

# 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 **Wednesday, 6 February 2019**

Present: -

Messrs:

T. Ashton	R. Hall-Jones
R. Austin	N. Jones
P. Bedford	R. Leggott
B. Bowles	P. Richardson (Chairman)
M. Cooper	K. Smith
Mrs P. Cooper	P. Skinner
C. Crunkhorn	A. Spencer
C. Hardy	R. Williams
A. Harrison	J. Woods

### 1 **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman confirmed that Hugh Drake had recently retired from the Board after 16 years' service. R. Hall-Jones made the presentation to H. Drake on behalf of the Board and thanked him for all his efforts over the years. H. Drake was very appreciative to receive the gift. He wished the Board well for the future and then left the meeting.

### 2 **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for non-attendance were received from: -

Messrs: C. Brotherton A. Saul  
J. Grant J. Ward

### 3. **DECLARATION OF INTEREST ON ANY GENERAL ITEM**

Declared an interest in discussions about Triton Knoll/Viking Link – P. Richardson and R. Leggott

### 4 **MINUTES**

#### 4.1 **Board Meeting – Wednesday 12 December 2018**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Board held on 12 December 2018 were submitted and, subject to an amendment to paragraph 11.1 to include the purchase of the Claas Tractor at £65,000.00, were agreed as accurate and signed by the Chairman.

#### **Matters arising:**

#### 4.1.2 **Liaison with Boston Borough Council ("BBC") -CCTV**

The Chief Engineer confirmed that an estimate had been received from a Contractor for the installation of cameras at both Hobhole and Lade Bank Pumping Station. The original idea was the cameras would be linked to the BBC system which has 24-hour monitoring. However, the broadband speed at the pumping stations was insufficient to enable this to happen. The costs of installing the equipment was in excess of £10,000 so was unaffordable at this moment in time and would not be pursued further.

*R. Hall-Jones - suggested installation of dummy cameras which are very realistic.*  
*J. Woods - advised he has a camera system installed which can be monitored via your phone. He was certain that such a system could be installed for significantly less than the £10,000 quoted.*

- The Chief Engineer confirmed this was something to consider as the cameras were not required for theft/break-ins but to monitor fly-tipping and drug use at the rear of the pumping station.
- J. Woods* - confirmed the phone detects the motion and he certainly found them useful and value for money. The company he used was Alarm Line – who are Boston based- and he extended an invitation to the Chief Engineer to visit his premises and see the cameras for himself.
- The Chief Engineer confirmed that he would obtain an alternative quote from Alarm Line.
- R. Leggott* - added, in his experience, trespassers hated lights.
- The Chief Engineer confirmed that the two sites do already have motion sensor lights installed.

The Chairman asked if there was any update regarding the second hand engines? The Chief Engineer confirmed there was not but that he would continue to pursue them.

- B. Bowles* - asked if the coastal path over the sea bank was still closed and advised that the County Council would be inspecting the site on 11<sup>th</sup> February 2019 to check if it had been re-opened.
- The Chief Engineer confirmed that it was in hand. The Chief Executive confirmed that he had been in contact with the Parish Council to advise them of the position.
- C. Hardy* - asked if vermin control was just carried out monthly?
- The Chief Engineer confirmed it was but that the company were called back in when the bait station was full.
- C. Hardy* - asked if the return visits attracted additional costs?
- The Chief Engineer confirmed they did.
- R. Hall- Jones* - asked what the additional costs were?
- The Chief Engineer confirmed roughly £300.
- J. Woods* - added Rentokill were trialling linking bait stations to an app which confirmed when they required emptying thereby reducing costs.
- C. Hardy* - asked if the pest control was proving effective?
- The Chief Engineer confirmed it was and that we were keeping a register of the rodents caught.

## 5. **MINUTES OF FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE – 16 January 2019**

### 5.1 **Matters arising:**

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

The Chief Executive read through his report and Memorandum which had been amended to accurately reflect what had been discussed in great detail at the meeting. The Chief Executive took the Board Members through the documents page by page, explaining how the deficit had arisen and the additional income that was expected to be received from Triton Knoll and Viking Link projects. The Chief Executive asked if anybody had any questions.

