

BLACK SLUICE INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

MINUTES

of the proceedings of a meeting of the Structures Committee

held remotely on
24th March 2021 at 2pm

Members

Chairman - * Mr J G Fowler

Mr W Ash	* Mr V A Barker
* Mr P Holmes	Mr R Leggott
Mr P Robinson	* Cllr P Skinner
* Cllr M Cooper	

* Member Present

In attendance: Mr I Warsap (Chief Executive)
Mr P Nicholson (Operations Manager)

Due to COVID-19, this meeting was 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.

1750 RECORDING THE MEETING - Agenda Item 1

Members were informed that the meeting would be recorded.

1751 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE - Agenda Item 2

Apologies were received from Mr W Ash, Mr R Leggott and Mr P Robinson.

1752 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - Agenda Item 3

There were no declarations of interest.

1753 MINUTES OF THE LAST STRUCTURES COMMITTEE MEETING - Agenda Item 4

Minutes of the last meeting held on the 13th March 2019, copies of which had been circulated, were considered and it was AGREED that they should be signed as a true record.

1754 MATTERS ARISING - Agenda Item 5

(a) RAILWAY CONTRIBUTION - Minute 1413(a)

Mr V Barker questioned if the Solicitor has made any progress with this?

The Chief Executive explained that a solicitor has not been formally appointed to progress this as he has spoken to various people at the Environment Agency (EA), with nobody being able to find anything relating to the agreement in place with British Rail in 1853. Mr V Barker noted that he found the information in a book he borrowed from local farmer, Tom Tunnard. The Chief Executive noted that he will have a further look to see if he can find the information, adding that he is not overly optimistic of success.

1755 REVIEW OF THE STRUCTURES COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE – Agenda Item 6

The Chairman presented the Structures Committee Terms of Reference, noting the only change being the addition of the 'reporting' paragraph, that is a standard paragraph that has been added to all committee's terms of reference.

All AGREED that the Structures Committee Terms of Reference be RECOMMENDED to the Board for approval.

Cllr M Cooper joined the meeting, apologising for being late due to technical difficulties.

1756 RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING HELD 26 JUNE 2019 RELATING TO THE MATTERS ARISING OF THE STRUCTURES COMMITTEE MINUTES OF THE 13 MARCH 2019 - Agenda Item 7

The committee received the minutes of the Board meeting held on 26th June 2019 relating to the matters arising of the Structures Committee minutes of the 13th March 2019.

The committee RESOLVED that the minutes should be received.

1757 RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD 10 JUNE 2020 RELATING TO THE CANCELLED 2020 STRUCTURES MEETING - Agenda Item 8

The committee received the minutes of the Executive meeting held on 10th June 2020 relating to the cancelled 2020 structures meeting.

The committee RESOLVED that the minutes should be received.

1758 REVIEW OF THE STRUCTURES REPLACEMENT POLICY - Agenda Item 9

The Chief Executive noted the only change being the addition shown in red ink at paragraph 6.8. This has been added to the policy due to a previously encountered problem with the construction of a culvert by a private contractor. This will also be likely to be included with consents.

The Chairman suggested that it perhaps also should clarify that the next stage of construction should not go ahead unless the previous stage has been inspected / approved by the Board.

Mr V Barker questioned how long a contractor may be expected to wait for an inspection from a Board's Officer before being able to move to the next phase of construction?

The Operations Manager noted that, previously, contractors have given very little notice to the Board to carry out the inspection – i.e., 1 days' notice. The ideal situation is for the contractors to provide a start date and expected completion so that the Board are aware in advance and can arrange for an Officer to attend site to inspect at each stage of the works. Mr V Barker responded that he has no objections to this, as long as the contractor understand this from the start. The Chairman added that if this is detailed in the consent, then they will be aware of the process.

The Chairman felt that the policy is understood and working.

All AGREED that the policy be RECOMMENDED to the Board for approval with the addition to paragraph 6.8 that that the next stage of construction should not go ahead unless the previous stage has been inspected / approved by the Board.

