

BLACK SLUICE INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

MINUTES

of the proceedings of a Meeting of the
Southern Works Committee

held remotely on the
12th November 2020

Members

Chairman - * Mr M Rollinson

* Mr W Ash	Mr J F Atkinson
* Mr V A Barker	* Mr K C Casswell
* Mr J Casswell	Mr R Dorrington
Mr C Dring	Mr A Mair
* Cllr P Moseley	Mr M Mowbray
* Cllr S Walsh	* Mr C Wray
* Mr J R Wray	

(* Member Present)

In attendance: Mr D Withnall (Finance Manager)
Mr P Nicholson (Operations Manager)
Mr S Harrison (Works Manager)
Mr K Methley (Pump Engineer)
Mr P Holmes (Vice Chairman & Northern Works Chairman)

The Chairman welcomed Cllr P Moseley to his first committee meeting.

Due to COVID-19, this meeting will be held remotely in accordance with The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020.

1678 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE - Agenda Item 1

Apologies for absence were received from Mr R Dorrington, Mr A Mair, Mr J Atkinson and the Chief Executive.

1679 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - Agenda Item 2

Mr V Barker declared an interest in Minute 1680, minutes of the last meeting, in relation to minute 1591(a) – drainage and maintenance issues at land south of the Risegate Eau. Gosberton Fen.

1680 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING - Agenda Item 3

The Minutes of the Southern Works Committee, which was held on 4th March 2020, copies of which had been circulated, were considered. It was AGREED that the Minutes should be signed as a true record.

1681 MATTERS ARISING - Agenda Item 4

There were no matters arising.

1682 TO CONSIDER PERIOD 06 MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS - Agenda Item 5

The Finance Manager presented the Period 06 Management Accounts, noting that the forecast will be presented after the Engineer's Report, inviting questions and comments from the committee.

1683 REPORT ON ENGINEERING WORKS 2020 - Agenda Item 6

The Operations Manager presented the report on Engineering Works 2020, highlighting points as follows. He also noted that 2020 has been a challenging year considering COVID-19 and the challenges it has caused making it difficult to remain on schedule. Many building materials have been more difficult to source and staff levels have been more difficult to maintain (both internal and external contractors).

Unfortunately, not all committee members could see the presentation being displayed on screen. It was noted that the presentation would be circulated following the meeting so that all could view them.

(a) CAPITAL ASSET IMPROVEMENTS

2020/21 Defra/EA Funded Grant in Aid (GiA) Schemes

(i) SEMPRINGHAM FEN PUMPING STATION REFURBISHMENT

The delivery of this work has been affected by the impacts of COVID-19 due to the Pump Engineer having to shield for 16 weeks during the first lockdown and needing to be on site to manage these works.

The weedscreen contractors have been on site this week, reviewing proposals and awaiting further proposal to move it forward. It is planned that the work to the dump area will be carried out over the following few months and is programmed to be complete by the end of March 2021. The weedscreen cleaner is programmed to be completed by October 2021.

2020/21 Board Funded Capital Schemes

(ii) GRAFT DRAIN IMPROVEMENTS - Scheme 2086

The intention was to have the Graft Drain work completed by now, it is now due to be completed by the end of this financial year (March 2021).

(iii) DOWSBY LODGE IMPROVEMENTS

Everything that was intended to be completed has been, other than the northern bank, where this is currently an issue with a badger sett. In July 2020, a meeting was held with an environmental consultant used by the EA who have advised that there is an option to move the sett. Once this sett has been relocated, works can continue with either improving the existing banks so it can be travelled on or level the bank out by spreading the soil in situ or placing the soil on the southern side bank.

Mr V Barker noted that there are some slips, where the existing slip was, but it is not blocking the watercourse. The Works Manager will investigate this and programme repair.

(iv) JETTING TO MAJOR PIPELINES

The initial programme is still in progress, however, some of the works were outstanding from previous year due to access difficulty, especially in Donington. One option is to look at different equipment to be able to gain access and complete. Once this area is complete, work will continue in other areas in the southern catchment.

(v) REMOTE MONITORING & CONTROL (H&S SCHEME)

The Board have contributed £57,000 to this work, with the additional £110,000 proposed originally to be funded by GiA and Local Levy equally. It is now known that there are not any opportunities for GiA funding for this scheme. It is now hoped that the full remaining amount of £110,000 can be obtained through Local Levy.

