

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, 19th September 2019**

Present: - P. Richardson

Messrs: R. Austin F. Pickett
P. Bedford A. Saul
B. Bowles K. Smith
M. Cooper P. Skinner
C. Crunkhorn (Vice-Chairman) J. Ward
J.E. Grant C. Woodcock
C. Hardy J. Woods

1 **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Vice-Chairman opened the meeting as the Chairman had been delayed due to a personal matter but hoped to be in attendance shortly.

1.2 **New Members**

The Vice-Chairman welcomed the new members to the Board and encouraged them to contribute to the various issues discussed at the meetings. The new members gave a brief introduction to the Board.

1.3 **ADA Conference**

The Vice-Chairman confirmed the ADA Conference will be held in London on Wednesday 13 November at the RICS beginning at 10.30am. The Chairman, Vice-Chairman, CEO and Chief Engineer usually attend along with one or two other Board Members.

2 **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for non-attendance were received from: -

Messrs: T. Ashton
R. Hall-Jones
A. Harrison
N. Jones
R. Leggott

No apologies had been received from A. Hall or A. Spencer.

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

Declared an interest in discussions about Triton Knoll/Viking – J. Grant,

4 **MINUTES**

4.1 **Board Meeting – Wednesday, 12th June 2019**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Board held on 12 June 2019 were submitted and awaited signature by the Chairman upon his arrival.

The Vice-Chairman ran through each page and asked members for comments.

J. Grant

-asked what the Winter Bushing Programme was for winter 19-20. The Chief Engineer confirmed that there was a high volume of bushing work to do this year. The Chief Engineer confirmed the need to maintain access on one side of the bank and that works were planned for Hobhole, Westville and Bunkers Hill. The value of work was approximately £40k and there was £50k

- left in the budget.
- C. Hardy* -asked if that was because the work hadn't been done before? The Chief Engineer confirmed it was. The Forestry Flail that had been purchased last year was being used to access one side of the bank and then the usual flails will keep on top.
- J. Grant* - asked who was liable if the hedges created subsidence? The Chief Engineer confirmed the Board owned the watercourse and the bank and Highways Department was liable for maintenance, but the trees were owned by the Board. The Chief Engineer confirmed he would provide full details of the Winter maintenance at the next Board meeting. The Chief Executive added that anybody interested in the Board's drains can view these on the website and it is now possible to drill down further into the information shown.
- J. Ward* - questioned what the Chief Engineer's standard response to criticism of this was? The Chief Engineer confirmed that we live in a man-made environment and we have to maintain it.
- K. Smith* - advised he was not shown as attending the June Board meeting but he had been there. The Chief Executive confirmed that the Minutes would be amended accordingly.

Matters arising:

4.1.2 Future Capital Expenditure

The Chief Executive confirmed that he and the Chief Engineer had been looking to review major capital but had not been able to do so because of the major weather event in June. They would provide this information at the next Board meeting in December 2019.

4.1.3 Triton Knoll

The Chief Executive confirmed that payment of the £50-£60k from Triton Knoll was outstanding. This was not yet in place as the solicitor dealing had been suffering ill health and had not progressed the matter to a conclusion. Some of the land still required registration at the Land Registry but a meeting was due to take place within the next week to try and resolve the issue.

4.1.4 Board's Vans

This item was deferred until later in the meeting when the Chairman was present.

5. MEETINGS WITH OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS

5.1 The Chief Executive confirmed the most fundamental meeting was the River Steeping Steering Group Meeting which had been attended by himself and James Grant. A detailed update was enclosed at the end of his report. The Chief Executive asked if anybody had any questions regarding the meetings attended.

- C. Hardy* - asked about the condition of the 3 culverts at Thorpe Culvert. The Chief Executive confirmed that the last report on them had been completed in 1982. At that time, they were in an appalling state. Lindsey Marsh IDB believed there was a real risk of the ceilings coming down. However, they were under review as to what could be done as they are an asset that is not in a useable condition. The Chief Executive added that moving forward, before any works were considered they would need to be surveyed.