1759 TO RECEIVE THE STRUCTURES REPORT 2021 AND APPROVE THE PROPOSED STRUCTURES REPLACEMENT PROGRAMME - Agenda Item 10

The Operations Manager presented the Structures Report 2021, with accompanying photographs displayed on screen for each culvert discussed.

(a) INFORMATION ON INVESTIGATIONS AT EWERBY, SOUTH KYME AND DAMFORD PUMPING STATIONS

These three pumping stations, Ewerby, South Kyme and Damford have experienced issues with high water levels running back from main river outfalls.

The inspections and groundwork investigation works have been completed. The Environment Agency (EA) have been asked to fund the inspections and investigation works (inspections; c£10,000 and investigations c£25,000). The EA have responded that they are willing to pay towards the cost of these investigations. Once the investigations are fully complete, it will give an idea of what works are required to put a revetment in place to stop the water coming through the banks and if there are any issues with the fabric of the pumping station building.

Mr P Holmes noted his concerns that the EA would not fund it due to the pumping stations being property of the Board.

The Operations Manager noted that the EA have been sent all the information and have raised no other comments other than that they would be willing to cover the cost, noting that the water is believed to be coming through the raised banks of the Main Rivers.

Mr V Barker noted that, over 60 years, he has observed that at many of the pumping stations it can be seen where the soil has settled down away from the building.

Mr V Barker suggested that a Board's Officer should observe each pumping station outside and take note of any settlement of the pumping station, so that the Board can identify which have settled and any work that may be required.

The Chairman acknowledged Mr V Barker's point, noting that he thinks, in this case, it is a deeper rooted problem that may not necessarily be visible, due to the high water levels in the EA's drains.

The Chairman confirmed that the current surveys, being completed by Stantec, are investigating saturation levels and water ingress. The Operations Manager added that the next stage will be a proposal around what works are required. Stantec are next due on site in April to collect more data.

(b) TRINITY COLLEGE PUMPING STATION WATER SEEPAGE FROM LONG SKIRTH

It has been reported that water is coming back round the pumping station, during high water levels, this being the first time it has been reported.

The Operations Manager has spoken with Stantec, and as soon as they are available, they will be conducting an inspection, similar to that being completed at Ewerby, South Kyme and Damford. The Operations Manager will continue to report on progress of this.

(c) CULVERTS REPORTED AS IN POOR CONDITION

The Operations Manager noted that it is unusual to have so many culverts in disrepair at the same time, noting that he believes some may have failed more quickly as a result of the high water levels experienced recently.

(i) MORTON FEN – No. 16 – FX1772

This culvert is access to a residential property. The Operations Manager has spoken to the landowner, the next step being to formally write to the landowner explaining the options and offering quotes for repair / replacement. However, the Operations Manager noted that he feels replacement will be the only realistic option.

The culvert has no benefit to the Board and so it is proposed that no contribution is offered. It is being monitored and will be removed as soon as possible if it fails and blocks the watercourse.

Mr V Barker questioned if the age of the culvert is known?

The Operations Manager responded that there is no record of age on the GIS database, noting that it is now a lot easier to record new information on the GIS digital database, adding that it is an Armco pipe so is probably going to be around the 1970's at the earliest.

Mr V Barker suggested that it could have been done as part of a Black Sluice improvement scheme, expressing his concern around this. Mr V Barker referenced drainage grants, that were only paid to the owner of the asset being paid for, suggesting that the grant money was paid to Black Sluice IDB as the owner to improve the watercourses, including putting in culverts. Therefore, expressing his concern about being deemed as owners in order to receive the grant.

The Chief Executive noted that Black Sluice IDB don't own any watercourses and so may have been provided the grant to improve the conveyance of water, but the Board is not the owner, the watercourses are owned by the adjacent landowners.

Mr P Holmes noted that the Board may have done the work, being paid by the owner who received the grant, adding that he can't imagine the Board would have funded the remainder needed for the culvert in addition to the grant.

The Chief Executive added that the Board's GIS system has 'layers' including a 'culverts structures and bridges' layer, noting that the system allows to investigate any asset within the catchment. The Chief Executive believed that less than 5% of the assets state that they belong to the Board; and the few that do will have the associated formal documentation regarding it.

