

WITHAM FOURTH DISTRICT INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

MINUTES

of the proceedings of the **Board** at a Meeting held by Zoom on **Wednesday, 3 February 2021**

Present: -

Messrs:

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

1 **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman asked the Chief Executive to remind everybody of etiquette for the Zoom meeting which he did.

The Chairman wanted to welcome two new members to the Board, Councillors Paula Cooper who was a previous member and Nigel Welton.

The Chairman reminded Members that due to the changes in Board membership, some vacancies now exist on the Committees. J. Woods was due to join the Governance and Risk Committee. The Chairman asked Members to indicate to the Chief Executive which vacancies they would like to fill, particularly in respect of the Governance and Risk Committee which had lost 2 Members.

IDBs were thanked by the EA at last Friday's RFCC meeting, for their assistance in dealing with the extreme rainfall events over the Christmas period and through January 2021. The catchment is extremely wet, and the Chief Engineer will update Members on this in his report.

Henry Cator is retiring as Chairman of Water Resources East after 6-7 years' service. The Board wished him well in the future and if anybody would like to apply for the vacancy they could do so.

2 **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for non-attendance were received from: -

Messrs: J. Grant
A. Hall

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

Declared an interest in discussions about Triton Knoll – P. Richardson, R Leggott

Declared an interest in Viking Link – P. Richardson

Leverton & Benington Pumping Stations – A. Saul

Gaysfield Road Planning Application – A. Saul

Wrangle Pumping Station - B. Bowles

4 **MINUTES**

4.1 **Board Meeting – Wednesday, 16th December 2020**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Board held on 16 December 2020 were submitted and were agreed as accurate and signed by the Chairman.

B. Bowles - asked if there was any update on the grass seed used on the sea banks and the different ways of farming? The Chief Engineer confirmed that he remembered last year the issue with fertiliser and the grass seed being used and would speak to the Farmers before commencing any works.

5. **MINUTES OF FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE – 20 January 2021**

5.1 **Matters arising:**

To approve the Adoption of Officer's Estimate

The Chief Executive confirmed that a copy of his Full Memorandum had been sent to all Board Members which covered the out-turn of the current year and what the rate would need to be to get the General Reserve back in line with the Board's policy. The Chief Executive confirmed that last year there had been a large deficit due to the weather event and this year we were looking to be back to 90% of the General Reserve figure, which was a good result, bearing in mind where the Board had been this time last year.

From the Minutes supplied, Members could see that the Memorandum had been discussed in detail and it had been agreed to recommend a 2% increase to the Board. The Chief Executive was happy to go through the documents if anyone needed him to.

The Vice-Chairman reminded the Board Members that the reason the Board was able to be in this position was largely because of the Triton Knoll and Viking Link payments, which were one off windfall payments that could not be relied upon in the future.

The Chairman asked if there were any further questions and there were none.

5.2.1 **To approve the proposed rate increase**

T. Ashton proposed that the rate increase of 2% be accepted. This was seconded by A. Harrison. A vote was taken, and all were in favour with no objections.

- RESOLVED**
- i) The Chief Executive's Estimates for 2021/2022 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:
8.391 pence
 - iii) that the rate be levied in Sub District 2 (*the remainder of the Internal District*) be the full rate:
16.781 pence
 - iv) that the Special Levies on Local Charging Authorities be set as follows:

Boston Borough Council	£1,108,049.50
East Lindsey District Council	£ 390,588.85

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 20 January 2021 were submitted and agreed as accurate and signed by the Committee Chairman.

6. **MEETINGS WITH OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS**

The Chief Executive confirmed that there was only one meeting to report, the Minutes of the ADA Lincolnshire Branch Annual General Meeting which had been submitted very late. Most of the issues contained therein would have moved on because of the lateness of the Minutes being circulated. The AGM will take place as it is necessary to approve the accounts for the year. The next meeting is due to be announced.

7. **STRATEGIC PLAN**

The Chairman confirmed that this item would be dealt with separately at the end of the meeting.

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

8.1 **Bank Balance**

The Chief Executive went through his report and confirmed that Members had seen the figures as at the end of December which we detailed in the Memorandum. £500k is currently held on a term deposit account and is attracting 1% interest. This is due to end this month and the Board's approval was requested to re-invest this with the Board's bank at the best rate available.