Cllr P Moseley questioned if there was a contingency in place for if the Local Levy funding is not achieved? The Operations Manager highlighted the importance of the works and that it would have to be considered for the Board to fund it. The Finance Manager added that currently there is £57,000 within the budget in regard to this work which will try to cover as much as possible, if any further funding was required then it would have to be approved by the Board. The £57,000 budget is proposed to be used as follows:

(vi) GENERAL CULVERT CONTRIBUTIONS

A mistake within the agenda was noted, it being confirmed that it should be a budget of £5,000 as opposed to £500.

Culverts 635, 2880 and 1795 have been identified in the northern area as being in poor condition, however, some are on drains that are being considered to be given up. There may be a requirement for some contribution from the Board within the £5,000 budget.

Proposed Works 2021/22 - Board Funded Capital Schemes

(vii) JETTING TO MAJOR PIPELINES

A map was presented on screen displaying the proposed jetting works to be completed next year in Donington. It was also confirmed that the budget for this is £54,000.

(viii) GRAFT DRAIN IMPROVEMENTS - Scheme 2086

A map was presented on screen displayed completed works (red), proposed works 20/21 (green) and proposed works 21/22 (purple). It is hoped that this work will carry on continuously from this financial year to the next, improving the drain and removing and replacing culverts where necessary.

(ix) HORBLING PUMPING STATION NEW ROOF

There is a £9,000 budget to put an apex roof on Horbling Pumping Station.

The Chairman questioned how many pumping stations roofs have been completed and how many are still to do? The Pump Engineer responded that there is around 5/6 left to complete.

Mr W Ash questioned the choice of a pitch roof, listing alternatives including fibre cement and fibre glass. The Operations Manager responded that the Board made the decision many years ago when apex roofs were first proposed, and alternatives have not been looked into due to knowing they are fit for purpose, noting that alternatives can be looked into. The Chairman felt it may be useful to get some quotes for fibre glass roofs when completing the remaining pumping station roofs.

Mr V Barker noted that consideration should be given to the possible addition of solar panels on the roofs in the future.

(x) GENERAL CULVERT CONTRIBUTIONS

It is not looking likely that the identified culverts, 635, 2880 and 1795 will have any work completed on them this financial year and so they have been included in next years budget.

Proposed Works 2021/22 - Pumping Station Schemes

(xi) DUNSBY FEN PUMPING STATION REPLACE CONTROL PANEL

The panel was built in 1996 and it is wanted to move away from 'fix following fail'. There are no interchangeable parts that could be used.

Proposed Works 2021/22 – Defra/EA Funded Grant in Aid (GiA) Schemes

(xii) LANE DYKE CULVERT REPLACEMENT

This is still at the proposal stage. The existing culvert is a 900mm Armco and following a catchment study was found to be under capacity. It is proposed to be replaced with a larger diameter (1500mm) which will increase capacity and increase the potential of allowing the Lane Dyke to evacuate its water efficiently during high flow conditions.

With GiA funding, there are additional costs which increase the cost of the scheme including contingency, risk factors and potential consultant costs. If it is successful, it is proposed for the culvert to be replaced next year.

(b) DRAIN MAINTENANCE

(i) Annual Summer Flail Mowing / Cutting

The Board maintain around 750km of watercourse every year.

The committee were directed to page 23 of the agenda, highlighting the 124km remaining at the time of printing. The cutting programme is now complete. The Summer Machine Roding is programmed to be complete by the end of November. The weather has been good this season for travelling and therefore have been able to keep on time and budget. The EA PSCA works have also been completed (150km) and it is anticipated the same amount of work will be completed next year.. The SKDC and Lincolnshire Housing Partnership (Mayflower) hand roding contracts work has also been completed on time and budget.

(ii) Prior Notice given for Summer Cutting

The committee were directed to page 26 of the agenda, proposed alternate bank and early cutting, being informed that the Board has received some strong complaints via social media and email. This is the first complaint received around the Boards summer cutting and machine roding programme. Other IDBs have also received similar complaints about the wildlife and nesting birds.

The Operations Manager has met with the complainant and explained the Board's programme and why it is programmed this way. However, the challenge that the Board now face is that the grass cannot be cut before 1st August. This year, cutting commenced in the second week in July. This same programme has been completed for the past 3 / 4 years without receiving any complaints, however, it may be that more has been noticed this year due to people spending more time at home during lockdown. The Operations Manager noted that a review of the programme was planned anyway.