- A. Harrison* - asked how much 1% on the rates equated to?
- The Chief Executive confirmed roughly £28,000
- T. Ashton* - felt that the Board was doing a very good job and that even with the 2% increase last year the average increase had been maintained at 1.5%. The proposed 1% increase this year would be welcomed by Councils because of the funding restraints but he was optimistic that when the funding review was completed, things would improve moving forwards. He would support a 1% increase.
- The Chairman clarified that at this stage, the Board was simply being asked to accept the estimate.
- C. Hardy* - was very concerned that the Board should not continually set such low rates.

T. Ashton proposed that the Chief Executive's estimates be accepted. A vote was taken, and all were in favour with no objections.

## 5.2 To approve the proposed rate increase

- R. Leggott* - had grave concerns about a 1% increase looking at the figures contained with the estimates. The rate does not recoup sufficient funds required for the budget and the purpose of the Drainage Board is to maintain the infrastructure and he would much prefer a 2% rate increase. Even with the additional anticipated income from Trion Knoll/Viking Link this would still fall short of the 20% reserve figure.
- T. Ashton* - did not wish to repeat the issues that had already been debated by the Finance Committee who had recommended a 1% increase, which he believed was a responsible increase and maintained the average 1.5% increase per year.
- J. Woods* - agreed with R. Leggott's suggestion of a 2% increase. Whilst he appreciates the position the Councils are in perhaps 1.5% increase would be a more realistic proposal.
- M. Cooper* - confirmed that Boston Borough Council could just about manage a 1% increase this year but if any higher increase was applied then essential services to the town would need to be cut which would not reflect well on the Board.  
The Chief Executive confirmed that a 1% increase to ELDC would produce a figure of £3,000, a 1% increase to Boston Borough Council would result in £10,000 and £11,000 to the agricultural ratepayers.
- A. Spencer* - confirmed the councils were in a very difficult financial position.

The Chairman confirmed that the Chief Engineer had been asked to look at the capital expenditure in three stages. Work needing to be done within 1-5 years, 5-10 years and beyond. The Board has secured Flood Defence Grant in Aid totalling £3 million over the past few years. The funding of the dredging work would be in the region of £2-£3 million but until such time as the survey has been completed there is no definite answer. We cannot say whether there will be issues obtaining funding as until the survey has been completed, we do not know the actual level of works required.

The Chief Engineer confirmed that there were only so many benefits available and we had to be selective. It was hard to justify the expense and there was need to demonstrate the properties at risk. The modelling of the catchment will show that some agricultural land is also at risk so we would need to work hard to obtain the 100% funding. The Chief Engineer confirmed that he would be much better informed at the Board meeting in June 2019.

- N. Jones* - supported a 1% rise. For an average Band D property, the council receives £136. £78 of which goes to the Lincolnshire IDBs, leaving just £58 to run the rest of the services. Being realistic, he felt that £400,000 in the reserves with an expected payment of £60,000 from Triton Knoll would put the fund back to almost 20%. He believed that the Board also needed to look at making more efficiencies.  
The Chief Executive confirmed that the sum of £78 was in respect of all drainage boards, the major one of which was Lindsey Marsh. He agreed that we needed to be smarter and more efficient but referred the members to the fact that the same amount of maintenance would still be carried out in the coming year at a higher cost but with less increase to the ratepayer.
- C. Crunkhorn* - referred to the comment made earlier that an increase of above 1% would not reflect well on the Board, he believed that it would not reflect well if we did not have sufficient money with which to do our job. The Board cannot continually keep rates at such a low rate.
- P. Skinner* - would support a 1% rate increase this year as the General Reserves are still healthy. He did not believe that the drainage rate contribution should be hidden within the Council Tax increase and believes that the public should be made aware of what they are paying for.

