting held on 18 January 2017 were submitted and signed by the Chairman.

##### **Matters arising:**

#### 4.1 **To approve the Adoption of Officer's Estimate**

The Chief Executive went through his memorandum concerning the 2017/18 estimate and answered questions that arose, so that members could fully understand the estimate for the current year and the resultant movement on reserves. The Chief Executive confirmed that the £55,000 cost in respect of the gearbox had not originally been included in the estimates and that the reserves balance at the year-end would be just about the 20% of annual expenditure. The Chief Executive confirmed that the EA precept had now been confirmed and the Environment Budget had been reduced to a more realistic level. He confirmed that developed land had been moved into special levy, nothing in the Boston area and all in East Lindsey area. The increases shown for a 1% increase in the rate are £4,000 to ELDC and £10,000 to BBC. This equated to a 1% increase across the Board.

The Chairman added *that if we had not secured the £1.5m grant income over recent years, the rate increase would have been nearer to 5% for 2017/18.*

*P. Bedford - said that he agreed but at the same time did not agree*

The Chairman said that he did not want another debate and that this was the figure recommended by the Finance Committee.

*C. Crunkhorn - referred to page 4b and asked the Chief Executive to explain the different reserves again*

The Chief Executive explained the reserves again but C. Crunkhorn was still a little unclear. It was suggested that he meet with the CEO for a more detailed explanation.

The Chairman asked if there were any further comments on the Chief Executive's recommendations.

*P. Bedford - advised that he was looking for a zero increase as indicated at ELDC earlier in the year. Black Sluice had agreed a zero rate increase and they forecast the rates over a ten year period. Over the next 4 year cycle BBC would lose £1.63m funding from the government and he was pleading with the Board not to increase the rates. He stated that we need to be working in partnership and that's the reason that Councillors were sitting on the Board.*

The Chairman asked how much Black Sluice was taking out of funding to retain a zero rate increase and P. Bedford said they were taking nothing.

The Chairman said that consideration had been given to the level of increase and he believed the rate was justified as we owed it to the rate payers to ensure that we are able to cope with any adverse situation that may arise. Any increase needed careful consideration but other Boards do not have the extensive mudding programme to carry out. This work was last carried out by the Board in the mid 80's and is a massive task. We may not receive Grant in Aid to cover the costs of the work and he was therefore loathed to agree a zero rate increase which could have an adverse effect in a couple of years. The Chairman added it was far better to have a small increase each

year rather than hold the rate at zero and then have to make massive increases to cover the costs. The Chairman added that the councils were able to increase the council tax rates by 2.9% so he did not believe that a 1% increase of the drainage rates was unreasonable.

*P. Bedford - agreed but said the Council had to find savings and he would suggest the Board holds the rate and start a 10 years plan in advance.*

The Chief Executive added that he had seen a copy of the Black Sluice's ten year forecast. In essence, Black Sluice IDB reviews the current year's position; adds inflationary costs and then takes a commercial view. The Chief Executive felt that a 6 year historical view gives a much more accurate view of the position rather than trying to predict the future.

*T. Ashton - sympathised with BBC and agreed with the Chairman that 1% was not a great increase but felt that this was more an issue of solidarity. He believed there should be a zero rate increase this year and then perhaps a 2% increase next year. A zero rate increase would be seen as a gesture of goodwill.*

The Chairman advised that at the meeting he and the Chief Executive had attended earlier in the year; he had said that he could not guarantee a 0% increase. There was still 6 weeks of the current year to run and anything could happen within that time. The Finance and General Purposes Committee had debated the issue in January and had recommended a 1% increase to keep things stable and sensible.

*R. Leggott - said everyone realised the pressure the councils are under and there appears to be a suggestion that Black Sluice's figures are all guess work but they do work! At the meeting in January he had suggested a 0.25% increase which would have been just enough to bring the reserves back to the required 20%. A zero rate increase would put us nearer to the reserve figure than a 1% increase.*

*M. Brookes - added concerns had been voiced at the meeting but the increase was definitely not agreed. He felt very strongly that the reserve figure of 20% was to cover the unexpected. A 1% increase took us above the required 20% and we should only increase the rate when the reserves had been depleted. A zero rate increase would be good publicity for the Board and if Black Sluice can hold their rate then Witham Fourth should do likewise and show support for the councils who are in dire straits.*

The Chairman reminded Board Members that the purpose of the Finance Committee was to bring recommendations to the Board. He added that there had been no representation at the January meeting by ELDC Councillors and the vote had therefore been decided between the Borough and Agricultural members.