(ii) HACONBY FEN – No. 815 – FX1773

The Operations Manager has spoken to the landowner about this culvert, in addition to some committee members having spoken with the landowner.

The landowner agrees that it needs to be removed if blocking the watercourse and preventing the conveyance of water, however, he does not agree that he has to fund the replacement culvert in order to access his field, feeling that he is paying an 'additional tax' because of the location of his land.

The Operations Manager has explained to the landowner that it is access to his land and therefore an asset of his. The culvert is not required by the Board to maintain its operations.

The landowner has since asked if there can be changes made to the specification. The Operations Manager has advised that changes can be discussed, but must be agreed by the Operations Manager, it being agreed that a different type of pipe is going to be used.

The Chairman confirmed that himself and Mr P Holmes have spoken with the landowner, who is questioning the policy, believing that the culvert should be put in at the cost of the Board as opposed to at the cost of the individual landowner.

However, the Chairman felt that the policy, and in this individual case, it is correct that the landowner should fund the culvert, if he chooses to replace it, due to it being only of benefit to him to access his field and the Board not using it for their operations.

The Operations Manager has provided the landowner with an estimate for replacement of the culvert and he had asked for it to be removed, which the Board have done.

Mr P Holmes noted that the landowner had stated that he had discussed this with landowners within catchments of adjacent IDBs and that they have said they would pay for the replacement culvert. However, Mr P Holmes has spoken with the Chairman of an adjacent Board, who has confirmed this would not be the case and that the Board don't fund replacement culverts, it would be the responsibility of the landowner.

The Chief Executive noted that there are often challenges received in relation to what other IDBs do, but we are acting on behalf of Black Sluice IDB. If the Board were to fund every culvert, it would require a very large budget and therefore a substantial increase in drainage rates to be able to fund this.

The Chairman felt that this culvert is part of the landowner's farm infrastructure and therefore supported the policy and Operations Manager regarding the cost being the landowner's responsibility.

Mr V Barker questioned whether the landowners owns or tenants the land east or west of the culvert, suggesting that he could use one of the culverts either side. The Chairman confirmed that he believes it is the same landowner to both fields either side and that there is a grass track along the drain side that he could use to move between each of the fields if he were to use one of the other access culverts. The Operations Manager has suggested this to the landowner, who believes that the total area of all the fields is too much of an ask for a single access culvert.

(iii) BOSTON WEST – No. 2757 – FX1764

The Operations Manager has spoken to the landowner about this culvert, who does not believe it is his responsibility, the Operations Manager explained that it is access to his land, albeit there is a long term tenancy in place. The Operations Manager has also spoken to the tenant who has stated that he wants the culvert in place.

The Operations Manager also noted that there was a bank slip that the Board attended and repaired, at which point the culvert was identified as in poor condition. The landowner argued that the Board had therefore created the problem and should therefore replace it; despite the fact the culvert had already rotted and no longer fit for purpose or safe. It is currently being monitored and if it fails and blocks the watercourse, the Board will remove it.

The landowner has also argued that it is a passing place for vehicles on the adjacent single track road, although not formally identified as one, therefore suggesting that if the culvert is removed it will create a danger and that Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) should be involved. The Operations Manager will discuss with LCC about this.

The Operations Manager explained to the committee that the culvert does offer some benefit to the Board as it prevents Board's machinery having to track a long distance back and therefore suggests a contribution of £1,000.

All AGREED that a contribution of £1,000 be made in relation to culvert 2757.

(iv) HOLLAND FEN – No. 2754 – FX1775

The Operations Manager explained that this is a concrete Ogee pipe that has cracked, with the landowner initially stating that Board's machinery had hit it and broken it. However, upon inspection by a Board's officer all of the pipes were found to be cracked; which is known as 'hearting'.

The Operations Manager has spoken with the landowner, it not being required by the Board for its operations, it being access to a reservoir.

Mr V Barker noted the soil cover on the pipe, suggesting it may not be enough for the diameter of the pipe, therefore meaning the load bearing and stresses were not correct, and it may have been preventable. The Operations Manager noted that it may be possible, it could have been fit for purpose at the time of installation, but due to the increase in heavy machinery, may no longer be.