The Chief Engineer asked if they were syphoned or straight through?

- J. Grant* - confirmed straight through. He further added that in 1982 there had been an inundation of water in the Fens and they had been opened to allow the water into the East Fen Catchwater. It was decided at that time that this should not be encouraged as it would be silted and would need to be handled very carefully otherwise it could cause issues in our system. The Chief Executive added that a precedent had been set during the June event as W4IDB had control of the pumps.

- P. Skinner* - added that Norfolk County Council who were investigating the flood came out to see the affected area approximately 3 week ago. The Chief Executive confirmed that their report was due to be received by the beginning of November.

- J. Ward* - believed that in 1982 the gates had to be opened at Thorpe Culverts as there was an agreement to pay £130 per annum for them to open and take the water. However, he thought that after this incident, the agreement was rescinded.
- J. Grant* - added that this put the Board under immense pressure with no support from the EA. The Board had no issue with assisting in such circumstances but at all times our ratepayers had to come first. The Chief Executive said that he would check the Board Minutes from 1982.

The Chief Engineer confirmed that any improvements to the doors could perhaps include improvements to the Bell Water drain – it was vital to consider the bigger picture.

- C. Hardy* - believed that money had been paid to seal the doors and they should remain closed.
- J. Grant* - believed the River Steeping should be improved before putting any water into the Board's system.

The Chief Executive added that WRE were pushing IDBs to help with the scarcity of water and that all IDBs (5 branches) should contribute to the £15,000 costs of appointing a person to arrange this.

- J. Grant* - added that Riparian owners should be taught good storage and transfer of water as it was everyone's responsibility not just the IDBs.

The Chief Executive asked if there were any further questions but there were none.

7. **CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND FINANCE MANAGERS REPORT**

7.1 **Cash Book Balances**

The Chief Executive went through his report and confirmed that the bank balances had now returned to normal levels as a result of all payments in respect of Wrangle Sea Banks project having been reimbursed.

7.2 **Payments Made**

The Chief Executive detailed the payments made inclusive of the EA Precept half year payment

7.3 **External/Internal Audit**

The Chief Executive reminded Board Members that following the last meeting in June, the AGAR had been signed and sent off and a copy of the Auditor's report was shown on the last page. The Chief Executive was happy with the report which was clean, but one matter had been highlighted and that was because there had not been a review of the Risk Management within the twelve-month period although the auditor acknowledged that the review had since taken place.

7.3 **Expenditure**

The Chief Executive confirmed that the figures were as were expected at this time of the year. The maintenance costs are at 36% (42% expected) and this was as a result of a staff member having been absent for 4 weeks and plant and fuel entries for August have not yet been entered. However, this will be rectified shortly.

7.4 **Income**

Rate arrears continue to decrease steadily and a further £42,000 has been collected from the date the report was prepared to the date of the meeting. We now had the benefit of a payment terminal on the reception desk and this had been a great asset in assisting ratepayers make payment.

7.5 **Flood Defence Grant in Aid Applications**

The Chief Executive confirmed that most of the larger projects had been completed and there were really only outstanding issues for culvert lining and catchment modelling and at present we were waiting to see what funds were available.

8. **ENGINEERING MANAGER'S REPORT NO. 3/19**

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

8.1 **Pumping Hours**

The Chief Engineer confirmed the pumping hours as at the end of July were 6206 with 3381 being recorded during the weather event in June.

With regard to mudding 6000m had been carried forward but this was over and above the 9000m already completed.

8.2 **Second-Hand Engine Offer**

The Chief Engineer confirmed that he had been in contact with The Internal Fire Museum of power regarding the sale of the second-hand engines. There had been no contact with Severn Trent Water about the availability of the engines. The Chief Engineer is awaiting contact details for Severn Trent Water so that he may approach them directly.

