

BLACK SLUICE INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

MINUTES

of the proceedings of a Meeting of the
Environment Committee

held at the Offices of the Board on Wednesday 15th May 2013 at 2:30pm

Members

Chairman - * Mr J R Wray

Mr R Leggott	* Mr R Welberry
* Mr M J Scott	* Mr P Robinson
* Cllr D R Dickinson	* Mr P Holmes
Mr J F Atkinson	* Mr V A Barker
Mr K C Casswell	* Mr C A Fretwell

(* Member Present)

In attendance: Mr I Warsap (Chief Executive)
Mr P Nicholson (Operations Manager)
Mr M Redding (Environmental Officer Witham 4th IDB)
Mrs Helen Scarborough (Scarborough Nixon Assoc)
Mr Ian Nixon (Scarborough Nixon Assoc)
Miss Claire Schofield (Scarborough Nixon Assoc)
Miss Amy Robinson (Greater Lincolnshire Nature Partnership)

The Chairman introduced and welcomed Helen Scarborough, Ian Nixon and Claire Schofield from Scarborough Nixon Associates along with Amy Robinson from the Greater Lincolnshire Nature Partnership (GLNP).

377 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Mr J Atkinson, Mr K C Casswell and Mr R Leggott. Mr M J Scott attended but had to leave early.

378 MINUTES OF LAST ENVIRONMENT MEETING

The Minutes of the last Meeting of the Environment Committee held on 6th December 2012, copies of which had been circulated, were considered and it was agreed that the Minutes should be signed as a true record with the following amendment;

Minute No 310(i)

National important species of bee – “bombus terrestris” should be “bombus ruderatus”;

379 MATTERS ARISING

(a) Alternative Energy Sources - Minute No 309(b)

The Chief Executive reviewed ROCS are for 50kw and above and would require a major investment by the Board for solar panels at the Swineshead offices.

(b) Fish Refuge Shelters - Minute No 310(g)

The Chief Executive outlined at Black Hole Drove pumping station all three pumps have been set to have a slower phased start, this initial stage should allow fish to vacate the pumping sumps and move up-stream prior to the pumps attaining maximum capacity. The South Forty Foot Drain outfall will be monitored over the following months for any further fish kills.

380 REPORT ON ENVIRONMENTAL WORKS COMPLETED 2012/13 – Agenda Item 4

Details of the environmental works completed were circulated within the agenda the Chief Executive highlighted the following areas;

(a) Owl Boxes

The Chief Executive reported that three pole mounted owl boxes were erected in 2012 by the Wildlife Conservation Partnership, this makes a total of thirty boxes financed by the Board. A copy of the 2012 annual check of BSIDB nest boxes was circulated in the agenda papers.

The Wildlife Conservation Partnership has agreed to attend and report on all nest boxes within the Boards catchments at the next Environmental Committee Meeting.

(b) Tom Tom Data Recording of Environmental Sightings

The Chief Executive reported that the Tom-Tom device in the JS130, that is due to be sold, will be transferred into the new Hitachi once delivered in June/July 2013.

The Operations Manager outlined that these devices have preset channels and any out of the ordinary activity can be notified by phone and the work force are encouraged to report these. These procedures will be reinforced at the 2013 pre-cutting brief.

(c) High Profile Watercourse Assets

The Chief Executive reported that the outside of the sharp bend on the North Forty Foot Drain at Punchbowl Lane was reed cut with a weed boat in March 2013 to deter nesting birds moving into the reed bed prior to the construction works taking place.

380 (c) Cont.....

The Chief Executive responded to a question with regard to the bend where debris collects, expenditure on this scheme has come in below budget and the bend will be re profiled.

(d) Fish & Eel CCTV Monitoring within the South Forty Foot Drain outfall and the Hammond Beck at Chain Bridge PS

The Chief Executive presented a slide of still pictures from the cameras, the fish shown are believed to be looking for food coming through the gravity pipe from the Hammond Beck. All information obtained will be passed to the EA.

(e) North Forty Foot Fishing Platforms

The three existing fishing platforms will have gabion mattresses laid over them whilst the revetment improvement works are currently taking place. At the same time, negotiations are taking place with the EA and the Boston & District Angling Association with regards to the possible funding and construction of a disabled fishing access and platform. If no funding is available the earth banks will be profiled accordingly.

(f) Kingfisher Nesting Sites

The Chief Executive presented a slide of the constructed site at Chain Bridge pumping station. Mr Holmes stated that bored holes would give them a start and has been proven to be successful.

(g) Biodiversity Action Plan

The Committee AGREED that the Chief Executive should further review the current BAP and present at the next meeting.

381 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROPOSED ENVIRONMENTAL SURVEY AND DRAIN WORKS TO BE CARRIED OUT 2013/14

(a) Water Vole Surveys

Water vole surveys will continue to be carried out prior to desilting and following the works where water voles had been identified. Environmental mitigation works may be required should results give evidence of disturbance.

(b) Owl Boxes

It was AGREED to recommend that a further three pole mounted owl boxes be erected at suitable locations alongside the Boards drains. Mr Holmes offered sites for two owl boxes.

(d) Recording by Machine Drivers

The workmen will continue to monitor and record sightings using the Tom Tom units fitted in the machines.

(e) Eel and Fish Passes

The Board will continue to investigate thoughts that to slow start pumps will have the effect of frightening fish and eels away from the sumps of pumps, investigations are ongoing whether we would be able to do this at minimal cost.

(f) Improvements to Risegate Eau

The Chief Executive reported there is a proposal to add environmental features to the western end of Risegate Eau. An environmentally-friendly improvement scheme is also being prepared for essential works along the open length of watercourse further west of the habitat enhanced site where the presence of *Bombus ruderatus* (large garden bumblebee), a national BAP species has been recorded. The area is also documented as an established toad breeding site.