Therefore, a small area has been identified, where it is known work can be done from the opposite side, shown in green on page 26 of the agenda. The proposal is to look at the difference in cost from the current way of working in comparison to the new proposed alternate bank cutting programme.

It is also proposed to complete early flail mowing. as If the watercourses are flailed early, commencing in late March early April then they can be cut early, probably around mid June. If the cutting programme changes, it will also impact on other works programmes throughout the year.

The Northern Works Chairman noted that since the Northern Works Committee meeting, he has had correspondence with a member, Mr J Pocklington, who wanted to highlight his concern regarding the necessity of the early cutting on the lower usage watercourses.

The Operations Manager noted that he has also had correspondence with the member regarding this, unfortunately he had had to leave the meeting early, due to connection problems, and so wasn't able to voice it at the meeting. Mr J Pocklington's main question being is it value for money to be cutting on four weekly cycle, dependant on the growing season.

The Operations Manager explained that his understanding has always been that the banks are flail mowed so that the machine operators can see what they are doing, if they didn't need to see what they were doing, the banks wouldn't be flail mowed. The cutting that is followed up from the flail mowing is the best option regarding cost.

This will be proposed after it has been trialled with the identified area (80km, c40km early flailing and c40km alternate bank cutting which is around 10% of the Board's total maintained) that it is known can be accessed from both sides. Challenges will be faced when other areas in the catchment are proposed as machines will have to travel on cropped land. If the flail mowing is not started early and the window for cutting not extended, then there are options to work longer hours with the existing machines (however, the workforce are already working longer hours), hire machines or extend the Board's fleet (however, there wouldn't be work for another machine outside of cutting season).

Mr K Casswell expressed that he felt the proposed programme is a good idea and that the Operations Manager is, hopefully, going to work out the costings to present to the Board in November, so that a decision can be made by the Board.

Cllr P Mosley explained that he is new to the work of the IDB and so questioned what roding is? He further questioned the impact of the cutting on bank efficiency and whether doing is based on cost or need is better? Lastly, asking for more information around the nature of the complaints received?

The Chairman noted that the complaints are regarding environmental concerns around nesting birds and wildlife, highlighting that nothing has been done differently this year in comparison to previous years, but people have spent more time at home this year and outdoors due to COVID-19. The Chairman agreed with Mr K Casswell, that this is a good starting point to go forward and show that we are responding to complaints. Also adding that more accurate costs will be known next year once it has been tried.

The Operations Manager added that the machine has a reciprocating blade, like a combine, on a cutting basket as an attachment on the arm of the excavator which removes weed and reed. This weed is placed on the bank being worked on; therefore, it is all done on one side, it is flail mowed, cut and arisings are put all on the same side.

There are a few exceptions where the weed cannot be placed on the same side bank due to it being too steep and rolling back into the watercourse. This is completed to maintain conveyance of the watercourses, referring to cott problems and the importance of clearing channels. Everything is maintained at least once a year and the critical watercourses are flailed early, around April, and are maintained at least twice per year.

The Northern Works Chairman noted that he has received concern from a farmer who can remember the days when a Foreman would visit farmers to inform them that the IDB would be coming on their land.

The Northern Works Chairman made reference to current communication including the text message service, being on the website, emails etc. but that it does need to be realised that not all farmers / land occupiers are converse with technology and some may not even have internet access.

The Operations Manager noted that, fortunately, with the thousands of ratepayers, there are only a handful that present any difficulty.

(iii) Proposed Desilting, Bushing and Cleansing Works

An optimistic cleansing programme has been programmed this year, around 77km, and are looking at dedicating at least four machines to complete this work within the programmed timescale. If the work is going to affect any members land or anybody has any queries, please contact the Operations Team to discuss.

(c) PUMPING STATION MAINTENANCE

These issues relate to the northern area of the catchment, but the Operations Manager felt it important for both works committees to be aware of them.

During high water levels, issues were found at South Kyme, Damford and Ewerby Pumping Station. Photographs and videos were displayed on screen, showing that when the main river outfalls were at high levels, water was coming through the bank and around and under the pumping station, causing concern around the damage the water was causing. Initial investigations have been completed and further investigative works are required at a total cost of approximately £22,000 . There will be additional costs to complete any work derived from the investigations. The EA have been approached to fund this work, however, in the opinion of the Operations Manager and Northern Works Committee, this work is extremely important to find out any damage and deal with it accordingly.