*J. Ward - advised he also sat on South Holland Board and they had had a period of several years with 0% increase which was just not sensible. He believed a small rise each year was the far more sensible option.*

*P. Richardson - said he totally understood the Borough's position but felt they were missing the Board's objectives in the short term. De-silting works had not yet been budgeted for but the money for this work had to come from somewhere, whether that be from the reserves or elsewhere. A slight increase afforded much better protection.*

The Chairman added that the increase which the Committee had recommended was less than the rate of inflation and asked if anyone wished to propose a 0% increase.

P. Bedford proposed a zero rate increase which was seconded by C. Brotherton. This was put to members and there were eight votes in favour of a 0% increase.

He then asked for those in favour of the recommendation made by the Finance Committee and there were ten votes in favour of a 1% increase.

*B. Bowles - added that the Board needed to continue to review all costs to ensure maximum efficiency*

The Chairman confirmed that costs continue to increase but we are frugal. We employ minimal office staff; have good machines and good knowledgeable staff. The Chairman made a request

that all members of the Finance Committee attend the meetings moving forward to ensure a mix of balanced views to ensure the correct decision is reached.

- P. Bedford* - questioned whether there could be a balanced view between 4 councillors and 8 farmers?  
*R. Leggott* - added that any decisions reached are only recommendations which would still require debate.

It was therefore:

- RESOLVED** i) The Chief Executive's Estimates for 2017/2018 be adopted.
- ii) that the rate be levied in the Sub District 1 (*the former Borough Area of Boston*) to be one half of the full rate:
- 7.753 pence**
- iii) that the rate be levied in Sub District 2 (*the remainder of the Internal District*) be the full rate:
- 15.505 pence**
- iv) that the Special Levies on Local Charging Authorities be set as follows:
- |                               |                      |
|-------------------------------|----------------------|
| Boston Borough Council        | <b>£1,023,450.16</b> |
| East Lindsey District Council | <b>£ 356,809.59</b>  |

The Rate was duly sealed at the meeting and would be published in the local press in the usual way.

## 5. MEETINGS WITH OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS

The Chief Executive read through the meetings with outside organisations and confirmed that:-

### 5.1 **Water Resource East Meeting (23 January 2017)**

This was about putting together front runner cases and on 21<sup>st</sup> April there is a visit scheduled to Black Sluice pumping station and the South Forty Foot drain to look at opportunities.

### 5.2 **Partnership Approach to Catchment Management Working Group (9 January 2017)**

This group is concerned with the cost of managing flood risk in the county and to ensure that the work is being completed by the most appropriate body. There are 16 catchment areas and luckily Witham Fourth's entire district falls within the same catchment.

## 6. CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND FINANCE MANAGERS REPORT

The Chief Executive went through his report and answered questions from members.

### 6.1 **Bank Balances**

**RESOLVED** that the balances be noted

### 6.2 **Money Market Deposits**

The Chief Executive confirmed that Lloyds had offered a 12 month deposit account paying 0.9% which was an increase on the rate being paid on the current account. The Chief Executive suggested making a deposit of £500,000, which was approved.

**RESOLVED** that the sum of £500,00 be deposited for 12 months

### 6.3 Rating Matters

#### 6.3.1 **Rate Arrears at 31 December 2016**

**RESOLVED** that the Rate Arrears as at the 31 December 2016 be noted

The Chief Executive advised that the balance of the arrears brought forward had now been reduced to £8,000. With regard to the bad debt of £25,000, the Liquidators had requested completion of a Proof of bad Debt form which had now been submitted. It was unlikely that any of this money would be recovered and it would have to be written off in the accounts.

Another ratepayer had asked for a reduction in their rates (from £38,000) because the land and commercial premises were empty and being marketed for sale. The Chief Executive had agreed to negotiate a 20% reduction with the District Valuer but just before the meeting, he had been

advised that the land had been sold. The Chief Executive was minded that we did not want to agree the reduction moving forwards as this would be to the detriment of the rates. The Chief Executive recommended pursuing the debt in full but allow the 20% reduction negotiated. The Board were happy with this suggestion.