8.3 **Heating Boiler**

The Chief Engineer confirmed two quotes had been obtained. A third had been received in the total sum of £22,000 but this detailed far more work than the other two so, in this instance, it might be prudent not to accept the lowest quotation.

A. Saul - asked if the issues with the cooling system have now been sorted? The Chief Engineer confirmed it had as a large sock had been installed which directs the heat up towards the vents in the roof. More work was required though as bigger vents are needed.

8.4 **Lade Bank Pumping Station**

The Chief Engineer confirmed that maintenance and repairs are ongoing.

8.5 **Weather Event – June 2019**

The Chief Engineer confirmed that this had been an extremely busy period but first and foremost he wanted to highlight the first-class commitment from all the staff throughout the event. The Chief Engineer added that he felt that the Board would benefit from an expansion to the existing telemetry the Board already uses together with real time rainfall data which would enable the Engineer to monitor the amount and intensity of any substantial rainfall. Overall, the Chief Engineer was happy with how the Board had coped with the water in the recent event, which was a 1 in 200-year event in places.

The Chief Engineer confirmed that June's event had highlighted some weaknesses in the District – in particular the Old Leake area had suffered and it was time to review the position and see what improvements could be implemented. A survey is planned to start next Summer.

B. Bowles - suggested that landowners be canvassed to allow the IDB to go through the crop for no fee. The Chief Engineer confirmed that the Land Drainage Act did allow for this provided that notice was issued to the occupier stating that maintenance would be carried out and no compensation would be paid. However, whilst this was our right, the Chief Engineer did not believe this was reasonable notice, this issue would be discussed further at the November meeting.

The Chairman suggested, perhaps, 6 months' notice could be given this year increasing to 12 months next year.

B. Bowles - felt the notice was immaterial

R. Austin - added that the time valuing the damage was probably more than the loss.

A. Saul - asked what the cost of assisting with the River Steeping issue had cost? The Chief Engineer confirmed the final figure had been £16,000 and an

invoice had been submitted. This formed part of the Bellwin costs which had been submitted to East Lindsey District Council.

8.6 **Rainfall**

The Chief Engineer confirmed that June was the main month which had affected the rainfall totals. The average rainfall being 164mm and the worst place, Old Leake, was 193mm.

8.7 **Water Transfer Anton's Gowt Lock**

The Chief Engineer confirmed that abstraction can now only be carried out under Licence and our application for the licence has been completed and submitted.

8.8 **Soil Moisture Deficit**

The Chief Engineer confirmed that whilst in June the soil was completely saturated the levels were now average for the time of year.

9. **Channel Maintenance**

The Chief Engineer confirmed that this flail mowing was slightly behind and the actual mowing work was 10-14 days behind.

9.1 **Sewer Mudding Programme**

The Chief Engineer confirmed this work had been completed and notices had been sent out in respect of next year's work.

10. **Planning**

The Chief Engineer asked the Board if they were happy with the information shown on Planning in his report or would they prefer less information. The general consensus was to keep the information as it was.

11. **Triton Knoll**

The Chief Engineer confirmed that an update had already been provided by the Chief Executive.

12. **Viking Link**

The Chief Engineer confirmed National Grid required all consents to be received by January 2020 and there would be a discussion with the Contractors within the next 6 weeks.

M. Cooper - asked if we knew who the Contractors would be? The Chief Engineer confirmed that a decision would be made at the end of October.

13. **Bull Drove, Wrangle**

The Chief Engineer asked the Board to consider the situation with regard to the broadband cabinets constructed on the Board's land without byelaw consent. The Chief Engineer has asked for the cabinets to be relocated but Openreach and Lincolnshire County Council do not wish to do this and have advised that the costs of carrying this out would mean that the project was no longer viable and would be scrapped. This would have a detrimental effect on local residents and businesses. However, the Chief Engineer was concerned that if the cabinets were allowed to stay that a precedent could be set.

