

# 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, 16<sup>th</sup> September 2020**

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Present: - P. Richardson (Chairman)

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

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

#### 1.2 **Apologies**

Apologies for non-attendance were received from: -

Messrs: J. Ward  
R. Leggott

No apologies had been received from A. Spencer, M Cooper, and A. Hall. The Chairman confirmed that R. Leggott had unfortunately been in hospital yesterday but was pleased to confirm he was home now and sent the Board's best wishes for his recovery.

#### 1.3 **Covid 19**

The Chairman confirmed that a second wave of the virus was highly likely, but the Board was well prepared. The Chairman confirmed the Chief Executive and Chief Engineer had done a very good job looking after the men and their health and safety during the pandemic.

#### 1.4 **Roger Hooton**

Roger Hooton turned 65 years old on Friday, 11<sup>th</sup> September and has worked for the Board for 49 years. The Chairman passed on the Board's congratulations.

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

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

### 3 **MINUTES**

#### 3.1 **Board Meeting – Wednesday, 10<sup>th</sup> June 2020**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Board held on 10 June 2020 were submitted and signed by the Chairman.

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

*J. Grant* - asked if this would be a good time for him to update the Board on the Steeping Steering Group? The Chairman confirmed he could proceed.

*J. Grant* - confirmed the group was meeting twice weekly for a short meeting and there was still fair participation. The work to flume the silt will be starting in October. There will be "open" days for the public but within the current Covid restrictions. They are awaiting funding in respect of the bank raising/filling which is a 2021 project. The Chairman confirmed £40m EA funds were available for improvement works but this would not cover these recovery works.

The Chief Executive updated the Board regarding the solar panels as per the schedule sent with his report. The schedule showed a 2-line graph with estimated -v- actual production and the actual figures were higher. The payback period ends in year 7, which is this year, so moving forward there will be an increase in income.

*J. Grant* -asked if we were happy with the maintenance carried out by the new company? The Chief Executive confirmed we were.

*J. Grant* -asked if they were 50kw? The Chief Executive confirmed they were.

*J. Grant* - asked what the total was for the year? The Chief Executive confirmed he would let him have a table showing the details.

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## **MINUTES**

4.1

### **Plant & Pumping Committee Meeting – Wednesday, 8th July 2020**

The Minutes of the Plant & Pumping Committee Meeting held on 8th July 2020 were submitted and signed by the Committee Chairman.

The Committee Chairman ran through each page and asked members for comments. The Chief Engineer expressed his thanks to the Board for dealing with the issues in such a timely manner which had enabled the orders to be placed for delivery in November at the special prices offered.

The Chairman added that paragraph 4.1 stated that “*The Chief Engineer confirmed that the Board’s policy was to replace old for new.*” The Chairman wanted to say that this was the **preference** of the Board and not the Board’s policy.

The Chief Engineer confirmed that the Board were not really in a position to purchase the Massey Ferguson tractor at this time, as this was dependent upon the outcome of the new refuelling trial. However, if as a result of the trial, the Unimog was disposed of then a new tractor would be required. The Chief Engineer said that he would be better placed to advise the Board at the December Board Meeting if the new tractor was required. The Chief Executive suggested that the decision to approve the purchase should be made now but to remain flexible. The Committee Chairman agreed and suggested delegated powers to the Chairman and The Vice-Chairman should be agreed. The Chief Engineer confirmed that if there was any change to this, then an e-mail would be sent to all Board Members advising of the same.

It was therefore:

#### **RESOLVED**

That the Board agree the Estimates recommended by the Plant & Pumping Committee to purchase

- (i) Massey Ferguson Tractor at an estimated cost of £91,000.00 plus VAT with delegated powers to the Chairman and Vice-Chairman.
- (ii) Flail Mower estimated at £80,000 plus VAT
- (iii)** Three new weed baskets estimated at £18,000 plus VAT

*B. Bowles* -asked if the new weed baskets were smaller than those currently used? The Chief Engineer confirmed that the weed basket which would be used on the CAT was slightly smaller as it allowed better access in smaller watercourses. One weed basket was the same size and one was slightly larger.

