

WITHAM FOURTH DISTRICT INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

MINUTES

of the proceedings of the **Works Committee** at a Meeting held at the Board's Offices, 47 Norfolk Street,
Boston on Wednesday **20 November 2019**

Present: P. Richardson (Chairman)

Messrs: P. Bedford A. Hall
C. Crunkhorn A. Harrison
(Vice-Chairman) R. Leggott
C. Hardy A. Saul

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for non-attendance were received from: -

Messrs: J.E. Grant
R. Hall-Jones
J. Woods
M. Cooper

2. **CHIEF ENGINEER'S ESTIMATES 2020/2021**

2.1 **Weed Control Estimates**

The Chief Engineer presented his estimates to the Committee: -

	Weed Control		
Item		2020/21	2019/20
1	Works Supervision (Sewer Spraying in previous estimates)	£37,084.70	£35,900.00
2	Roundup	£21,899.60	£21,200.00
3	Drain/Sewer Flailing	£249,986.00	£242,000.00
4	Drain/Sewer Cutting	£455,822.14	£417,000.00
5	Cotting	£0.00	£14,580.00
6	Hand Roding	£6,249.65	£6,050.00
7	Weed Boat Cutting	£28,407.50	£27,500.00
8	General	£1,074.32	£1,040.00
9	Transport Plant	£38,407.50	£27,500.00
	Total	£818,931.41	£792,770.00

The Chief Engineer confirmed the Channel Maintenance table detailed the current 2019/20 costs and the proposed costs for 2020/21. The increase allowed for the anticipated increase in the cost of living which, next year, looked likely to equate to a 3.7% increase in wages. So the estimate had also been increased by 3.7% which equated to £37,000.00. There were a few changes and funds have been redistributed to increase efficiency.

For example, cotting has always been carried out alongside spraying but since the chemical ban came into force the weed-baskets used for routine drain maintenance have been collecting the cott from the water. Accordingly, £15,000 has been removed from cotting and added to the Weedcutting budget. Likewise, within the cleansing budget, £15,000 has been transferred from Drain Access Works to Weedcutting.

2.2 **Cleansing/Mudding Estimates additional costs**

	Cleansing		
10	Works Supervision (General in previous estimates)	£55,058.90	£53,300.00
11	Sewer/Improvements	£99,168.00	£96,000.00
12	Drains	£52,063.20	£50,400.00
13	Revetment	£9,451.95	£9,150.00
14	Vermin Control	£1,033.00	£1,000.00
15	Cowbridge Lock	£4,142.33	£4,010.00
16	Slip Repairs	£45,555.30	£44,100.00
17	Surveys	£1,043.33	£1,010.00
18	Bushing (65% of cost)	£32,229.60	£31,200.00
19	Faggot Making (50% of cost)	£12,602.60	£12,200.00
20	Transport Plant	£7,954.10	£7,700.00
21	Drain Access Works	£15,902.48	£25,075.00
		£346,204.79	£335,145.00

3. **Asset Improvement Programme**

The following section details the estimate for asset improvements for 2020/21:

	Assets	2020/21	2019/20
1	Improvements - urban watercourses	£31,067.48	£30,075.00
2	Improvements - ordinary watercourses	£20,711.65	£20,050.00
3	Bridge Repairs – Grants Bridge	£15,000.00	£00.00
		£66,779.13	£50,125.00

4. **PROPOSED CHANGES TO OPERATIONAL PRACTICES**

4.1 **Critical Watercourse Maintenance**

The Chief Engineer confirmed that he had previously highlighted that the current list of Critical Watercourses maintained in the summer would require review.

Currently, 50,000 metres of watercourses are flail mown and weed cut to control summer vegetation growth which can restrict conveyance of water. The Chief Engineer has carried out a thorough review of these watercourses following the June event, and having discussed the issues with the Board's Foremen, has identified a further 53,000 metres of watercourses that would benefit from this early maintenance. Summer rains are more frequent, and this work would provide a better standard of protection.

This additional work will double the current workload between May and June and increase the cost from £50,000 to £100,000. The Chief Engineer has been looking at ways to do this without increasing the drainage rate. This is why additional funding has been moved into the weed-cutting budget.