- A. Spencer - believes that the budget based upon a 1% increase is balanced so there was no need to increase it further. There had been "blip" in the Capital Reserve this year but generally it was healthy.  
The Chief Executive confirmed that the General Reserve balance is set at 20% of the general expenditure.  
The Chairman voiced concern about investment. In recent years the Board had enjoyed a 100% success rate in relation to grants but if the grants ceased then the rate may need to increase.
- C. Hardy - was very concerned that the Board could not continually set such low rates.  
P. Bedford - confirmed the 1% rate increase had been recommended by the Finance Committee and the Board should support the Committee, otherwise what was the point in having a Finance Committee?  
The Chairman confirmed that in a democracy the Board has a vote.
- R. Leggott - felt that some of the comments made had sounded threatening. He sympathised with the position the Councils found themselves in, but this was the fault of the Treasury. The Council merely act as a collector for the Drainage Board and the Board cannot alleviate problems for them. However, in a show of co-operation he would support a 1.5% increase.
- B. Bowles - confirmed that the Finance Committee had had a very good meeting and the matter had been discussed in depth. Their recommendation was that a 1% rise would be adequate this year and he was happy to support that.

The Chief Executive added that a recent ADA meeting, the 1975 proposal which changed how Drainage rates were collected had been discussed. The councils do act as collectors for the drainage boards and he would arrange to circulate the paper as he believed it clarifies the position for members.

The Chairman asked for the Board's approval to sign the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 16 January 2019.

C. Hardy proposed that the Board approve the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 16 January 2019.

This was seconded by N. Jones

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 16 January 2019 were submitted and agreed as accurate and signed by the Committee Chairman.

The Chairman confirmed that with regard to the proposed 1% rate increase there had been a counter-proposal.

R. Leggott proposed a 1.5% rate increase.

J. Woods seconded the proposal.

A vote was taken and there were 3 votes in favour of a 1.5% increase and 14 votes against. There were no other proposals.

T. Ashton proposes that the 1% increase in the drainage rate be supported and applied.

A. Spencer seconded the proposal.

A vote was taken and there were 15 votes in favour of the 1% increase. It was therefore: -

- RESOLVED** i) The Chief Executive's Estimates for 2019/2020 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:

**7.986 pence**

- iii) that the rate be levied in Sub District 2 (*the remainder of the Internal District*) be the full rate:

**15.973 pence**

- iv) that the Special Levies on Local Charging Authorities be set as follows:

Boston Borough Council	<b>£1,054,698.66</b>
East Lindsey District Council	<b>£ 367,579.46</b>

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

## 6. **MEETINGS WITH OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS**

The Chief Engineer confirmed that he had attended two meetings, ELDC PAD and Drainage Meeting and the ADA Technical and Environment Committee Meeting. There was nothing contentious to report from either meeting. The ADA meeting takes place every 3 months and national colleagues meet to discuss matters. This time, Biodiversity 2020 had been discussed and the changes to the national strategy which will determine how we report on goals and environmental matters.

The Chief Executive attended the Partnership Strategy Group Meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> January 2019 and confirmed he had found the day useful and there had been lots of good feedback. He referred Board Members to the footnote regarding Nicola McGarry's appointment as IDB FCERM Officer. Nicola had already been into the office to review the Board's programme and would be working with all IDB's to get the applications submitted early in an enough to secure the funding. This Board is currently 70% over our target for the year.

*T. Ashton - was very encouraged with the Lincs Strategy Group. There appeared to be a lot of support including the Parish Councils. At the meeting in January it was confirmed that the precept was being held steady for the forthcoming year.*

The Chairman reminded Board Members of the future ADA Meeting dates and the Chief Executive confirmed that invitations to Flood-Ex had been sent with the Agendas for today's Meeting and urged Board Members to book their places. There would be 55 Exhibitors this year.

## 7. **STRATEGIC PLAN**

The Chief Executive took Board Members through the documents and explained that this really provided details of new things which he would like the Board to achieve over the next 12-24 months. Some of the outstanding items had now been completed, with the assistance of the Chief Engineer.

The Chief Executive confirmed that the one thing the Strategic Plan does not reflect is what the Board does and does well. There is a lot of good work done promoting the Board at the Lincolnshire Show and the East Heckington Show. There is a £3,500 programme in place to educate school children, although the uptake from local schools was not good. It was essential that children when studying water were made aware of the work that Drainage Boards do.

There were no questions from the Board regarding the details set out in the Strategic Plan and the document was approved.