*J. Grant* -asked when the new Spearheads would be delivered? The Chief Engineer confirmed they were being built in November.

*J. Grant* -asked if the Chief Engineer was happy with everything offered? The Chief Engineer confirmed he was. He had to consider whether he required a service plan or whether we would service the machine ourselves but the warranties etc were all good.

The Chairman asked if the Chief Engineer had obtained any quotations for service contracts and the Chief Engineer confirmed he had not but would consider this at a later date.

## 5. **MEETINGS WITH OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS**

- 5.1 The Chief Executive confirmed there had been very few meetings because of the Covid situation. There is a meeting scheduled with Norman Robinson of the Environment Agency on Friday, 18<sup>th</sup> September where he would be discussing the £40 million funding for this area, of which £4 million will be assigned to Steeping.

ADA held their first virtual meeting in July and had been very quiet since. The new byelaws had stalled and there was no update on Technical and Environment.

*B. Bowles* -advised the Wrangle banks had not yet been re-seeded and asked if there Was any action planned? The Chief Engineer confirmed that the Contractor was due this month to carry out patch work, seeding and fencing works.

*B. Bowles* -confirmed there were other issues. The Chief Engineer confirmed that the Contractors would walk through and carry out snags. The Chief Executive confirmed that funds had been held back to pay for this snagging so the farmers would not be expected to contribute.

*J. Grant* -added that re-seeding needed to be carried out as soon as possible and Should not be left till October. The Chief Engineer confirmed that local Contractors had been employed and he was confident they would do the job well.

*B. Bowles* -advised some of the banks had been lightly grazed which had not caused much harm.

*J. Grant* -asked about using clay? The Chief Engineer confirmed that it was expensive to cart to site.

*A. Saul* -confirmed that the soak dyke grass had not established very well. The Chief Engineer confirmed this had been his concern.

## 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 were looking healthy.

### 7.2 **Payments Made**

The Chief Executive detailed the payments made inclusive of the EA Precept half year payment which had remained at the same level for the past 10 years and he hoped this would continue.

### 7.3 **External/Internal Audit**

The Chief Executive confirmed that as a result of the Covid situation the Auditor has been given an extra 2 months in which to submit their report. A copy of their report would hopefully be available at the December Board meeting.

### 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 43% (42% expected).

### 7.4 **Income**

Rate arrears continue to decrease steadily and the balance now outstanding is £129,000 making a recovery total of 90% which was very good given we were still in September.

### 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. In February, the Board discussed the 15-year capital expenditure programme required for our assets. This includes all works required for our drains and pumping stations over the next 15 years. In all, there were 11 projects including de-silting works, culvert lining and refurbishment of all pumping stations. These 11 projects have all been placed into the 6-year programme starting next April. The EA have accepted them all and they will now be referred to RFCC for approval in October. The Chief Executive is hoping that within the next 6 years we will be delivering 9 projects totalling £4m worth of investment from Grant in Aid funds with minimal contribution from the Board. This will depend in

part upon the results of the Catchment modelling report which is due within the next 30 days. This would mean that within 6 years our systems and assets will be in the best condition they can be, and it was a really good achievement that these projects had been included in this programme for this next 6 years when the EA has £5.2 billion to spend across the country.

- J. Grant* -asked what the projects were? The Chief Engineer confirmed they were the refurbishment of Wrangle, Benington and Leverton Pumping Stations, Cowbridge Sluice refurbishment, main drain dredging programme, Lade Bank Pumping Station refurbishment and the Hobhole Pumping Station refurbishment.
- J. Grant* -asked what was meant by main drain? The Chief Engineer confirmed it meant everything - all 147km.
- J. Grant* -added this would take up approximately 50% of the Grant in Aid monies. The Chief Executive confirmed that £2.7m would be used.

The Chief Executive confirmed that there were still some projects outstanding under the old 6 year plan and these were the ones listed in his report. These included the eel pass at Lade Bank Pumping Station, Culvert lining work and the catchment modelling phase 2 works. Wrangle Pumping Station feasibility study has been completed and paid for and this has confirmed that the asset is at the end of its useful life.