C. Hardy proposed that the sum of £500k be re-invested on a deposit account if there was an improvement in the interest rates. This was seconded by R. Hall-Jones. A vote was taken, and all were in favour with no objections.

8.2 **Payments Made**

The Chief Executive confirmed there were no large payments made in December except for the jetting works which had been completed.

8.3 **Rating Income**

The Chief Executive confirmed the position regarding rate arrears and advised the Board that unfortunately because of the pandemic it had not been possible to attend Court to obtain Liability Orders and instruct bailiffs. However, of the rates outstanding, a large percentage related to those paid by instalments. There is a Court date set for 15th February, but we were unable to confirm that this would actually proceed.

8.4 **Solar Panel Performance**

The Chief Executive referred Board Members to the last page of his report which shows the position for the year, which was better than anticipated. By the end of 2022, the panels should have paid for themselves and with a lifespan of 20 years there should be several years where the Board are in funds.

9. **CHIEF ENGINEER'S REPORT**

The Chief Engineer went through his report, which he would take as read and would highlight areas of importance for Board Members. The Chief Engineer was happy to take any questions as he ran through the report.

9.1 **Pumping Station Operations**

The Chief Engineer confirmed at this time of year it was really a round-up of where we were for the year. The table shows the total hours for 2020. Page 3 shows we usually work on an average of 12,000 hours per year, so we are just over the average for 2020 but the weather took a turn for the worse at Christmas and we have been in a sustained period of pumping since then. Page 3 gives the average pump hours completed over an 18-year period.

9.2 **Pump Volumes**

The Chief Engineer confirmed the volume of water pumped over the year.

9.3 **Hobhole Pumping Station**

The Chief Engineer referred the Board to the problems in relation to the access road. Due to the pandemic the amount of footfall had increased and as discussed previously how we can make our site more secure. The Chief Engineer had 3 options. One to do nothing. The second was to install automatic gates at the end of the access road at Cut End Road and only authorised personnel and residents would be allowed access. The Chief Engineer's preferred third option was to install manual gates which could simply be closed for operational emergencies. Install

automatic security gates and fencing on the west side of the access road behind the pumping station for evening and weekend closure. This would enable the public to continue using the parking space. The costs of options 2 and 3 would be between £12k and £20k depending on the final specification of the gates and fencing.

There was no statutory right of way behind the Pumping Station it was a permissive right of way. Hopefully, this situation would improve when lockdown comes to an end.

A. Harrison asked if there had been any vandalism or Health & Safety Issues? The Chief Engineer confirmed the only Health and Safety issue is when large numbers of people are walking behind the Pumping Station and the machines are running across the yard. There have been acts of vandalism and also incidents of members of public walking round the attendants' houses.

C. Hardy - what the residents thought about the plans? The Chief Engineer confirmed he had had minimal contact with them, but they had also raised concerns about the increase in foot fall.

The Vice-Chairman confirmed improved signage would also be of benefit.

N. Jones - was happy to propose Option 3.

B. Bowles - felt it would be interesting to look at an older map to see whether the Footpath was there before the pumping station. He also agreed that Option 3 is the best way forward.

T. Ashton - wanted to be 100% certain that there was not a public right of way behind The Pumping Station as the Council's map shows a purple line. Generally speaking he was supportive of Option 3.

R. Leggott -referred the Board to the graph on page 3 – from the figures shown would it be possible to consider whether climate change is having an impact on the lifting costs for pumping and our operation costs. The Chief Engineer confirmed this is something he is aware of. Constant steady pumping does not hit costs very much but higher levels of rainfall can increase costs and wages. This is something he will monitor.

The Chairman added that he had spoken with the Chief Executive and Chief Engineer about the cost and frequency of weather events. This topic will be picked up later in the meeting in the Strategic Plan.

B. Bowles - confirmed a number of variables would need to be given consideration – the changes in farming techniques and the improvement in the efficiency of the pumps etc.