The Chairman suggested that perhaps the cabinets could be painted a different colour so that they were more visible when we were maintaining the bank.

B. Bowles - raised concern if they were hit.
P. Bedford - confirmed Black Sluice had recently had a similar situation where the cabinet had been damaged whilst maintenance works were carried out. The Chairman confirmed it would be very expensive if one were damaged.

J. Ward - added there had been an instance where a flail mower had picked up fibre optic cables that had just been laid in a dyke.

The Chief Engineer confirmed that the sub-contractors were unaware of IDBs and if the cabinets are being placed on the roadside, would have contacted highways and think that that is all that is needed.

- R. Austin* - suggested that bollards could be placed round the cabinet if it were left in place. The Chief Engineer agreed there were options for allowing them to remain, but you were then setting a precedent.
- M. Cooper* - felt it best if the cabinets were removed.
- J. Ward* - felt that local residents could not complain as the cabinets were not constructed on their land.

J. Grant proposed that the cabinets be moved.
This was seconded by M. Cooper
There was a show of hands and the decision was unanimous.

The Chairman added that in the event the cabinets really could not be moved that the tops of them could be painted a different colour.

- M. Cooper* - felt this should not be an option

The Chief Engineer confirmed that if we were so inclined, we could move them and recharge the cost however they were balanced on concrete blocks and what would happen if the cabinet slipped into the watercourse?

- J. Ward* - advised structural integrity had broken the byelaws.
- J. Woods* - confirmed the Board should not accept any liability for damage.

14 **Plant**

The Chief Engineer advised that the purchase of the 4x4 pick up had been delayed until March 2020 which will allow the vehicle being replaced to be utilised for a further 6 months.

The delivery of the Bailey Tipper Trailer has been delayed as a result of the company building the wrong trailer. The 4x4 SUV for the Chief Engineer has now been delivered and is in use.

15. **Health and Safety**

The Chief Engineer confirmed that the Health and Safety review due to be completed in June had been delayed and the Health and Safety committee were due to meet at the end of September 2019.

16. **Technical Matters**

16.1 **Survey Equipment**

The GPS equipment has been delivered and has been in use over the summer months. The Board employed a student to walk the watercourses to collect asset data.

17 **Other Engineering Matters**

The Chief Engineer confirmed that the maintenance work was all well underway but the repairs to the East Fen Catchwater Drain had been sub-contracted to a contractor as at present we are simply unable to deal with this work.

- J. Grant* - asked how the EA works were progressing? The Chief Engineer confirmed that there had been no dissolved oxygen in the water, so more work had been completed by boat.
- J. Grant* - asked if there was much silt in the EA watercourses? The Chief Engineer confirmed there was, and he was lobbying them for works which need to be completed and had told them that mudding works needed to be done.

J. Grant provided Board Members with an update regarding the Steeping Group which he had attended with Simon Fisher from the National Farmers Union. At present they were waiting for the S19 carried out by Norfolk County Council to be completed and then hopefully survey work would be carried out by the end of September. This survey would give an indication of silt levels on all culverts. He believed that the main problem was that the River Steeping had not been used as intended and too much reliance had been put upon the bypass channels. If the doors

at Wainfleet Clough had been in working order, this would make a huge difference. They could remove silt and use the bypass channels for what they were intended. Masses of work is required but things can be improved. He felt that we needed to build on what we are able to, without apportioning blame, but have a partnership working together and this is what the people of Wainfleet wanted to see – action!

18. **Vans**

The Chief Engineer referred the Board Members to the handout provided and gave a brief recap of the position for the new Board Members in that currently the Board pays a user allowance and mileage was reimbursed at 0.45 pence per mile. The idea was to stop this scheme and implement company vans. At the June meeting, the subject had been debated at length and it was agreed that the Chief Engineer should provide figures for a lesser number of smaller vans.

