

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, 5 February 2020**

Present: -

Messrs:

T. Ashton	N. Jones
R. Austin	R. Leggott
P. Bedford	F. Pickett
B. Bowles	P. Richardson (Chairman)
C. Crunkhorn	A. Saul
J. Grant	K. Smith
C. Hardy	P. Skinner
A. Harrison	C. Woodcock
R. Hall-Jones	J. Ward
	J. Woods

1 **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman extended congratulations to Paul Skinner who had been elected as Leader of Boston Borough Council. The Chairman wished him every success in his new role. P. Skinner thanked the Chairman and confirmed that it was business as usual at the Council and he hoped that everyone would pull together and work as a team to ensure that some really good projects for the town would come to fruition.

Members were invited to the Floodex 2020 event held at Peterborough showground on 26th and 27th February. HRH Duke of Gloucester would be attending along with many IDB suppliers.

2 **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for non-attendance were received from: -

Messrs: M. Cooper
A. Hall

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

Declared an interest in discussions about Triton Knoll/Viking Link – P. Richardson and J. Grant
Declared an interest in discussions about bridges – J. Grant

4 **MINUTES**

4.1 **Board Meeting – Thursday 12 December 2019**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Board held on 12 December 2019 were submitted and were agreed as accurate and signed by the Chairman.

J. Grant - asked if there was any update on the sea banks? The Chief Engineer confirmed that the Contractor was due to return in the Spring and reseed the grass. Hopefully, this would result in decent growth.

J. Grant - suggested that the Contractors carry out a salinity check before this was done. The Chief Engineer confirmed a salinity check had been carried out last year.

J. Grant - recommended another salinity test be carried out prior to commencing work. The Chief Engineer said he would mention this.

B. Bowles - confirmed some old grass was growing through.

A. Saul - suggested adding fertiliser on the sea bank

R. Hall-Jones - commented on the amount of money spent on badger setts. The Chief Engineer confirmed that some badger setts had required removing and netting and repair work had been completed by a Contractor. This was paid for by way of EA Recovery Funds and the Board were receiving a payment for supervision works.

A. Saul - asked if there had been any response from the Treasury regarding compensation for flood recovery costs? The Chief Executive confirmed that at the last RFCC meeting the scene had been set in relation to pumping hours and costs for the IDBs and some Lincoln Boards. ADA were targeting DEFRA for assistance for areas where Bellwin payments were not available. Progress was being made but there was no actual update as yet.

5. **MINUTES OF FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE – 15 January 2020**

5.1 **Matters arising:**

To approve the Adoption of Officer's Estimate

The Chief Executive read through his report and Memorandum and the Minutes which accurately reflected 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 current year deficit had arisen. The Chief Executive said members had seen the debate regarding the proposed rate increase of 3% which had been unanimously supported by the committee and asked if anybody had any questions. There were two factors that would improve the level of the General Reserve.

1. Pay the £50-60k payment due from Triton Knoll into the General Reserve.
2. Leave the £50k payment due to the Pumping Station Reserve in the General Reserve.

This would mean an increase of approximately £110k to the General Reserve which would bring the total back up to over £400k.

The Chairman added that page 6 of the Chief Executive's Memorandum showed an accurate budget and the amounts taken out of the General Reserve over the past 4 years.

T. Ashton - reiterated his comments made at the Finance Meeting in that when the previous Engineering Manager had retired, he had wished the Board "average weather". He felt that up till now we had been lucky with average weather but last year had shown the Board could not bank on this. He had previously advocated keeping the rate as low as possible but felt that a lesson had definitely been learned this year and as such, on behalf of East Lindsey District Council, he was happy to support the proposed 3% increase. The Chairman added that the proposed 3% rate increase took into account the impending 3.7% pay increase and 2% inflation. It also allowed for 0.3-0.4% to be returned to the General Reserve. This was quite an ask for the Chief Engineer as even with the 3% increase the budget was very tight.

T. Ashton - agreed and said that it was a credit to the Board to keep the rate to 3%.

J. Grant - said that if the Board looked back over the past 4 years, nobody could predict the impact not being able to use chemical weed control would have. There was a huge impact – including risk of machinery damage to the banks.

R. Leggott - felt a lot of costs relate back to what the retired Engineering Manager called "average". He believed that we were budgeting for average and we needed to consider whether it was a fixed average or a moving average. The Chief Engineer said that it was hard to estimate pumping hours because there were so many variables.