The Chief Executive referred Board Members to the graph on page 8 which showed we had hit over 700mm on six separate occasions, four of those had been since the turn of the century. The Chairman agreed and re-iterated that if it was constant rainfall over the year, it was not so bad it was the peak rainfall that caused the issue.

The Chairman steered the Board Members to the issue of the access road at Hobhole Pumping Station and asked if anyone had any further comments.

N. Jones - proposed to proceed with Option 3.

J. Woods - said that the Board could not afford to over-simplify this issue and the Board's assets needed to be protected so he too would support Option 3 permanent fencing and perhaps supported by cctv.

There was a show of hands in support of Option 3 and the majority were in favour.

9.3.2 Air Lock Cooling System

The Chief Engineer updated the Board that there was a brief shutdown period. Two attendants checked the system, and the main problem was found to be a cracked cylinder liner on engine number 2. This issue can be repaired in-house, but it will take 2-3 weeks to complete.

9.4 **Rainfall**

The Chief Engineer confirmed that in January there had been an average 100mm of rainfall across the catchment, so it has been a very wet start to the year. Page 8 of his report showed the average rainfall at Lade Bank Pumping Station.

T. Ashton - asked if we were aware why the liner had cracked at Hobhole Pumping Station? The Chief Engineer confirmed the issues were down to the age of the plant and the wear and tear on them.

9.5 **Channel Maintenance Operations**

9.5.1 **Plant Operations 2020/21**

The Chief Engineer confirmed the chart shows the position as of 31st December 2020.

A. Saul - commented that the Board now seemed to suddenly be very efficient in the metres that are being covered compared to the previous year. The Chief Engineer confirmed that last year the Board suffered a large number of breakdowns and the weather was against us. There have been changes to operational practices and the efficiency of the machines has improved greatly. Also there was improvement in the recording of the measurements with the assistance of the Operations Manager.

9.5.2. **Slips**

There had been another slip on the Fodderdyke Drain and Lincolnshire County Council have agreed to contribute 50% towards the estimated £40,000 cost. Another large slip on the Medlam Drain had been reported this morning approximately 150 feet.

9.6 **Alcorn Green, Boston B/19/0514**

The Chief Engineer confirmed that he was still working with the developers for the site. One option is to divert the pipeline through the estate, and they would then pay the Board a commutative sum for the future maintenance of this pipeline. This is ongoing.

9.7. **Coastal Paths**

B. Bowles - confirmed there had been a discussion at the Parish Council Meeting regarding the car park at Wrangle. The lagoon area has reduced the car park slightly and there was no barrier at the end of the car park to stop people going into the lagoon. The Chief Engineer was not aware that the area had been made smaller and would say it was the Landowner's responsibility.

B. Bowles - suggested a joint effort between all parties. The Chief Executive confirmed The Board had photographs of the area before the works started and a comparison could be made between then and now.

9.8. **Plant and Equipment**

The Chief Engineer referred Board Members to paragraph 7.3 which showed the results of the Plant Tender Sale and confirmed that he was happy with the number of Tenders received.

9.9. **Technical Matters**

The Chief Engineer confirmed the Technical Engineer was continuing work on asset management, concentrating mainly on pipelines. There was nothing further to report on Catchment Survey at the moment as the Technical Engineer was using the equipment needed to complete the asset database, which was a legal requirement to finalise.

9.10 **Flood Defence Grant in Aid Projects**

The Catchment Modelling was drawing to an end. The Chief Engineer had received 2 sets of flood-outline maps from the consultants instructed to complete the work which he needed to review. There is a lot of interesting information contained in these results and the Chief Engineer hoped to bring these to the Board Meeting in June.

9.11 **Wrangle Pumping Station Feasibility Study**

There was nothing to report at present as the results of the Benington and Leverton Inspections needed to be considered. These had been received that morning but were 50 pages each and the Chief Engineer had not had the opportunity to review them. The Consultant is looking at a small feasibility study for combining three pumping stations into one and the cost implications of this before any decision is taken. The general consensus of the Benington and Leverton Pumping Stations were that they had some life left in them but how long would be contained in the information in the reports.