- J. Grant* -questioned the comment that Wrangle Pumping Station was at the end of its useful life and did this mean that it would require refurbishment and new pumps etc? The Chief Engineer confirmed that the report had been based upon the electrical, mechanical, and structural elements and an assessment had been made as to what life was left in the asset so that a formed decision could be made. The electric control panel had approximately 10 years life left in it. All 3 coastal pumping stations were undergoing assessment so that a decision could be made. In the event that all 3 stations require major expenditure, a decision may be made whether to refurbish all 3 pumping stations or replace them with one new central pumping station and widen the catchment out to the A52. This would be a big project, but one that requires consideration. Hopefully, the other assessments will be completed by end of December.

The Chairman added that with all costings moving forwards the Board will be adding in the cost of a Project Manager, which will allow the Chief Engineer to get on with the Board's work uninterrupted. With regard to one pumping station in place of three, this could be beneficial because at present in the event of a major incident the Board are short of labour because the pumpmen have to work 24 hours.

As a point of reference, the Covid 19 situation has cost the Board £75,000. This is an approximate figure due to having to stand men down, changes to working procedures etc. The Chief Executive confirmed that it had not actually impacted the Board, but it was the cost of maintenance which would have been carried out, but the Chief Engineer will report later that it has not adversely affected the Board's operations.

## 8. **Complaint**

The Chairman confirmed that there has been a complaint made against the Board. The Chairman has met with the complainant and has assessed the information and has agreed that the Board is not at fault. As a result, the complaint is being passed to the Ombudsman, but he reiterated that the Board was not at fault.

## 9. **ENGINEERING MANAGER'S REPORT NO. 2/20**

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

### 9.1 **Pumping Hours**

The Chief Engineer confirmed the pumping hours as at the end of August were 101 and that the most had been made of the opportunity to sluice.

## 9.2 **Second-Hand Engine Offer**

The Chief Engineer confirmed that the pumpmen had spent 5 days at Peckforton stripping down the engine and had managed to get many parts which could be used as spares. The Engine block had not been bought back because of the size of it. It would not have been safe to try and transport it to the depot. The Chief Engineer referred Board Members to the list of parts obtained and confirmed that these had all now been treated and made good for storage. The parts would now be stored in a container until such time as finances allow, when a permanent structure can be built. The engines had all been well run in although one had been classed as a spare with only 800 hours recorded.

*J. Grant -asked if the Chief Engineer was happy with all the parts obtained and should we have perhaps taken more? The Chief Engineer said that the men had worked 12 hours a day and had taken as much as we could.*

*J. Grant -asked if the container was insulated? The Chief Engineer confirmed that it was not but that all the parts had been well greased before being put into store.*

*J. Grant -recommended CJ Supplies did a range of insulated containers. The Chief Engineer confirmed the idea was to put down a concrete base with a prefab building on top.*

*B. Bowles -agreed with J. Grant's comments regarding storage.*

*T. Ashton -expressed his thanks to the Chief Engineer and his team for salvaging these parts and bringing this to a happy conclusion.*

The Chairman agreed but advised that any repairs using these parts were merely a stopgap before the machines were replaced.

*J. Grant -suggested it may be nice to put some pictures of the engines at Peckforton in the Pumping Station. The Chief Engineer confirmed that he would distribute pictures to the Board Members.*

## 9.3 **Pump No 3 Crankshaft Seal**

The Chief Engineer confirmed that no further action will be taken with regard to this seal and it does not pose any threat. At present, it has been decided to leave it but continue to monitor the situation. This item will no longer appear on the Board report.

## 9.4 **Access Road**

The Chief Engineer confirmed that whilst this had been considered previously, he believed that the Board should consider constructing gates and fencing at the end of the road, with access to Board personnel and residents only. The Chief Engineer had been concerned recently when travellers had been in the local area looking for somewhere to park up and asked the Board for their thoughts.

*R. Hall-Jones -said he would not hesitate to erect gates and fencing.*

*B. Bowles -agreed but said that the danger was if this were carried out it could concentrate people into a smaller area – such as sea banks.*

*J. Grant -suggested a compromise. If the gates and fence were nearer to the pumping station people would still be able to walk to the sea banks. Perhaps a tarmac parking area could be supplied.*

*P. Bedford -was concerned that Anne in Jolly Sailor is 80 and the effect that it may have on her.*

*C. Crunkhorn -suggested a kissing gate.*

The Chief Engineer agreed and suggested perhaps a key fob entry system, which could be provided to the residents. An override switch could be an option and the code could be changed periodically.