## 8 **CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND FINANCE MANAGERS REPORT**

### 8.1 **Bank Balance**

The Chief Executive went through his report and confirmed that the bank balance was almost £1,000,000 down and this was mainly due to the Wrangle Sea Banks project. All information had

now been submitted and we were awaiting payment of the sum of £800,000. Once this payment has been received the Board will be able to consider investments.

#### 8.2 **Payments Made**

The Chief Executive confirmed the larger payments were all capital related.

#### 8.3 **Rating Income**

The Chief Executive confirmed that collections continued to be successful and in mid-January £45,000 had been agreed to be paid by instalments. There were still two accounts outstanding which were with the Bailiff for collection. There were three bad debts totalling £398 which the Board was asked to approve being written off. There was a show of hands and approval was given to write off the total of £398.

#### 8.4 **Expenditure**

The Chief Executive read through the report and confirmed that the Board should be at 66% of the expenditure target but we are at 72%. This was because there had been a number of maintenance repair costs and the Board may have to take funds from reserves at the end of the year. However, the Chief Executive would be better placed to confirm this in his financial report in June 2019.

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

The Chief Executive confirmed there were currently 3 applications and that the catchment modelling total was £40,000 and not £30,000 as shown on his report.

#### 8.6 **Pay and Conditions**

A 2.7% increase to staff salaries had been agreed with the Employees' Union and this would take effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019.

#### 8.7 **Solar Panel Performance**

Each Board Member had been provided with a leaflet regarding the performance of the solar panels. The Chief Executive confirmed that the feed-in tariff had performed better than expected and we were exploring battery storage to save further. The Chief Executive confirmed that the investment should be showing clear profit in 2 years- time.

*M. Cooper* - queried the figure of 9,622 shown on the update.  
The Chief Executive confirmed the correct figure was 8,122.

### 9. **CHIEF ENGINEER'S REPORT**

The Chief Engineer went through his report, highlighting those areas of importance for Board Members.

#### 9.1 **Pumping Station Operations**

The Chief Engineer confirmed that pumping hours were actually lower in January, which was a good sign because it showed that the ground was not saturated.

#### 9.2 **Catchment Pump Hours**

The Chief Engineer confirmed that the graph on page 3 showed the total Catchment Pump hours over a 16-year period.

#### 9.3 **Hobhole Pumping Station**

The Chief Engineer referred Board Members to the photographs on page 4 of his report which shows the ongoing works for the cooling system which are near completion aside from a few minor issues to complete – including handrails and thermostats to regulate the heat.

#### 9.4 **Rainfall**

The Chief Engineer confirmed that Page 5 of his report showed the rainfall totals for 2018 and as an update there had been 15mm of rain in January 2019.

Page 6 of his report showed a graph detailing 100 years of rainfall at Lade Bank Pumping Station and the average was 573mm. 2018 was considered an average year for rainfall.

9.5 **Soil Moisture Deficit**

The Chief Engineer confirmed the graph on page 7 showed a snapshot of 2018. He explained that 0mm meant complete saturation and the higher the number the drier the soil. As Board Members could see from the graph the soil conditions had returned to normal for the time of year by Christmas 2018.

*R. Austin* - how the reservoir levels were faring?

The Chief Engineer confirmed no issues had been reported.

*B. Bowles* - confirmed that the lagoons were one third full and could really do with another 4" rainfall.

*R. Hall-Jones* - asked if there were any salinity issues?

The Chief Engineer confirmed not really, one or two in the Hobhole Drain as a result of tidal water getting past the broken staunch bar on the sluice.

9.6 **Channel Maintenance**

The Chief Engineer confirmed that a summary of the metres completed had been requested at the last Board Meeting. This was now included.

With regard to the Bushing report, the Chief Engineer confirmed that there were two plans at the back of his report which gave details of the sites where an Ecology Report had been carried out. There were no issues to report.

9.7 **Sewer Cleansing**

The Chief Engineer confirmed that there was no progress report at this time.

9.8 **Planning**

The Chief Engineer confirmed the Board had been consulted on 85 residential development at Toot Lane and 14 residential development at Stickney (East Lindsey District Council).