#### 6.4 **Flood Defence Grant in Aid Applications**

The Chief Executive confirmed that this was taking up the majority of his time at present. It was hoped that the Wrangle Sea Bank work would commence in April and there was another meeting of the Project management Board tomorrow morning. The underwriting issue with Lincs County Council had now been resolved. There were minor points that had not been agreed e.g. interest on late payments but the Chief Executive was satisfied that the risk to the Board had been covered. He asked that delegated powers be given to the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman to sign off the Agreement.

**RESOLVED** That the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman have delegated powers.

*C. Crunkhorn* - asked if the Governance Committee members could have a copy.

The Chief Executive confirmed that he would arrange to send a copy to the Members.

The Chief Executive confirmed that the preliminary work had been done at Lade Bank Pumping Station and the funding application had been submitted and approved the application. This will release funds as soon as the claim has been signed off. This will enable us to look at the electric pumps at Lade Bank and diesel tanks.

#### 6.5 **Pay and Conditions Update**

The Chief Executive handed over to the Vice-Chairman who had presided over this meeting in the Chairman's absence. The Vice-Chairman confirmed that it had been a very successful meeting with co-operation on both sides. Discussions were held about modernising the White Book and a proposal of 1% pay award together with 0.4% consolidated payment was put forward. This proposal will be put to the ADA Branch Meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> February 2017 and hopefully both sides will accept. If accepted, the Board will accept this. Only Welland and Deeping IDB would not accept the offer as they are undergoing a restructuring process. The Engineering Manager confirmed that Lindsey Marsh had undergone the same process resulting in an award greater than 1.4%. The Chairman questioned whether it was correct to follow the methodology of the White Book but break loose on pay issues but not on other conditions. The Engineering Manager confirmed that Lindsey Marsh do support the conditions in the White Book but had agreed a separate pay arrangement. The Chairman asked if we should adopt the pay review with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April. This was confirmed.

The Chief Executive added that on a separate note, he had been asked if the current car loan scheme available to managers could be extended to staff. The interest charged would be greater than the interest currently earned and sufficient funds were available to enable this to happen. The Chief Executive asked the Board if they were prepared to support this.

The Chairman added that only management enjoyed this benefit at Black Sluice and the Engineering Manager confirmed that when this scheme was first introduced it was to ensure that essential users had a vehicle which was suitable for the job that was required. However, we did want our men in the district to have decent cars.

After discussion and general comments both for and against the idea, the Chief Executive asked for a show of hands in support and the majority of the Board did not approve making loans available to all employees.

#### 6.6 **Solar Panels**

The Chief Executive confirmed that the solar panels had performed better than expected for the first three years of operation.

#### 6.7 **2017 Business Plan**

Due to time constraints, this item would be dealt with after the Engineering Manager had presented his report.

7. **ENGINEERING MANAGER'S REPORT NO. 4/16**  
The Engineering Manager went through his report, highlighting those areas of importance for Board Members

7.1 **Maintenance Works**

7.1.1 **Bush Control**

The Engineering Manager confirmed we were still two men down so some jobs had fallen behind.

7.1.2 **Slip Repairs**

The Engineering Manager referred the Board to 1.4 (Slip repairs) and confirmed that this was a job that had been badly managed by Western Power. Due to an error on their part there had been three slips to date which have been repaired at Western Power's expense.

7.2 **Waste Management**

The following expenditure has been incurred during the period:

| Detail          | Nov, Dec, Jan |
|-----------------|---------------|
| Labour          | 366           |
| Plant           | 251           |
| Flyswat (6mths) | 0             |
| Total           | 617           |

7.3 **Rainfall**

7.3.1 **Monthly Rainfall Totals**

The Engineering Manager confirmed that since 2000, 1 year in 4 had been very dry. He thought it had not been a bad winter so far as pumping was concerned.

7.4 **General Maintenance**

7.4.1 **Gearbox No 1**

There have been no mechanical faults found with the gearbox and the Engineering Manager does not believe that there is an issue with the oil. The oil is heated so that it is not too thick for the starting pumps and this has been done since 1957. The oil is heated to 65-70 degrees Fahrenheit, and when operational this rises to 88 degrees Fahrenheit. David Brown has suggested that the approved temperature for the oil is 110 degrees Fahrenheit. However, we have been using thinner oil since 1979 – no response has been received as yet.