The Chief Executive referred Board Members to page 4b and graph which showed that the General Reserve had been quite constant.

R. Leggott - believed that the Board needed to budget more carefully to ensure the General Reserve line was kept steady.

- J. Grant* - added it had been very difficult but with hindsight the Board had never had 50% of the General Reserve wiped out in any one year. The Board had not experienced extremes of weather like this year and it had not been wise to adjust the rates previously. The Board was beholden to the ratepayers to judge matters sensibly and economically.
- R. Leggott* - added the rolling average should be considered on a 5-year basis not a 1-year basis.
- T. Ashton* - agreed he would be interested in the budget over a longer period of time than the current year.

The Chairman confirmed that the Board was looking at a 10-year budget and referred Board Members to the report which was in the form of a fold out plan. The Chief Executive confirmed that this was basically the Board's capital investment plan for the next 15 years, although none of the information contained therein had any bearing on the rate.

- N. Jones* - stated come 2035 no diesel or petrol vehicles will be available anyway but agreed that nobody knew what variables could affect the budget.

R. Hall-Jones proposed that the Chief Executive's estimates be accepted. This was seconded by T. Ashton. A vote was taken, and all were in favour with no objections.

5.2.1 To approve the proposed rate increase

A. Harrison proposed that the rate increase of 3% be accepted. This was seconded by T. Ashton. A vote was taken, and all were in favour with no objections.

- RESOLVED**
- i) The Chief Executive's Estimates for 2020/2021 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:

8.226 pence

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

16.452 pence

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

Boston Borough Council	£1,086,298.91
East Lindsey District Council	£ 381,520.07

The Rate was duly sealed at the meeting and would be published on the Board's website.

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.

6. MEETINGS WITH OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS

The Chief Engineer confirmed that there had only been a couple of meetings since the last report.

J. Grant updated the Board with regard to the Steeping Steering Group Meeting which had been held on 27th January 2020. The group had been awaiting the S19 report but unfortunately it had been received just before the meeting, so nobody had had the opportunity to review it. He went on to confirm that an improved maintenance programme was required. In a five feet depth of water it was necessary to consistently remove weed, de-silt, and then de-silt Thorpe Culvert and continue through to Salem Bridge. The berm at Thorpe Culvert bypass also needed attention to make sure that the River Steeping kept moving.

The Chief Executive confirmed that the S19 was not in the public domain until 14th February but would be released at the end of February.

R. Leggott - added there were silt deposits further out.

J. Grant believed it likely that the out-marsh reclamation had altered the path of the river.

T. Ashton - asked if there were any plans to do anything downstream nearer to the sluice?

J. Grant confirmed there were no plans at present. The Chief Executive added that the person doing the modelling was in fact an IDB Engineer. Councillor Skinner is due to have a meeting with him and J. Grant would be happy to meet with him prior to that, to offer advice.

7. **STRATEGIC PLAN**

The Chief Executive took Board Members through the documents and explained that the plan provided details of new things which he would like the Board to achieve over the next 12-24 months. Progress had been made within existing objectives and new objectives had been set. Operational objectives have moved forward significantly.

J. Grant - asked what the costs would be for the environmental consultant? The Chief Engineer confirmed that it would be no different to when the previous environment officer had been employed.

J. Grant - asked how GIS Collector was being used? The Chief Engineer confirmed the foremen were using it to record slips on their mobile phones.

The Chief Executive confirmed that the Board were raising their profile by using social media (Twitter) and also by way of the annual newsletter. There were no questions from the Board regarding the details set out in the Strategic Plan and the document was approved.

J. Grant - asked if a graduate was needed again in 2020? The Chief Engineer confirmed that he was returning at Easter and then again in the Summer.

8 **CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND FINANCE MANAGERS REPORT**

8.1 **Bank Balance**

The Chief Executive went through his report and stated that this had really been covered earlier in the review of the year so far. However, there was an opportunity to place a total of £1 million in a fixed term deposit account by way of two £500k deposits at three monthly intervals which would attract an interest rate of 1.05%. This money was not required for cashflow and this investment would earn the Board £1,500. This was not a massive return but would help.

R. Leggott proposed that the money be transferred to the fixed term deposit account as outlined by the Chief Executive. This was seconded by J. Grant. A vote was taken, and all were in favour with no objections.

8.2 **Payments Made**

The Chief Executive confirmed the large payment in respect of the electricity bill and that another £50k had been paid at the end of January 2020.