B. Bowles - commented if there were one pumping station instead of 3, depending on where it was sited, the amount of water taken from Friskney would need a very deep channel. The Chief Engineer advised the bed levels at Wrangle Pumping Station are a metre higher than at Benington Pumping Station. It would involve significant earthworks and it might not be the way forward, but everything will need to be considered. The Chief Engineer had also contacted Barry Shearer who had dealt with the original Benington and Leverton schemes to ask for his input into the decisions that had been taken and the reasons why and had received a very detailed report from him in response.

T. Ashton - asked what parts were likely to fail and what would they need to make them last another 20 or 75 years? The Chief Engineer confirmed that Wrangle Pumping Station had no life left in it and would require significant investment in it so not economical to repair and more cost effective to build a new one alongside it. This Pumping Station is significantly older than the other two. Benington and Leverton – do we want to increase capacity there? There are drainage problems at Old Leake, and other areas require improvement. Water would be better transferred to the coast than sent back to Hobhole Pumping Station. Investments would be weedscreen cleaners, new pumps, new motors, and an automatic diesel engine to support the electric. Structure refurbishment is another consideration.

9.12 **East and West Fen Catchwater Drain Survey**

The Chief Engineer confirmed that we had received a £15,500 contribution from the Environment Agency to carry out some studies. Problems with silt and unprecedented levels of vegetation have been removed which is believed to have been as a result of the fresh silt deposit from 2019. Survey is 60% complete and once complete we will be looking at the possibility to dredge some sections – all at the expense of the Environment Agency.

R. Hall-Jones - mentioned the possible increase in building at Spilsby and the run-off will all run into the Catchwater Drain. The Chief Engineer confirmed it was hard to convince the EA that there is a benefit to desilting that section because there is no direct housing along it which is at risk. However, it deals with all the run-off from the higher ground so it is a benefit and hopefully the results of the survey will support this.

9.13. **Staff Matters**

The Chief Engineer confirmed we were still managing the covid risk as we continue to work normally. Three members of staff had had positive tests but were all fully recovered.

J. Ward - believed that South Holland IDB were erecting red and white posts either side of electric cables that cross their drains, from a health and safety perspective. What were the Chief Engineers thoughts? The Chief Engineer confirmed he had done the exact same thing in his previous employment at North Level IDB. This came about as a result of a few cable strikes in 2008 and a few IDBs adopted this idea. It is not something the Witham Fourth adopted however, the machines do have wire watchers on the machine and the machine bleeps when the machine gets too close to the cable. The operators also have to complete reports before undertaking any work under the cables to confirm that it is safe to do so. The Chief Engineer confirmed he likes the system, but it can be

onerous to install and expensive to maintain and he feels that the current processes in place are adequate.

10. **HEALTH AND SAFETY OFFICER'S REPORT**

The Chief Engineer confirmed this had been removed from the Engineering Report and was now being treated as a standalone report to emphasise the importance the Board placed upon Health and Safety. The Chief Engineer would take the report as read.

Item 1.2 showed the Lone Worker App that had just been downloaded onto everyone's mobile phone. It is working very well. The Chief Engineer felt that we were exposed by the current policy which has now been updated. The App monitors the movement of the staff.

The Chief Executive and the Chief Engineer were working on an IT Solution to Risk Assessments and Method Statement instead of having to print out paperwork.

Item 1.5 was an interesting piece of work being carried out by ADA for IDB Board Members. This would show Board Members what they should expect from the IDB officers in relation to Health and Safety issues.

11. **ENVIRONMENT REPORT**

The Chief Engineer confirmed that there was not much to update since the last report prepared in November/December time, unless there were any questions. There were no questions.

12. **STRATEGIC PLAN**

The Chairman confirmed this document had been around for a long time and the aim was to make this a "living" document. If you need to know what the Board was doing or planning, this is the document that would need to be referred to. It will have its own item in the Agenda.

The Chief Executive has drafted the document along with the Chief Engineer's input. The Chairman handed over to the Chief Executive and asked him to advise the Board Members about the document. The Chief Executive confirmed that this document had been around for some time and discussions had taken place regarding the Board's current position, objectives, and aspirations to ensure we have a network and a range of assets. Some new sections have been added.

