

WITHAM FOURTH DISTRICT INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

MINUTES

of the proceedings of the **Environment Committee** at 47 Norfolk Street on Thursday
25 November 2021

Present: - B. Bowles (Committee Chairman)
Messrs: T. Ashton
C. Crunkhorn
A. Harrison
P. Richardson (Chairman)
A. Saul

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for non-attendance were received from:-
N. Jones and P. Skinner

2. **ENVIRONMENT OFFICER'S REPORT**

The Chairman welcomed Members to the meeting and confirmed that we really need to be considering the importance of our own environment and the excellent work which is already carried out in this respect along the 700km of dykes that the Board maintains. This includes the owl boxes and other good projects already completed. The Chairman is minded that the Board's carbon policy will also need consideration moving forwards.

The Chief Engineer went through the Environment Report which he would take as read but there were a few things he would just like to mention:-

2.1 **Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Update**

The Chief Engineer went through the Board's BAP as set out in the agenda. Pages 3 gave an update on the actions taken. The new BAP was targeting different actions and it would be necessary to broaden our scope to comply with the new Environment Act 2021. The BAP was in the new ADA format and the main format for the meeting was "actions" – what we do and how we deliver. The Chief Engineer confirmed that we needed to think outside the box and consider some quick wins projects the are cost effective.

The Board owns 147km of main drains the land adjacent to these watercourses could be used develop green corridors, linking already established habitats. The Chief Engineer confirmed there were already some built-in benefits such as the wild-flower meadows but more consideration was needed to how we could best utilise the Board's land.

The Chairman added that the estimate put together shows that we are committed to the environment but now we had reached a turning point and needed to consider new benefits.

The Committee Chairman believed that the Board should be publicising what it already does do and does well. The Chief Executive confirmed that the Board's figure in relation to the environment is the largest amongst the Board's. The Chief Engineer was concerned that over the next 5 to 6 years scrutiny of public bodies managing the environment will increase and he did not want this Board to be found Under performing.

T. Ashton - added the Board should do what it needs to do but be clear on what we do have to do. There is a lot of habitats that the Board already maintains.

The Chairman added that if the Board did not get this right, it would reflect very poorly. The Chief Engineer agreed and confirmed we should highlight what we are doing but consider whether we

are doing it well enough. The Chief Engineer believed that this was something that the Board needs to consider very carefully.

A. Saul *-suggested the operatives record anything that they see and that could be publicised.*

K. Smith *-believes in the future grants may be reliant upon a good green/carbon neutral policy*

The Chief Executive confirmed future forecasts all included carbon footprint of all capital projects and this would be monitored moving forwards.

2.2 **Environment Officer Resource**

The Chief Engineer confirmed that at present the Board currently use a consultant on an ad-hoc basis but it may be time to consider employing somebody on a shared resource basis to deal with environment issues.

T. Ashton *-fully supported this as it would free up the Chief Engineer to deal with his own work.*

B. Bowles *-agreed.*

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

The Chief Engineer ran through the Environment and Conservation estimate for 2022/23, there was an increase of £1,240.00 which related to the increase in wages anticipated for April 2022.

After discussion it was:

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND That the estimate for 2022/2023 at £95,859.00 be recommended for approval by the Board at the December 2021 Board Meeting.

4. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There was no other business, and the meeting was closed at 4.15pm

Chairman