8.3 **Rating Income**

The Chief Executive confirmed that collections continued to be successful and in mid-January £52,995.24 had been agreed to be paid by instalments. There were still two accounts outstanding which were with the Bailiff for collection. A Court hearing date had been set for 2nd March and final reminders were in the process of being sent out.

8.4 **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 was slightly lower than expected. Notwithstanding this, the panels were in line to pay for themselves by year 8 of a 20-year plan.

R. Leggott - stated that the attachment was of very poor quality.
The Chief Executive confirmed it was taken from a scanned copy.

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 the Board had already discussed the weather events this year and at the end of December 2019, over 21k pump hours had been completed. In January, a further 2,875 hours had been completed on all sites.

9.2 **Catchment Pump Hours**

The Chief Engineer confirmed that the graph on page 3 showed the total Catchment Pump hours over a 17-year period. This showed an average of 12,000 hours over the last 9 years.

9.3 **Hobhole Pumping Station**

The Chief Engineer confirmed that there had been no progress with regard to the second-hand engines and he had not been able to speak to anyone about them. The past 4 months have thrown up a number of issues as a result of general wear and tear. The Chief Engineer believes that the Board now seriously needs to consider how durable the engines are. As a result, he would like the Board's approval to look into the cost of replacing the engines with electric motors or new diesel engines.

T. Ashton -confirmed he was happy for the Chief Engineer to look into the cost of replacement engines but would like him to continue to pursue the second-hand engines as well.

J. Grant - asked if the Chief Engineer would consider Cummins/Perkins engine? The Chief Engineer confirmed he would and confirmed that the current engines were very labour intensive especially when the station was running 24hrs.

C. Hardy - agreed it was a good idea.

The Chief Engineer confirmed he would look into it and would report back to the Board at the next meeting.

9.3.2 **Engine No 2 Exhaust Silencer**

The Chief Engineer confirmed that this had now been manufactured and was awaiting installation in the Spring.

9.3.3 **Heating Boiler**

The Chief Engineer confirmed that this had now been installed at Hobhole Pumping Station. This will be more cost efficient and will provide protection against frost.

9.3.4 **Pump No.1 Gear Box/Engine**

The Chief Engineer confirmed there had been various issues and Pump No 1 had been stood down as it was believed there could be a problem with the impeller. David Brown has confirmed that the gearbox is fine, and Sulzer were looking at the impeller. North Lincs Engineering confirmed there is some damage to the piston liner and there is a meeting due to take place on 11th February 2020 to discuss in further detail. The Chief Engineer will report back to the Board at the June meeting.

9.3.5 **Pump No3 Engine Over Heating**

Work has been completed and issue resolved.

9.3.6 **Pump No.3 Engine Crankshaft Seal**

No damage caused as a result of the damaged seal, but this will require repair at some future time.

9.3.7 **Electric Pump Discharge Pipes**

These repairs will be completed in Spring.

9.3.8 **Electric Pumping Station Weedscreen Cleaner**

These repairs are continuing.

9.3.9 **Staff Illness Issues**

The Chief Engineer confirmed that Simon had now returned to work on light duties and David would be returning on 17th February, subject to his GP signing him off sickness leave.

9.4 **Rainfall**

The Chief Engineer confirmed that Page 6 of his report showed the rainfall totals for 2019. The total was 840mm (or 332"). The 100-year average for Lade Bank Pumping Station is 22.7" so 2019 was an exceptionally wet year.

9.4.2 **Volume Pumped**

The pie chart on page 7 shows the actual volume of water pumped. The Chief Engineer confirmed that Hobhole Pumping Station had done the bulk of the work and had been exceptionally busy. It had been a very busy year and the Chief Engineer said it was a testament to the pumping station staff how well we had fared.

10. **Water Transfer**

There had been no water transfer. The Chief Engineer confirmed that a licence was required to transfer water at Anton's Gowt, and this was now in place.

J. Grant - confirmed water transfer was good for salinity.

11. **Soil Moisture Deficit**

The Chief Engineer referred Board Members to the information shown on page 10 of his report which basically confirmed 2018 had been a dry year whereas 2019 had been a very wet year.

12. **Channel Maintenance**

The Chief Engineer confirmed that a summary of the metres completed was again included in the comparison table in his report. The Weedcutting was behind schedule but he was happy with the drain cutting. The Chief Engineer confirmed that bushing work was due to commence at Houghbridge and Hobhole.