- Appendix 1 shows the policy- how we operate what we do and why.
- Appendix 2 relates to raising activities – for example the new livery on vans and new workwear – it shows people we are out and about in the district.
- Appendix 3 details the 15-year capital programme, which shows a list of works required in the District and in the Pumping Stations over the next 15 years. Whilst some of this is a "wish-list" the first 6 years are already included in the Environment Agency 6-year plan which starts in April this year. The document has been sent by e-mail because it was quite difficult to read and page 3 shows how we are using reserves to fund capital programme and the Chief Executive wanted Board Members to appreciate how much money we have managed to draw out of government over the last 10 years to support the projects the Board has already completed. This totals £3 million in the last year. Had this funding not been obtained some of the cost would have been recovered through the rate and this is why we have been able to maintain the rate as we have.

The third page, a spreadsheet which shows the Capital Investment Fund at the bottom takes the previous Development Fund and transferred it to the Capital Investment Fund to which £50,000 will be added most years to enable us to fund those projects. The fund is starting with a total of over £200,000 but will be reduced to £62,000 (without inflation) in 15 years' time. The Chief Executive confirmed it was reassuring that with the normal amount of investment by the Board, and with the additional amount of funding, we can complete 15 years' worth of investment with a total of £11 million.

- Appendix 4 – projects we know need doing in the District and our outside of usual maintenance and will not be covered by funding. The Chief Engineer and The Operations Manager have been round the district looking for work which will need doing if we have any spare funds. It would be hoped that within the next 10-15 years as we get through the maintenance programme there may be some head room within the budget, to complete these works. These will of course be reported to the Board.
- Finally, Appendix 5 is a review of the Reserves. This is simply so Board Members understand the Reserves we have and how they are used to fund the Board's commitments.

The body of the main plan has some areas highlighted in blue which are changes that have been made this year. The Chief Executive has taken it as read that Board Members have read and understood them. The Chief Executive was happy to take any questions but there were none.

The Chairman added that weather events will be included in this document and the effect that they have on the Board's budget. The 2019 weather event had added £500,000 to the pumping costs in addition to what was expected, but at the end of the year had an out turn of £120,000. However, the additional damage caused to the District also have to be considered. £240,000 worth of slips against £40,000. Capital works or operations which have been deferred – appendix 4 show works which may have been deferred, but these will still need doing. With our budget there are other costs such as district work, Pumping Station work together with running costs for the office so there is very little leeway with the funds available. Both the Chief Executive and the Chief Engineer have been working together as an excellent team and have a good understanding of the works required and the costs involved. The Chairman believes that this document is massively important for the Board.

C. Crunkhorn - confirmed that the Chief Executive was arranging for hard copies of the 3 documents to be sent to Board Members as it was difficult to read through on the e-mail. The Chief Executive confirmed this.

The Chief Engineer confirmed that he would keep updating the document and it would be brought to the Board as it evolved. It was not meant to be a scaremongering document but to ensure that everyone had a realistic idea of the work needed and the cost for that work.

The Chairman added that often at Board Meetings extreme weather events have been discussed but the Board has not been very good at noting them down. This document will change that. Some works may stay in the list for years because if the funding is not available then the works cannot be completed. At least moving forwards the Board is aware of them and the exposure. With regard to the funds in the Pumping Station Renewals Fund this is being kept as a buffer because in the event of a problem with an engine or pump, the Board would be very exposed. The General Reserve is more for weather events.

N. Jones - was sure working practices had changed during the Covid restrictions and wanted to know if these would be reviewed when the pandemic was over as some could be beneficial to the Board -perhaps with people working at home rather than office based. The Chief Engineer did not feel that any efficiencies could be made out in the District and perhaps it was more about people working at home rather than in the office. Working remotely was a challenge in managing teams. The Chief Engineer added that much of the training was taking place remotely.

The Chairman added that N. Jones' point was valid and perhaps consideration was needed as to whether a large office was required. However, these things would be considered and brought before the Board and via the Strategic Plan if there was felt to be any merit.

12. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The Vice-Chairman thanked J. Woods for agreeing to join the Governance & Risk Committee but confirmed that there were still vacancies if anyone else would like to join. The Chairman confirmed there was no other business and the meeting concluded at 3.25pm.

Chairman