Accordingly, the Chief Engineer had reviewed the position and suggested that the total number of vans be reduced from 17 to 14, this is to allow for three staff members who are due to retire within the next 5 years. These three employees are based at the depot and are paid a casual user allowance for their vehicles. His suggestion was that when these 3 staff members retire their replacements will not be given a van or a casual user allowance but will be allowed to use the depot's 4x4 vehicles for daily work travel and to get home in emergency situations.

The Chief Engineer has compared vehicles (Peugeot Partner, Renault Kangoo, Citroen Berlingo, Ford Fiesta and Courier). With exception of the Ford, the rest are basically the same van. The Ford Courier offers the same carrying capacity but is a physically smaller van with a short wheelbase. The Chief Engineer believed that this van provides the right spec for the Board. The Chief Engineer referred Board Members to Appendix A which shows the price comparison and the Ford is not the cheapest, page 2 of his report showed the costs breakdown and the savings were shown at the foot of the report.

The Chief Engineer believed that the figures shown were sensible and a fair comparison. The vans would create some efficiencies and would be suitable vehicles for driving on farm tracks etc. The choice, if the Board decided to proceed, would be to purchase 4 vans over a three-year period or 6 vans over a two-year period. The employees were keen to get on with the implementation of the scheme.

The Chief Engineer confirmed this would not be classed as a benefit in kind as the staff were not travelling from home to a fixed place of work but various places in the district. The only time this would become an issue is if the van were to be used for private use.

- R. Austin* - asked if this would increase staff production? The Chief Engineer believed that it would as some staff members were not keen to take their vehicles down certain tracks or place certain tools in their own vehicles (strimmers/chainsaws) and they would be able to go straight to site rather than call at the depot first and then onto site. The Chairman asked if the bulkhead would improve safety and the Chief Engineer confirmed that it would as it would be sealed.
- P. Skinner* - asked if the tools would be left in the van overnight? The Chief Engineer confirmed they would but the vans were solid with no windows so tools would not be seen. The van and tools would be covered by our insurance, but the vans would also benefit from a lockable storage box.
- J. Grant* - asked if the livery would not advertise the fact that it was a works van? The Chairman said possibly the fact it was a work van might associate it with tools, but he felt the livery was vitally important. Farmers would be able to identify who was on their land and in recent events, like Steeping River, it was good PR for the Board if their vehicles were seen there. The Chief Engineer added that it was not unusual for IDBs to run these schemes. North Level IDB, Lindsey Marsh IDB and Welland & Deepings all run similar schemes.
- J. Grant* - asked how the other schemes work? The Chief Engineer confirmed that in Winter staff doubled up, but everybody needed a van during the Summer months.

- A. Saul - asked if there was a fuel tank at the Depot? The Chief Engineer confirmed there was. There were a number of options to consider regarding fuelling the vehicles whether to have an account at a garage, supply the staff with fuel cards or to use the fuel at the yard which would be monitored by key fob. Obviously, buying diesel in bulk was the cheaper option. The Chief Executive added that staff members could fuel the vehicle themselves and then claim back the mileage.
- J. Woods - asked how would we know private use would not be abused? The Chief Engineer said that it was trust in the staff members. The mileage would be monitored weekly on a mileage sheet. Trackers were available (although not included in the quotation) at £250-£300.
- J. Ward - asked if there was any difference in clearance height on the vans? The Chief Engineer confirmed that the Peugeot Grip had the biggest clearance because it was the largest van.
- M. Cooper - was concerned at the state of the van after 8 years. The Chief Engineer confirmed that not one vehicle does more than 6,000 miles per year.
- M. Cooper - agreed but said a works van had a tough life. The Council had refuse trucks which had an anticipated life span of 8 years but were clapped out after 6 years. The Chief Engineer said that most of the staff members would look after the vehicles although there was always one that would not.
- J. Grant - was concerned at the message purchasing all these new vans would send out to ratepayers. The Chairman said that if all 14 vans were in a row then perhaps that might be an issue but to see the Board's vans out working in the District would be a positive and especially so in emergency situations. The Chief Executive added that the vans would not be purchased until next April there would eventually be a 10% return on the Board's money but nothing showing in the bank. The Chief Engineer added that ratepayers do not see the mileage claims currently being paid.