Cllr M Cooper agreed with Mr V Barker, suggesting that it looks like a stress fracture due to excess weight that may have been prevented if they had had a concrete slab across the top; which needs to be considered when replaced.

(v) BICKER FEN – No. 1408 – FX1770

The Operations Manager noted that this culvert and culvert 1469, in the next item, are both access to land owned by the same landowner.

This was reported to the Board by a member of the workforce who lives in the area, it was blocking the watercourse and so has been removed.

(vi) BICKER FEN – No. 1469 – FX1769

The Operations Manager noted that this culvert and culvert 1408, in the previous item, are both access to land owned by the same landowner.

This is a concrete block headwall, this culvert was extended by the Board at some time during the 80s, which is the section that has failed, the remainder of the culvert is in good condition. However, the landowner is now saying due to the reduction in running width it isn't big enough for his requirements.

This culvert does provide benefit to the Board as it is an access culvert between Bicker Fen and Swineshead Lowgrounds and so is used by the Board, therefore proposing a contribution of £1,000.

All AGREED that a contribution of £1,000 be made in relation to culvert 1469.

(vii) SMALL DROVE – No. 718 – FX1760

This culvert is under a highway, with Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) acknowledging that this culvert hasn't been repaired to the specification by the Engineer; it being a temporary repair to try and prevent the road from collapsing. The repair therefore isn't adequate and are aware of this. LCC are therefore going to complete more temporary repairs, until they can fit it into their programme for permanent replacement.

Mr V Barker noted that he has been to site and seen this, highlighting that there is a brick garden wall along the drain side, noting that it may be beneficial to put a return pile in the drain side to protect it from running silt. The Operations Manager noted that LCC have suggested this, which will also stabilise the bank.

(viii) QUADRING FEN – No. 50 – FX1761

This culvert is under a highway, with the Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) having done a temporary repair. The concern is the loose stone that has been placed on top of the pipe. LCC are aware of this, confirming that it is only a temporary repair and will complete a permanent replacement as soon as possible.

Mr V Barker noted that he has sent a video of this, showing brown water running through the pipe, suggesting that this could indicate another collapse inside. The video was displayed on screen.

The Operations Manager noted that this could be a possibility, if it is believed to be a detriment to flows then the Board will act upon it.

(d) CULVERT SURVEYS

The Operations Manager drew the committee's attention to the culvert survey panning map, showing what has and hasn't been completed.

The Operations Manager noted the discussion had at the last meeting and about the possibility of looking at getting outside help to conduct the surveys. The Operations Manager noted there have been no surveys carried out by outside staff but has been 201 completed in 2019 and 172 completed in 2020 by the Board's workforce.

There is around 980 left to complete, with the Operations Manager believing that this could be completed with the Board's workforce only, as opposed to getting outside help. A workforce pair can comfortably complete 25 surveys per day, which equates to 40 days / 8 weeks work if it is only the one pair doing them, the ideal being to get it done as soon as possible. If outside surveyors were brought in, they would most probably need to be accompanied by a member of the Board's workforce anyway.

The Chairman felt the expertise and constant quality of surveys is definitely an advantage of the surveys being completed by the Board's workforce, if time allows. The Operations Manager noted that the restrictions are the seasonal difficulties including water levels and vegetation.

The Chief Executive questioned whether the ones that are left are more difficult to inspect than the ones already completed? Also questioning what detriment there would be to other programmed works if completing them by Board's workforce only? The Chief Executive finally suggested that the committee could provide a timeframe that they would like to see the remaining culvert surveys completed by.

The Operations Manager noted that when the culvert surveys commenced there were 4 teams available and a lot completed, but this does take a big resource from other jobs that require doing. Once completed, the information will be able to be developed and a plan completed.

Mr V Barker noted that the committee don't actually get to see the survey results, therefore not knowing how many have been identified as in poor condition or good condition and not knowing how many can be expected to fail in a given time, this will then give an idea of the workload to be expected. Mr V Barker clarified that the committee don't need to know each individual culvert report, but as groups, i.e., those identified as in 'poor condition', 'very poor condition' etc.