*P. Skinner -advised there were a number of cottages and perhaps 6 cars (12 maximum) on the other side. There is a lot of anti-social behaviour up there and there is an existing right of way on access to the marsh. RSPB Frampton had been taken to Court over a similar matter.*

*T. Ashton -supported the gate option but agreed that we needed to check the position regarding the right of way. This was especially important if pumping operations were being affected.*

*J. Woods -added that the road was primarily there for the use of the Board. If the road were to be gated off then it was essential that we used the right gate. The Board also had a duty of care to the residents there and he believed this*

would help.

*J. Grant -suggested that from a different angle perhaps just the pumping station could be fenced and gated off?*

The Chairman confirmed that at this stage, he was not looking for the Board's approval and suggested that the Chief Engineer could collate some ideas on the various options and costs and then present them to the Board. The Chief Engineer confirmed he would do this and present his findings at the December Board meeting.

#### 9.5 **Rainfall**

The Chief Engineer confirmed that an average of 95.7mm was recorded for the catchment during August.

#### 9.6 **Algae Issue**

The Chief Engineer confirmed that there had been an issue with blue-green algae in the Hobhole Drain as a result of the prolonged dry spell which had affected the dissolved oxygen levels in the drain. This unfortunately resulted in some fish kills. This had been assisted by opening up the Dogdyke sluice and freshening up the water. Signs had been erected warning of the blue-green algae. There had also been an issue with children jumping off Nunn's Bridge into the Hobhole drain but there was not much that the Board could do about this issue.

*J. Grant -asked if there was a rubber ring at that site? The Chief Engineer confirmed there was not.*

*J. Grant -asked if the Board was liable? The Chief Engineer said that Highways were Responsible as the bridge was their structure.*

*P. Skinner -advised that these were displaced children that were not allowed to jump off Sluice bridge.*

*A. Harrison -added fish had been lost in the Castledyke drain which had gone very cloudy and had a foul smell. There was a concern it was sewage related. The Chief Engineer confirmed that it was not sewage but agreed it was a similar smell. When there had been a long spell of high temperature, over 30 degrees, the silt heats up and then you get silt plumage. Usually the fish manage to escape from it and once the temperature returns to normal levels it clears.*

#### 9.7 **Slip Repairs**

The Chief Engineer confirmed that the Operations Manager was busy checking slips and calculating the costs of repair. The repair costs for the damage caused last winter was £250k and will be worked into 3-year programme. £55k has already been committed to slip repairs.

*J. Grant -asked what was included in the £250k figure and whether the Council could contribute? The Chief Engineer confirmed that the £250k was in respect of the repair costs at this moment in time. The slips are mainly inland and are therefore the Board's responsibility.*

*J. Grant -asked how old the slips were? The Chief Engineer confirmed that they were from June 2019 onwards.*

#### 9.8 **Brick Lane Wrangle Culvert Lining**

The Chief Engineer confirmed that the Chief Executive had referred to this earlier. The work is due to start on 19<sup>th</sup> October and has been funded by Grant in Aid.

#### 9.9. **Planning**

The Chief Engineer confirmed that the Toot Lane Development is progressing. It has been a very busy time with lots of consenting works and discussions with Developers about fees. In relation to Alcorn Green, bit more challenging but has come to an agreement with the Housing Association regarding access for the Board's assets.

The Chief Engineer confirmed that the Board was starting to see larger developments coming in around Boston area. The developers are all being made aware of the fees involved for discharging water etc.

*J. Grant -asked if the Chief Engineer told them about pipes and chambers? The Chief Engineer confirmed he had a design standard and he would tell them the size of pipe and where chambers were needed. Anything over 15m length – Board*

has to adopt maintenance and the developers have to pay a contribution towards that maintenance.

*J. Grant* -is this on top of attenuation? The Chief Engineer confirmed that there was a committed maintenance fee and surface water development contribution fee for any discharge.