R. Hall-Jones - asked if any bushing work was due to take place at Lade Bank? The Chief Engineer confirmed that it was not.

T. Ashton - confirmed he was very "pro-tree" provided they had been planted in the right place!

R. Hall-Jones - agreed 9m from the bank.

J. Grant - added he hoped the situation at Hobhole would not create liability issues for the Board. The Chief Engineer confirmed there were many miles of watercourse where we could not gain access because trees and bushes had self-set. An ecologist checks the site before work commences. The Chairman asked the Board if they were happy with the removal of trees and all agreed they were.

13. **Slips**

The Chief Engineer confirmed that £131k had been spent on slips. £60k had been incurred since the end of October. The Chief Engineer confirmed he was pursuing LCC for a contribution towards the costs.

A. Saul - asked what was happening with Benington Bridge (The Gride). The Chief Engineer confirmed that LCC Highways have acknowledged that the work needs to be done and once the bushing work has been completed the work will commence.

R. Leggott - referred to the pictures of the Fodderdyke slip and asked if this was the only solution contemplated and how long would the structure do the job? The Chief Engineer confirmed 50 years. Other options had been considered stone Larssen soldier piles, but the timber piles cost £190 and we have the necessary equipment to install them. Sheet piles are used for smaller slips.

J. Grant - added that along the Fodderdyke Drain there were areas of fine silt which cannot support it. Single track roads were the answer.

14. **Sewer Mudding Programme**

The Chief Engineer confirmed he was keen to press on with this work and that not much had been completed.

15. **Planning**

The Chief Engineer confirmed the Board had been consulted on 303 planning applications in 2019. These involved a considerable amount of work and the staff member dealing with them, was new to the role and had done well.

16. **Consenting and Enforcement**

The Chief Engineer confirmed that in view of the number of consents that the Board was dealing with, and the work involved dealing with each consent, he has increased the charge from £50 to £100. The Chief Engineer was also looking at changing the charging matrix for surface water contributions. The Board agreed that developers should be charged and supported the Chief Engineer's move to make the charges.

17. **Plant and Equipment**

The Chief Engineer was pleased to confirm that the new 4x4 vehicle had been ordered and would be delivered in March. The Board are currently awaiting tenders for the CLAAS Tractor and Loader and the JCB excavator.

Six Peugeot Partner vans have been ordered and will be delivered in March.

A. Harrison - asked if the new vans would be sign written from the start as the white van the Board had out in the District recently had caused some suspicion.

18. **Health and Safety**

The Chief Engineer confirmed that there had been one incident to report where the Spearhead SPV had slipped towards the watercourse as a result of a culvert having given way. Nobody was hurt and the machine was recovered safely.

19. **Technical Matters**

The Chief Engineer confirmed Huw Sharman was continuing with the asset management.

19.2 The Chief Engineer confirmed that Grant in Aid had been applied for and the Lade Bank Eel Pass was due to be installed at any time now. The Brick Lane culvert lining work totalling £45k was with the EA for review. With regard to Catchment Modelling phase 2, this had been referred to the EA for early drawdown. We are awaiting drawdown of £50k in respect of Wrangle Pumping Station Refurbishment feasibility study.

A. Harrison - asked about the fencing at New Bolingbroke?
The Chief Engineer confirmed he had been out to inspect the same.

20. **Staff Matters**

The Chief Engineer confirmed that 2 of the Board's most experienced excavator drivers had decided to retire early. The Board was currently in the process of recruiting replacements for them. In addition, David Somerfield was due to retire on 8th May this year.

J. Grant - asked if the Board were satisfied with our Health & Safety procedures for our foreign employees? The Chief Engineer confirmed that Krzysztof and Atis had been with the Board for over 3 years and no issues had been encountered.

A. Harrison - asked if there were any plans to return to New York to continue the work started? The Chief Executive confirmed that work would recommence in the new financial year.

21. **ENVIRONMENT REPORT**

The Chief Engineer confirmed that there was not much to update since the last report prepared in November/December. The only real update is that the eel pass should be installed at the end of February. The Technical Engineer was assisting with meeting the 19/20 BAP Objectives – in relation to the 3 owl boxes which have been erected, bat roosting boxes and the grass snake habitat at the top end of the Medlam Drain.

22. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There was no other business and the meeting concluded at 4.15pm

Chairman