4.2 **Summer Channel Maintenance**

The Chief Engineer advised more uniform channel maintenance was required. At present, the Board cuts in areas where it can gain easy access and if the area is near to cropped fields, work stops, and machinery is moved to another area to start work. We then return to the original area to complete the works as and when we can. This is time consuming. Moving forward, the Chief Engineer intends to serve all landowner/occupiers with a Statutory Notice confirming an intention to execute our powers under the Land Drainage Act and that the Board will be accessing the land and will be cutting the whole length of the land. The Chief Engineer intends to give landowner/occupiers 12 months' notice of this intention which will enable them to consider whether they intend to crop or not. This would also mean that the Board would not be liable for any compensation payments. The Chief Engineer asked the Committee if they agreed this was fair.

- C. Hardy - asked if every landowner would be given plenty of notice? The Chief Engineer confirmed it would before Xmas this year but then moving forwards the notice would be included when the drainage rates were sent out each year. This would also be detailed on the website
- R. Leggott - suggested that in the notice the Board details the exact works which will be undertaken. The Chief Engineer confirmed that it would only be in relation to flail mowing and Weedcutting as the mudding will be sent out separately in September.
- A. Harrison - added that notice would need to be served upon landowners both sides of the watercourses.
- B. Bowles - confirmed other Boards do this and after a couple of years everybody would be used to it. The Chief Engineer admitted that the Board was under pressure and that change was required. Other Boards do early control and summer control. Some Boards pay compensations, some don't but this was the most efficient way to maintain the watercourses.
- A. Harrison - voiced concern about weed being left on the batter of the bank. The Chief Engineer confirmed the workmen were encouraged to leave the muck by the tracks and certain sections required the muck to be carted away.
- A. Saul - confirmed this should be adopted. The committee unanimously agreed.
- T. Ashton - as an observer agreed

The Chairman confirmed that the Board has the power and this work simply has to be done. The Vice-Chairman added that the covering letter explaining the works would be very useful.

- R. Leggott - as an observer agreed that letters detailing the work needed to be sent to all parties. The Chief Engineer confirmed that letters would be sent to landowners/occupiers on both sides as the flail mowers may need to be used from either side. The early control would be carried out on the roadside where possible.

A. Saul recommended that the estimates be adopted. P. Bedford seconded the proposal and the show of hands was unanimous.

4.3 **Asset Improvement Programme**

The Chief Engineer confirmed that the estimate again included the cost of living pay award together with £15,000.00 in respect of the repair costs for work at Grants Bridge, which is owned by the Board. The bridge had been surveyed by Lincs County Council Highways and they estimated the repair costs at £15,000.

- A. Saul - asked if Lincs County Council would be doing the work? The Chief Engineer confirmed that they would be the Board's choice. The Chief Executive added that they had also done the work on the Lade Bank piers.

A. Saul recommended that the Asset Improvement Programme estimate be adopted. P. Bedford seconded the proposal and the show of hands was unanimous.

Following these discussions it was:

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND

That the 2020/21 Channel Maintenance Estimates for Weed Control, Cleansing Improvements and Asset Improvement Programme be approved by the Board.

4. **ENVIRONMENT AGENCY/ CO-OPERATION WORKS**

The Chief Engineer briefed the Committee on his report and confirmed that part of the recovery works detailed were in relation to the June event. There had also been some repair work on the East and West Catchwater drain as a result of damage caused by badgers. However, the Board had employed Contractors to do this work under the Board's supervision. The Board then added the uplift to the Contractors' costs.

- C. Crunkhorn* - asked if the work regarding the badger setts was still ongoing? The Chief Engineer confirmed the work was to repair the bank and also for the use of artificial setts. The Chief Engineer confirmed the badgers do use them.
- B. Bowles* - asked if the general public would be happy if they knew the sums of money being spent on this? The Chief Engineer confirmed that some would.
- T. Ashton* - added this had been done elsewhere but the badgers had ignored the setts and returned to the banks.

The Chief Engineer asked the Committee if they were happy to approve the additional works for next year. The Chief Executive added that this was all additional income for the Board. The £23,000 (8% supervision time) was in relation to the time spent by the Board's foremen and the £31,000 in respect of uplift is the office administration time.

A. Harrison recommended that the Officer's estimate be approved and the 2020/21 PSCA works programme for the EA be delivered. C. Hardy seconded the proposal and the show of hands was unanimous.

It was therefore:-

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND

That the Environment Agency Public Sector Co-operations works estimate be approved by the Board.