The Chief Engineer confirmed that the vans would be white which would avoid any charge for metallic paint with the Board's logo on the side and chevrons on the back.

- R. Austin - wondered whether social media might create some negative comments and suggested that the Board anticipate this negativity before it became an issue.

The Chairman added that the vans would provide a saving to the Board and would be a major boost to Health & Safety of the drivers. The Vice-Chairman added that new vans sporting the Board's logo would look very professional out in the District.

- P. Skinner - asked if ply lining and rubber mats were included in the price? The Chief Engineer confirmed ply lining was and he would get the garage to include rubber mats for each vehicle.

P. Bedford proposed that 6 vans be purchased over 2 years.
This was seconded by M. Cooper
There was a show of hands and the decision was unanimous.

The Chairman added that perhaps trackers should be fitted in the vans in case of lone workers. The Chief Engineer confirmed this was not necessary as the workmen call in to check in on arrival and again at departure. The Chief Executive added we did not wish to appear like "Big Brother" but the Chairman said if the trackers were on the vans at the outset there could be no issue.

- A. Saul - added that the men spent most of the day away from the van, so the phone was the preferred option.
- M. Cooper - added the main concern was lone workers. The Chief Engineer confirmed that it was possible to have a live link on jobs that we could track by phone.

19. **ENVIRONMENT REPORT**

The Chief Engineer read through the Environment Report and confirmed that

19.1 **Eel Regulations**

There necessary refurbishment at the pumping stations is underway and this will allow the Board to comply with the Eel Regulations. The Silver Eel passage is a prototype.

20 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The Chief Executive confirmed the prospective dates for next year's meetings as follows: -

Wednesday, 15th January 2020 – Finance Committee Meeting

Wednesday, 5th February 2020 – Board Meeting

Wednesday, 10th June 2020 – Board Meeting

Wednesday, 16th September 2020 – Board Meeting

Wednesday, 18th November 2020 – Committee Meetings

Wednesday, 16th December 2019 – Board Meeting

The Chief Executive also raised Committee Membership. He asked Board Members to make him aware if they had any preference for certain committees. This would enable the Chief Executive to ensure there was a fair percentage of farmers and appointed members on each committee. There would also be an increase in numbers on the Governance & Risk Committee to 7.

<i>F. Pickett</i>	- asked to be added to the Plant & Pumping Committee
<i>C. Woodcock</i>	- asked to be added to the Governance & Risk Committee
<i>K. Smith</i>	- asked to be added to the Plant & Pumping Committee and Finance Committee
<i>P. Skinner</i>	- asked to be added to the Environment Committee and the Governance & Risk Committee

It was suggested that A. Hall should be added to the Works Committee.

There was no other business and the meeting concluded at 4.10pm.

Chairman

WITHAM FOURTH DISTRICT INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

BOARD MEMBERSHIP

COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS AS AT SEPTEMBER 2019

The Chairman and Vice-Chairman are members of all Committees:

Committee:	Governance & Risk	Works	Plant & Pumping	Environment	Finance & General Purposes
Members:	7	9	9	5	11
Chairman:	C Crunkhorn	P Richardson	C Crunkhorn	B Bowles	P Richardson
John Woods					
B Bowles					
C Crunkhorn					
K Smith					
C Hardy					
A Harrison					
R Hall-Jones					
A Saul					
J W Ward					
P Bedford					
A Spencer					
R F Leggott					
T Ashton					
N Jones					
R Austin					
P. Skinner					
J. Grant					
M. Cooper					
A. Hall					
F. Pickett					
C. Woodcock					
Vacancies	2	0	1	0	0

NB Future Committee Agenda's will include this Committee Membership list