7.4.2 **Pump No 1**

Sulzer Pumps are ready to proceed. The pump was loosened and ready to be winched out on the 10 tonne overhead crane and hoist. The gauge showed the pump weighed 11 tonne. As a result, the Engineering Manager stopped work whilst the options could be considered together with the Health and Safety issues. The Engineering Manager had asked Sulzer if it would be possible to repair the bearing in the pump in-site and to disregard the impellor. Sulzer are looking into this but if it is not possible, then another assessment will need to be carried out.

The Chairman asked if there were any documents which might show the correct weight and the Engineering Manager confirmed a search of the archives would be necessary.

7.4.3 **Pump Replacement**

The Engineering Manager confirmed that any changes made would need to comply with the Eel Regulations. It is unlikely that Grant in Aid would be available for this site and it would be very remiss to be spending any money on the pumps until we have heard the update from the Environment Officer.

*R. Hall-Jones - asked if the gaps in the screen could be tightened up*

The Engineering Manager confirmed that we could make smaller spacing but there would be a large cost involved replacing it and risk of blockages. The Chairman agreed that the matter needed further investigation.

7.4.4 **Control Panels**

The Engineering Manager confirmed that the structure of the panels is good and that the interior components could be repaired in sections. The estimated costs of this would be £27,000 as opposed to £45,000 to replace the whole panel.

*M. Cooper* - agreed this was a good way to proceed as breakdowns are costly.  
*R. Leggott* - stated that we must be able to rely on them.

It was agreed to repair the insides and to await the findings of the Eel Regulations and compliance.

#### 7.4.5 **Electric Pumps**

The Engineering Manager advised that he had discovered a pump repair company based in Lincoln who were recommended. The pump had been sent to them for repair.

#### 7.4.6 **Structural Repairs**

The Chairman asked the Engineering Manager for a breakdown of high, medium and low priority works. The Engineering Manager confirmed the high level priority related to the walkway to the pumping station which was a thin, concrete platform.

#### 7.4.7 **Resilience Measures**

The flood protection doors have now been installed at the pumping station and the panels have been ordered from Interlec.

### 8 **Fodderdyke East Drain**

The Engineering Manager confirmed the four options available to the Board and reminded them that when the work was carried out in the mid 1980's, the Board had 25 staff and 5 long reach machines. We now have fewer employees and the current machines are not as large.

*M. Cooper* - suggested we see what happens when Black Sluice start work on the South Forty Foot. They were due to start this work in April and would be using a floating pump. Perhaps we could use the machine if it was still in the country.

The Chairman said he would be very interested to see it.

*T. Ashton* - suggested that we continue to look at the options but keep option 3 on the and not dispose of the JCB JS220

The Chairman confirmed we needed to review what we need to do, how we do it and most importantly keep abreast of what we need to do. The Engineering Manager suggested the Works Committee should have another meeting before the next Board meeting in June.

### 9 **PLANT REPLACEMENT**

#### 9.1 **Weed Basket**

The Engineering Manager confirmed that he had been able to borrow a 5 metre weed basket and this had been tested on one sewer on the JS145. The work would usually take 17 hours but using the 5 metre weed basket the work had been completed in 14 hours. This included 1.5 hours moving the basket but the output showed significant improvement.

#### 9.2 **Unimog/Fuel Deliveries**

The Engineering Manager stated that the Unimog replacement had been deferred for a number of years. A replacement price was quoted as £138,000 two years ago but he did not feel it necessary to purchase a replacement if operational changes are currently being considered prove to be cost-effective, then a cheaper alternative vehicle could be purchased.. The Board were asked to give the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman delegated powers to deal with this issue before the next Board meeting.

*M. Cooper* - asked if it would be worth considering a 4wd 3.5 tonne vehicle which would be a lot cheaper than a Unimog.

The Engineering Manager confirmed that an Iveco Daily only has 1,000 kilo capacity. Toyota do a Hilux which is simply a cab and chassis and another firm can put something on the back which would give 1.3 tonne capacity however this is near the ADR limit.