(d) HEALTH & SAFETY

The Board have entered another 5-year agreement with Copes, the Board's Health and Safety Consultants, which works well.

1684 QUARTER 2 FORECAST - Agenda Item 7

The Finance Manager presented the Quarter 2 Forecast, noting that the adjustments explained within the Engineer's Report have been included within the forecast. Currently, the Board should be in position with an additional £20,000 at the end of the financial year.

This is a healthy position, especially in comparison to this time last year. The Period 07 Management Accounts have also just been produced and are also indicating an additional c£15,000 at the end of the financial year.

1685 REVIEW OF POLICY No. 46: CROP LOSS COMPENSATION - Agenda Item 8

The Finance Manager explained that this policy has been produced to document what is already in practice.

This was presented to the Audit & Risk Committee on 14th October 2020, at which it was suggested that an additional paragraph be included to explain how farmers claim the compensation. The officers of the Board therefore held a meeting to discuss this, with the outcomes of this meeting outlined in the agenda. This has been presented to both works committee to gain input around what detail the committees feel should be included within this additional paragraph for the policy, questions and comments were invited.

Mr W Ash felt that the compensation is fair and should stay as it is and the policy will make it easier to claim. Also noting that farmers need to remember that they are having their drains cleared and land kept dry.

Mr K Casswell felt it would be beneficial to put the onus onto the landowner to claim the compensation, also noting that other adjacent IDBs don't pay any compensation, even though it states within the Land Drainage Act that compensation should be paid for injury sustained.

The Chairman felt it was important to pay compensation to maintain the good relationship with landowners.

The Operations Manager noted the proposed slight change in the current procedure that the onus will be on the landowner to claim the compensation as opposed to the Board's Officers chasing it.

The Chairman asked about the current winter compensation claim procedure? The Operations Manager explained that the winter maintenance compensation is worked out from the drivers cropping sheets, unless a large, agreed area is being used.

The Northern Works Chairman questioned how many landowners / occupiers have provided the Board with contact details? The Operations Manager explained that the main source of contact is from the rate paying system, some of which all we have is names and address', with no contact number. The Northern Works Chairman highlighted that it has been included in the Rating Brochure for the last few years for land occupiers to provide contact details i.e. a contact number or email, further adding how are the Board supposed to notify them if they don't provide contact details, adding that he feels that 99% of farmers would have a mobile phone and are therefore contactable via phone.

The Chairman agreed with the Northern Works Committee Chairman, that the farmers need to provide contact details, and that perhaps an alternative way of getting this message to them should be considered.

It was confirmed that a proposed paragraph, displayed on screen, will be presented to the Board for approval.

1686 REPORT ON THE SOUTH FORTY FOOT CATCHMENT UPDATES - Agenda Item 9

The Chairman explained that the Chief Executive was going to present this report and so he, the Operations Manager and Finance Manager will try to answer any questions. Any questions that cannot be answered will be passed onto the Chief Executive once he is well enough to answer.

(a) Boston Tidal Barrier

The Chairman noted that he is sure all the committee members have seen this and how impressive it is. The Chairman questioned whether it would be possible to visit in Spring 2021 if Works Committee Inspection Tours can go ahead then.

(b) Boston Haven Bank Improvements

No questions were posed.

(c) EA/BSIDB Public Sector Cooperation Agreement (PSCA)

The EA PSCA Works for 2021 were displayed on screen.

(d) South Lincolnshire Water Partnership (SLWP)

Mr K Casswell explained that the Chief Executive is Chairman of the SLWP, the aim being for water transfer via open water conveyance with wildlife sites along the banks of the SFFD.

Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust (LWT) have been successful in an Elms bid for 50ha in Bourne North Fen. This is next to a pit owned by the Board. This site would be able to polish enough water to supply Bourne and if the South Lincs Reservoir goes ahead it would require twenty sites of the same size.

There has been no landowner / public engagement around the South Lincs Reservoir yet as it is unknown whether it will go ahead. If it does go ahead, it will start to be constructed around 2025/26. They are currently looking at a long list of sites.

Mr K Casswell also noted that there is a bid for £800,000 to look at the quality of water within the Board's and Welland and Deepings IDB catchment.