(g) High Profile Watercourse Assets

The Chief Executive presented a slide showing the enhancement works on Bicker Eau through the village centre.

A correction to the Agenda the Frampton Towns Drain from London Road to weir is (5/14 not 5/1).

(h) Grass Snake Breeding Sites

The Chief Executive reported that a technical advice note has been produced by Scarborough Nixon Associates and this will be acted upon.

(i) Tongue End Environmental Site

The Chief Executive reported that the Board has, at Tongue End pond, enough reed bed to offer a safe wintering stop over location for Bittern's. It is recommended as requested by Lincolnshire ADA that the Board contact Charlie Barnes at the GLNP and inform him of this site along with the two smaller sites. Miss Robinson will produce a Lincolnshire Bittern report for distribution.

381 Cont.....

(j) Fens for the Future

Martin Redding outlined the background to the setting up of the Fens for the Future Partnership and that he has joined the steering group and attended the Workshop in Lincoln. All IDB's will be contacted to be involved.

(k) Invasive Species

Information relating to Lincolnshire Fens aquatic invasive species will be handed out to the workforce at the 2013 pre-cutting brief.

It was RESOLVED that the Report on Environmental Works should be received and adopted.

382 REPORTS – Agenda Item 5

(a) Amy Robinson – Greater Lincolnshire Nature Partnership (GLNP)

Miss Robinson introduced herself as the Nature Policy Officer, following the re-launch in November 2012, to the accredited Defra scheme to form a Local Nature Partnership which would be 1 of 50 in England.

Miss Robinson offered to help develop and provide some simple ID guides for Lincolnshire aquatic invasive species that can be provided to the workforce for quick and easy identification in the field.

(b) Helen Scarborough – Scarborough Nixon Associates

We are continuing with the water vole surveys and this spring early reports are encouraging, identified areas like Bourne and Heckington in having a good population of voles. Nice reed fringe have been left in places and it was requested if the excavator operators could not scrape the opposite side bank along the bottom which means the voles have difficulty evacuating the water once their holes are sealed. There has been good evidence of water vole latrines with high population clusters.

There are quite a few mink signs especially Bourne area which is not so good for the water vole population.

In association with an environmentally minded local resident, discussions have taken place to help create a management plan for Gosberton Siltside/Risegate Eau to promote and protect the *Bombus ruderatus* bee which has been identified on site and is a rare bee to Lincolnshire. The area further west would benefit from some opening of the tree foliage to lighten the area.

382 (b) Cont.....

The assessment of the site at Tongue End, Twenty is quite a remote area and meets wildlife site criteria for wet areas and grassland. Marsh harriers have been sighted and might be breeding in the reeds. A detailed assessment of invertebrates is required before any form of a management plan could be provided.

(c) Martin Redding - Lincolnshire ADA Environment Committee

- (i) Anglian eel and fish prioritisation - No enforcement notices have been served, ADA news has made available the EA's new guide "Eel passes and Eel screens – safe passage for eel".
- (ii) Fens for the Future - Jo Finlow is hoping to attend the ADA Demo in July and meet members to get a better feel for what IDB's do regarding their land management practices and flood defence and environmental obligations.
- (iii) Lincolnshire Rivers Trust - Trust formation is currently being finalised and IDB's are seen as key regarding the delivering of the Water Framework Directive objectives and eel & fish pass regulations.
- (iv) Water Framework Directive (WFD) Lincolnshire - The EA's Dr Helen Barber, WFD Catchment Delivery Manager for the Witham, Ancholme, and East Coast & Humber has a keen interest in IDB operations and looking at ways to resolve WFD issues or seeking gains in positive schemes and management.
- (v) Operation Fly Swat - 335 tonnes so far in 18 months and 6.3 tonnes recovered during the Big Boston Cleanup between 8 -11 April 2013.
- (vi) Illegal fish/eel nets - A large number of illegal fishing nets have been found one measuring 25 meters' long and 1.5m depth in a very fine mesh which is almost invisible - please make your workforce aware and inform Rachel Woodcock Fisheries Enforcement Officer based in Lincoln 01522 785816 or 07831 455517 (Kettering office). These new synthetic nets are much trickier to spot than fykes.
- (vii) Lincolnshire County Council Environment Grants - Up to 75% funding can be awarded for community wildlife grants between £50-£500, applications close on 1st September 2013. This encourages local community involvement with nature conservation projects, promote, improve and protect bio-diversity, promote access to and enjoyment of the countryside.

382 (c) (vii) Cont.....

While 50% match funding up to £1,000 can be awarded for native British hedges and small woodland schemes, the closing date is 30th September 2013. Other LCC grants are available for other projects, so if you have any scheme ideas do contact them and see if they can assist.

383 MINUTES FOR THE ADA LINCOLNSHIRE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 24th OCTOBER 2012 – Agenda Item 6

Copies of the ADA Environment Committee Meeting were circulated with the Agenda for information.

384 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

(a) Badgers in EA, BSIDB & Riparian Drain Banks

Mr Barker raised the issue of the numbers of Badgers living in setts in drain banks which could cause a breach, collapse or blockage. He reminded the Committee that in 1999 the South Forty Foot Drain breached due to bank erosion due to rabbit holes. Badgers also have a detrimental effect on other forms of wildlife; i.e. hedge hogs, bees etc. The drains become blocked with the residue spoil which comes from their setts being dug out in drain sides and the workforce could be at risk if a machine travelled along the bank and collapsed the top of the set and overturned the machine.

The Committee AGREED that ADA, NFU, Defra, Natural England and local MP's should be lobbied to understand the issues of IDB's and the high risk of flooding due to badgers.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 5pm.