

WITHAM FOURTH DISTRICT INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

MINUTES

of the proceedings of the **Works Committee** at a Meeting held at 47 Norfolk Street on Wednesday
26 April 2023

Present: P. Richardson (Chairman)

Messrs: P. Bedford A. Harrison
 C. Crunkhorn Mrs J Welbourn
 (Vice-Chairman) J Woods
 C Hardy

In attendance: T Ashton, R Austin, Mrs G Nichols (Grants Manager)

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for non-attendance were received from: -

Messrs: J Grant
 A Saul
 R Hall-Jones

2. **MAIN DRAIN CAPITAL DREDGING FEASIBILITY REPORT**

2.1 **Introduction**

The Chairman began by thanking the Chief Engineer for preparing a very comprehensive report which had been sent to all Board Members ahead of this committee meeting. He also welcomed Georgina Nichols to the meeting in her role as Capital Grants Manager for several Lincolnshire Boards.

2.2 **The need for dredging**

The Chief Engineer drew Members' attention to the £51 million, 15-year capital replacement programme and explained that dredging was not included in this programme. This project would not attract Defra grant in aid and therefore, it needed to be self-financed by the Board. He then went on to explain why this was the case.

The modelling work that the board had done using grant funding was shown in the report and in summary, this was done using an industry methodology and the outline of this flood extent was shown on maps in the report. The damages experienced during such an event produced baseline damage scenario, from which the benefit of doing any dredging work could be seen. By assuming dredging work of the Board's main drains, the flood extent reduced, but it was shown that no properties were better off as a result of the work, therefore granting aid was unavailable.

2.3 **The Board's options**

The Chief Engineer went on to explain that the district had an original design standard that should cope with events that have a 1 in 20-year chance of occurrence, with 0.6 metres of freeboard (distance from water level to bank top). The results of the modelling showed that dredging reduces flooding for events with this lower return period but not for higher return events. The modelling evidence showed that there would always be a flood risk for these events. With this context, the report went on to cover five options available to the Board, but three of these were discounted, leaving only two real options:

- + option 3 to dredge the main drains (cost £4.6M)
- + option 4 to dredge as above plus a 50% re-profile of drain banks (cost £5.4M)

A Harrison - asked if there was a free board of 0.6 metres across the district and the Chief Engineer confirmed that this was largely the case,

J Woods – confirmed that crops would be destroyed after 42 hours under water and that vegetable crops would also be written off.

2.4 **The Benefits of dredging**

The Chief Engineer then explained that the report contained a detailed cost estimate for delivering the above work plus 20% for risk, and the work would be phased in over several years (8 to 12). It also showed a 30-year benefit period of the work. The difference between the “do nothing” option and dredging, showed that there was a £5 million damages avoided benefit of doing the work. This produced a cost benefit ratio of better than one to one, so using normal funding criteria, it should be something the board supported.

R Austin - asked how do we know where the bed levels are? The chief engineer explained how we do this.

P Bedford - said that where Black Sluice IDB used suction dredging, they used a screen that shows the bed level, so they do not take out more than required.

A Harrison - asked if we needed to improve the pumping stations? The chief engineer said yes because for a 1 in 75 or 100-year event, we need 20% more pumping capacity.

The Chairman asked if the £9 million damages calculated was a high enough sum as this seemed little low. Members then had a lengthy debate about crop loss and relative land values etc.

2.5 **Funding choices**

The chief executive went through the finance section of the report and the various options the Board had to fund the work. He also explained that the modelling work we did, gave us the strategic business case for replacing Hobhole pumping station and dredging the main drains. Water had to get to the pumping stations, and it was appropriate to use the available benefits in the district (land and properties), to try to obtain DEFRA funding for both projects. Public Works Loans were another option, as was putting rates up over 30 years to pay for this work.

T Ashton - said he was relaxed about putting this expense on to ratepayers as they were benefiting from the work

Finally, the Board also have the option to seek RFCC local levy for dredging which other IDBs had been successful in obtaining. This option is something that Georgina Nichols (Grants Manager) and the Chief Engineer would explore before the next board meeting, and Members were happy with this approach.

2.6 **Recommendation**

The Chairman asked Members for a proposal and P Bedford proposed that the board should go for option 4, dredging main drains and reprofiling 50% of the drains. He added that as Royal Smalls needed to be booked early, we should resolve to begin the work as soon as possible

A Harrison seconded the proposal and it was :-

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND

That the board should go for option 4 as set out in the dredging report - dredging all main drains and reprofiling 50% of the banks

3. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

None.

Chairman