Mr K Casswell noted that Anglian Water are still yet to decide whether the resources within the area will be sufficient or whether they take water from the River Trent in a pipe, but hopefully Defra will support the option of open water transfer and all its benefits.

Mr K Casswell concluded that it is a wonderful thing that this catchment is so heavily involved in.

(e) SFFD De-silting Work

The Chairman noted that the silt cutter is on the River Steeping, questioning if there is any idea when it will be with the Board?

The Operations Manager explained that it should be back to commence desilting work on the NFFD the second week of January. There is still no progression regarding the desilting of the SFFD, however, the EA have indicated about doing more work next year. There is 9km remaining to the A17, which is dependant on the EA.

(f) Upper Catchment Natural Flood Management (NFM) and Control Analysis

The Operations Manager noted that a Farm Engagement Consultant, Lesley Sharpe, has been employed to walk the upper catchments and provide a report. £100,000 has been secured towards progressing the seven sub-catchments and a Local Choices bid has been submitted. Any further budget for other schemes has not yet been allocated until the outcomes of Swaton are known.

(g) The Lower Witham Flood Resilience Project 2020

It was confirmed that W16 is the only area within the Board's catchment. Some of the banks are 200 years old and the concern is that the banks may fail during high water levels. It is therefore good news that they are being proactive and replacing, reinforcing and reinstating where required.

1687 REPORT ON RAINFALL - Agenda Item 10

The rainfall figures at Black Hole Drove were circulated. The Committee RESOLVED that this report be noted.

1688 ANY OTHER BUSINESS - Agenda Item 11

(a) REPLACEMENT OF CULVERT 1959 - FX1130 - GOSBERTON HIGH FEN

The Operations Manager explained that culvert 1959 failed several years ago and has now subsequently been replaced. The Board were approached to provide a quote for replacement but was told it was too expensive by the tenant. Works have now been completed, but not completed to the specification provided, especially in relation to the headwalls, as displayed in photographs shown on screen.

If the culvert were to fail it would be treated as any other obstruction in a watercourse would and be removed.

The Southern Works Committee noted that it is tenanted land, and this has been ongoing through multiple tenants. If this fails with a different tenant, will the onus lie with landowner to rectify it?

The Operations Manager confirmed that this has been ongoing for several years, highlighting that the Board do not make any money out of replacing culverts, a quote is simply given to replace to specification.

The Chairman felt it needed addressing with the Structures Committee and that if the Board provide a specification, it should be met and that the Board do not want this to set a precedent.

Mr W Ash suggested that an inspection by one of the Board's Officers takes place whilst works are being carried out to ensure they are being completed to specification.

The Works Manager explained that himself and the Works Supervisor went to site to meet the contactors, but they could not commence works that day due to water levels being too high. The next contact received was upon completion, nobody had notified that they were commencing works.

The Board's Officers can only be on site if they are told and know when works are commencing.

The Chairman questioned what the next course of action is? Do they need to be asked to rectify it?

The Operations Manager explained that that is the reason for bringing it to the attention of the committee.

The Chairman felt it needed to be presented to the next Structures Committee meeting, for them to produce a policy.

Mr C Wray referred to public liability and indemnity, noting that if you complete work on a public highway, you have to have a certain amount of liability insurance and have to indemnify the work. Mr C Wray felt it should be a similar thing for the watercourses, concerning the ultimate damage that could come from a collapse. By completing works to a sub-standard level, they are then taking liability upon themselves for any problems i.e. downstream flooding, caused from the culvert issue.

The Operations Manager emphasised that the Board do not provide a specification because we want to complete the works but provide a specification so that they are completed to a standard.

Mr K Casswell felt it needed to be discussed by the Structures Committee and that it needed to be insisted that the Board are notified when works are commencing. If this is not done, then the Board should have the right to say it has not been completed to specification.

Mr W Ash felt that if the work has not been carried out to standard then it should be rectified and brought up to standard by the tenant immediately rather than waiting for it to fail.

The Chairman questioned whether if it is signed off once complete, like building regulations? The Operations Manager responded that once consent is given, they can commence works, there is no further sign off.

The Chairman felt a policy needs altering / forming, noting that discussion should take place with the Structures Chairman.

The Chairman apologised for any technical problems and noted his hope that an inspection tour would be possible in the Spring.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 15.42.