Item	Works description	Works total	Supervision @ 8%	Uplift @ 10%	Total	Cost to date
1	Flail mowing and weed control all of the COWS.	£12,350.00	£988.00	£1,333.80	£14,671.80	£5,108.53
2	2 Flail mowing cuts on the East Fen catchwater (Raised banks)	£4,613.00	£369.04	£498.20	£5,480.24	£9,043.15
3	2 Flail mowing cuts on the West Fen catchwater (Raised banks)					
4	Weed control and flail mowing (field sections) East Fen Catchwater	£25,412.00	£2,032.96	£2,744.50	£30,189.46	£9,948.64
5	Weed control and flail mowing (field sections) West Fen Catchwater					
7	Boat work 3 cuts on the Maud foster	£30,250.00	£2,420.00	£3,267.00	£35,937.00	£39,678.24
8	Boat work 3 cuts on the Stonebridge drain					
9	Boat work 2 cuts on the East Fen catchwater	£27,850.00	£2,228.00	£3,007.80	£33,085.80	£15,796.94
10	Boat work 2 cuts on the West Fen catchwater					
11	Flail mowing Maud Foster	£3,351.00	£268.08	£361.91	£3,980.99	£2,649.12
12	Spray Lilies	£4,150.00	£332.00	£448.20	£4,930.20	£3,278.56
13	Health and Safety cuts East & West Fen Catchwater Drains	£12,627.05	£1,010.16	£1,363.72	£15,000.94	£19,597.53

14	Badger Sett work and Bushing East Fen.	£82,443.75	£6,595.50	£8,244.38	£97,283.63	£74,193.80
15	Badger Sett work and Bushing West Fen	£83,433.00	£6,674.64	£8,343.30	£98,450.94	£0.00
16	Bank raising East Fen Catchwater Drain	£13,028.00	£1,042.24	£1,407.02	£15,477.26	£0.00
		£299,507.78	£23,960.62	£31,019.83	£354,488.25	£179,294.51

5. CAPITAL ASSET IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME

The Chief Engineer referred the Committee to the white folded page at the back of his report and confirmed that this set out details of where the bulk of the expenditure will be today and over the next 16 years. It was basically a snapshot of what things will cost and when. The costs for refurbishing the pumping stations, coastal and Lade Bank, will be in the region of £11.5m. £10m will be received from FDGiA at today's prices, which would mean an investment of £1.5m by the Board. This is essential work which needs to be carried out. The Chief Executive said that the figures at the end of the report show the bigger picture and confirmed that the Board had been very successful and had obtained 100% funding from FDGiA. DEFRA have recently carried out a report which identified 50's assets with insufficient value to replace. There was, however, a new system in place which should assist the Board. In June, the Board assisted the EA by taking water and only last week we again offered to take additional water which would be discharged through Hobhole Pumping Station. This will help the Board to attract funding as the Board have offered assistance to other Partners.

The Chairman added that he had been reading a report which his Father had been given in 1980 by B. Shearer (Chief Engineer at that time) advised that the pumps at Hobhole would need replacing as it was difficult to obtain spare parts. There is currently £600k in the reserve fund and it may well be that the pumping station will require significant investment before the proposed date of 2032. The Chairman's view was that the reserves need to be much higher. The Chief Executive said that the plan was not meant to frighten members but to make them aware of what we think that the Board will need. The EA are aware of the work required and the Board needs to work to meet the difference.

A. Saul - asked if the culvert works would be finished in 2020? The Chief Engineer confirmed the Board had had a good run but that we were struggling to find areas to support any case we could build.

The Chief Engineer added that with regard to the proposed refurbishment of Hobhole in 12-15 years' time, we still have to maintain it until then and need to consider how much money we want to invest in it in till then. The Chief Engineer did not believe that the current engines will last that long as they are encountering issues now. The Chairman added that we had already had 2 engines down. The Chief Engineer confirmed that although these issues were not major, a seal on one and a blanking plate on the other, the Board could not afford to defer things.

A. Harrison - asked how many diesel engines were running at Hobhole? The Chief Engineer confirmed that 3 were running all last weekend. The Chief Executive confirmed that in 2007 only 2 were running.

T. Ashton - asked if number 3 engine was running longer as it had only done 1/3 of the hours of the other 2. The Chief Engineer confirmed that 2 and 3 have been running. There was a gearbox issue on 1 which had been resolve and 3 had experienced a leaking crank seal.

K. Smith - added that with the recent extreme rainfall we could not afford to have 2 engines down.

6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed.

Chairman