**9.10. Viking Link**

The Chief Engineer confirmed that this project was now well under-way and he had dealt with the first 30 consents which would result in approximately £13k income to the Board.

**9.11 Enforcement**

The Chief Engineer confirmed that item number 4 was now 14 days past the deadline for action given. The Board will now clear the waste and invoice the occupant.

**9.12 Catchment Survey**

The Chief Engineer advised that we had started level surveying and have prioritised the ones where he met with A. Saul and R. Bowser. Unfortunately, the student that had been completing this work on our behalf in the Summer has now returned to university, so this work has now stopped.

**9.13 Environment Agency Works**

The Chief Engineer confirmed that we were working on main river maintenance and as the Chief Executive had mentioned earlier there was £40m available locally. We are also working with them on recovery and bushing works on the East and West Fen Catchwater.

*R. Hall-Jones* -advised that the weeds had grown right over in the East Fen Catchwater. The Chief Engineer confirmed that the machines were working on weed-cutting and it will all be covered less the 10% margin that has to be left. The Chief Engineer added that pressure was being placed on them for some money towards dredging on the Catchwater system.

The Chief Engineer confirmed we were up to approximately £350k in respect of bushing work for the Environment Agency Public Sector works.

*J. Grant* -asked if the weed cutting was being done by machine or boat? The Chief Engineer confirmed that the Maud Foster, Stonebridge and 25% of the Catchwater was being done by boat and the remainder was all hydraulic.

**9.14 Staff Matters**

The Chief Engineer confirmed that a mid-year meeting was held on 13<sup>th</sup> July in two sittings, to comply with current Covid restrictions. Obviously, because of Covid-19 meetings cannot be carried out as usual but the Chief Engineer has been recording podcasts for awareness training which was well received. The Chairman added that he had listened to the Chief Engineer's podcast in relation to Badger licences which he thought was excellent. The Chairman asked the Chief Engineer to share the podcast with Board Members.

*J. Grant* -asked in relation to Covid and the winter approaching was there any thought on having a hand-held thermometer to monitor temperatures at the depot? The Chief Engineer confirmed that 1 or 2 staff members have already had flu-like systems but they are isolated to their machines at this time of year and must not congregate in the depot. Once the Chief Engineer is contacted, he goes through the NHS checklist and online assessment and if there is a possibility of them having COVID they will be sent for a test. Working towards winter months, gearing up outdoor operations if doing slip repairs will be working in small bubbles.

*J. Grant* -said it was a concern because he believes it will have a second surge

*P. Skinner* -asked if the podcasts were recorded as part of the training records? The Chief Engineer confirmed that he was recording them and sending them out to all employees who then have them logged on their phones and the Chief Engineer will keep a manual record in the office.

*P. Skinner* -confirmed that the Covid levels are rising in Lincolnshire in line with the national rate.

10. **ENVIRONMENT REPORT**

The Chief Engineer read through the Environment Report and confirmed that the Badger licences were now in place. The Technical Engineer was in the process of making sure they were recorded on all employees' phones together with the Wildlife Trust app.

The Chief Engineer confirmed that an infra-red camera had been purchased to record the eel pass at Hobhole Pumping Station. The eel migration period has now started and, if the eel pass is working, we should be able to see the eels passing through. The eel pass is only one of two in the country so it should be interesting to see what is recorded.

11. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

*B. Bowles* -was concerned that there seemed to be an increase in wild swimming and camping and asked what responsibility did the Board have? The Chief Engineer confirmed that it all depends on the policies we have in place. We do have policies regarding fishing and boating but anybody on the Board's land without permission is trespassing. The Chairman added that we can only carry out best practice – and it is not practical to fence off all our waterways and banks.

*N. Jones* -advised that Shelley Grant of Gibbs Bridge had died. The Chairman passed on the condolences of the Board.

The Chairman confirmed that looking forward to Christmas it was felt that the Christmas meal should be cancelled in December and depending on the Covid situation a barbecue should be held next June. The Chairman asked that this be passed onto the staff.

There was no other business and the meeting concluded at 3.48pm.

**Chairman**