The Operations Manager explained that the culverts are rated from 1 – 5, for each aspect of the culvert, i.e., the pipe, headwalls etc. It is also dependant on the person completing the surveys and what is visible on the day of inspection.

Cllr M Cooper noted that most of the culverts aren't the Board's or the Board's responsibility, so is it really beneficial or necessary to be using the workforce's time to inspect them all? The Chairman responded that it is the Board's responsibility to transfer water so therefore the Board need to know where the weak points are in the system to enable water conveyance and gain some 'pre-warning' about where problems may arise. Cllr M Cooper questioned whether it is efficient, questioning whether the culverts that have collapsed and been presented earlier in the meeting were on the radar as in poor condition from their inspection survey, noting that he feels it is a lot of work that may not be providing good value.

The Operations Manager added that they are still working to the original idea of looking at what is within the catchment, classified as assets, the surveys can then help determine if any are full Board responsibility.

Cllr P Skinner added to Cllr M Coopers point, noting that a 'watch list' really needs to be established at the time of the surveys, so that site visits can take place more frequently to monitor so that the Board are able to be proactive as opposed to reactive.

The Chairman agreed, noting that to be proactive, the information needs to be available, adding that a realistic timescale to complete the remaining surveys would perhaps be another two seasons. Further noting that it may be beneficial to focus on the inspections in the Spring to try and avoid inhibiting factors such as high water levels and vegetation growth.

The Chairman expressed his support for getting the surveys and therefore database completed, to enable the committee and Board's Officers to move into the second stage of using the information to be proactive.

The Chief Executive noted that the inspections won't stop once they have all been completed it will continually roll on to enable a proactive approach, suggesting that a report regarding the frequency, inspections and category of what they have been identified as be presented at the next meeting.

Mr V Barker felt that two seasons is very admirable, but not necessarily manageable, noting that management don't want to be tied down by this, noting the committee should be prepared for it to possibly take longer.

The Operations Manager also highlighted that a new system has been developed by the GIS Technician; a digital culvert inspection form that will automatically transfer the information on the inspection sheet into the database. At the moment, the culvert surveys are being carried out on pen and paper and then physically transcribed into the database, which is a lengthy administrative job. Therefore, there may be the possibility of purchasing two tablets in the future for the workforce to complete the inspections on.

(e) STRUCTURES REPLACEMENT PROGRAMME 2021/22

The Operations Manager noted that these are carried over from the previous year. All AGREED the Structures Replacement Programme 2021/22 as below:

No. 635	Swineshead	15m x 0.6m	Armco	£1,000 max contribution
No. 1795	Kirton	12m x 0.6m	Armco	£1,000 max contribution
No. 2880	Kirton	9m x 0.6m	BAT	Potential to give this up

1760 ANY OTHER BUSINESS - Agenda Item 11

(a) LOAD BEARING OF CULVERTS

Mr V Barker referred to twin wall culverts, in relation to depth, soil cover and the heavy machinery crossing them, and about understanding the load bearing of them, and the specification of the pipe. The Operations Manager noted that the specification can be provided, it is highways specification.

(b) GRAFT DRAIN CULVERT

Mr V Barker referred to the last culvert that has been put in on the Graft Drain, expressing his confusion as to why it has been put in when there are a number of other access points and the number of culverts is trying to be reduced. The Operations Manager confirmed that it is part of a scheme and that the landowner requested it.

(c) RISEGATE DRAIN – ELECTRICITY POLES

Mr V Barker referred to the electricity poles on the RiseGate Drain verges, noting that the drain owned by the Board should be straight forward to get a wayleave payment from the electricity board. In relation to the other side, the Board would likely need to apply for ownership of the land to be able to claim a wayleave payment for that. Mr V Barker noted the time it takes to move around these poles in Board's machinery and so feels it should be compensated for. The Chief Executive responded that he will look into it.

(d) MAP BOOK

Mr P Holmes noted an old map book of the Black Sluice IDB catchment that he had found, adding that he will have a look at it to see what detail is included and share with the Board's Officer's.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 16:02.