9.9 **Consenting and Enforcement**

The Chief Engineer confirmed there was not much to report as this had been fairly quiet as it was a short period which included the Christmas break.

9.10 **Triton Knoll**

Work was ongoing to resolve all outstanding issues.

9.11 **Viking Link**

The Chief Engineer confirmed that this project was now progressing, and work was underway to agree the Head of Terms document.

9.12 **Plant and Equipment**

The Chief Engineer was pleased to confirm that following the Board's approval to purchase a Tree Snipper/Cutter one had been ordered from Mastenbroek at a cost of £12,400 plus VAT.

9.13 **JCB JZ141**

The Chief Engineer was pleased to confirm that the issue with the oil had now been resolved.

9.14 **Health and Safety**

The Chief Engineer confirmed that there had been one incident to report due to an electrical fault on the Board's Spearhead SPV, this had resulted in an injury to the driver. However, it had transpired that the driver had not been wearing his seat belt. The Board's policy is clear that where fitted seatbelts **must** be worn. All employees have been sent a reminder of the Board's policy in relation to this.

9.15 **Technical Matters - Catchment Modelling**

The Chief Engineer confirmed to Board Members that a successful tender of £42,500 had been received for phase 1 of the Catchment Modelling work. £30,000 had been secured from FDGiA, the EA have agreed to fund £10,000 and the Board will contribute the remaining £5,000.

9.16 **Engineering Matters**

The Chief Engineer confirmed that the public sector work for 2019 have now been approved by the EA and work will commence in the Spring. Additional bushing work on Haven Bank is underway and will attract £13,000 costs.

9.17 **Works Inspection June 2019**

The Chief Engineer suggested that before the Board Meeting in June, Board Members may like to take part in a Works Inspection. This would give the Board Members a better understanding of where the capital works were needed. The Chief Executive confirmed that this would be arranged in the morning, followed by lunch and then the Board Meeting. This was agreed by the Board.

9.18 **Staff Vehicle Costs**

In June 2013, the Chief Executive had carried out a feasibility study of providing vans for district staff. The current car user allowances paid total £57,000 (including mileage etc). The cost of providing the same staff with liveried vans would reduce this cost by £18,000 following the initial outlay costs of purchasing the vans.

*R. Leggott*

*- asked if we were looking at retaining the vans long term?*

The Chief Engineer confirmed depreciation had been calculated over an 8-year period.

*P. Bedford*

*- suggested the Board check with the Employees' Union as there could be tax implications.*

The Chief Engineer confirmed that tax would only be incurred if the vans were used for private use.

*B. Bowles*

*-asked if the Haven Banks work would have any effect on the pumping station?*

The Chief Engineer confirmed the works terminate at the pumping station. He also confirmed that the Contractors could be taking soil which had been piled up at Hobhole Pumping Station

*A. Harrison*

*- asked about the fencing at New Bolingbroke?*

The Chief Engineer confirmed he had been out to inspect the same.

10. **ENVIRONMENT REPORT**

The Chief Engineer read through his report and confirmed that Biodiversity Strategy 2020 is coming to an end. ADA have been accumulating all the results from the IDBs which will in turn be submitted.

10.1 **Witham Fourth IBD BAP**

The Chief Engineer confirmed that this was detailed in red on his report. 3 owl boxes have been erected and a suitable site had been found for the grass snake habitat at the top end of the Medlam Drain.

The Chief Engineer confirmed that in relation to the Reed Beds, 196,717m of drain banks had not been mown. These banks have never been mown on an annual basis and were roadside sections.

10.2 **Eel Monitoring at Hobhole Pumping Station**

The Chief Engineer confirmed that sluicing in the Autumn rather than using the electric pumps had been encouraging for the eels. The Chief Engineer was due to meet with Ros Wright, the EA eel expert, on 14<sup>th</sup> February to take her round the district to show how the Board was intending to comply with the Regulations.

10.3 **Cowbridge Site – Reel Project**

The Chief Engineer confirmed there was no update to report.

10.4 **Boston Borough Council Operation Flyswat**

The Chief Engineer confirmed there was no update to report.

11. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There was no other business and the meeting concluded at 3.45pm

**Chairman**