*T. Ashton* - asked what else the Unimog could be used for and was there any point in retaining it

The Engineering Manager said delivery of construction materials etc but that it was not used all that much and its second hand value would buy the Toyota Hilux.

**RESOLVED** That the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman have delegated powers.

- 10        **Health and Safety Matters**  
There was nothing to report.
- 11        **2016 Rainfall**  
There was an error in paragraph 10 and the figure at Haven Bank should read 26mm and not 2mm.
- 12        **Tidal Surge**  
The Engineering Manager said the staff had done a very good job volunteering and all in all he was very impressed at how things had gone. There had been a problem with the timing of some of the warnings which had to be taken on a tide-by-tide basis but the support received from other IDBs had been excellent. The one thing that had come to light was that we needed to gate the road leading to the pumping station to stop members of the general public sightseeing.  
*R. Leggott*            - *thanked the Engineering Manager for sharing updates with the Board.*
- 13        **Boston Barrier Public Inquiry**  
The Engineering Manager confirmed that they required fewer issues to deal with at the Inquiry and asked the Board if they were comfortable with the proposed changes to the statement. The Board confirmed they were happy with the proposed wording.  
  
*P. Bedford*            - *advised he had attended a meeting on Tuesday and the evidence appeared to be taken in sections. It was important to support the plan as this would ensure 3,000 properties would be protected.*  
The Chairman suggested that a caveat be added to say that the sea defences are all intact. The Chief Executive confirmed that the inquiry will cover the Haven works which should start at the same time as the Wrangle Sea Defence project. This would be a two year programme starting in April.
- 14        **2017 Business Plan**  
The Chief Executive read through the 2017 Business Plan and highlighted the revised draft policy statement on water level and flood risk management that had been agreed with DEFRA. He said that this would be personalised by the Board and adopted at the next Board Meeting.  
  
There were no other major changes to the plan apart from progress and deadline dates.  
  
The Chairman asked for comments after which the Board indicated their support for the 2017 plan.
- 15        **ENVIRONMENT OFFICER'S REPORT**  
The Environment Officer introduced Dr. Jon Bolland from Hull International Fisheries (HIFI). Dr Bolland is the Project Manager for the EA funded Eel Survey at Fenland Pumping Stations Project and was raised locally and knows the area well. The project has now completed the current programme of study at Lade Bank and Hobhole Pumping Stations. There is a proposal to only run duty electric pumps during day time hours and operating the gravity sluice at Hobhole during dark moon phases coinciding with decent tides going forward. Initial findings have already been encouraging, so much so that the EA and Defra are now revising existing eel and fish passage at water level control structures, influenced by encouraging results from Hobhole and Lade Bank. Dr Bolland said that the work was challenging and there was still more work to do in collecting the results and collating data from 2016.  
  
The Environment officer then read through his report and confirmed that:-
- 15.1      **Wrangle Sea Bank Raising Scheme Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA)**  
The Project Management Board was due to attend a meeting at these offices on 10<sup>th</sup> February 2017 and the Environment Officer was working to complete the HRA as a matter of priority.
- 15.2      **The Wash & North Norfolk Coast European Marine Site (EMS)**  
The Environment Officer had now met the new Project Manager and he will be attending his first Board Meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2017.
- 15.3      **Mink Control**  
The Environment Officer confirmed that a number of volunteer groups exist to stop the spread of mink and that Lincolnshire Rivers Trust was seeking to expand eradication county wide.

15.4 **Boston Borough Council Operation Flyswat**

There has been an increase in fly-tipping because of less daylight hours. Recently, the contents of a whole house had been dumped near to Bakers Bridge.

*J. Ward - feared this would only get worse once the tip at Slippery Gowt Lane closed. Apparently, the Council would be opening a new one which would only be open 3-4 days per week.*

The Chief Executive was not aware of this and would look into writing a letter to the Council.

The Engineering Manager asked Dr. Bolland if he (HIFI) would be interested in attending the Lincolnshire show, perhaps taking a stand showing details of the eel project. Dr. Bolland said he would be delighted to attend or supply supporting material as he is also a Trustee for Lincolnshire Rivers Trust who already share the ADA stand.

16. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There was no other business. The Chairman expressed thanks to Martin Redding for all his efforts and hard work over the past few years and wished him all the best for his new life in France.

**Chairman**