

# **BLACK SLUICE INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD**

## **MINUTES**

of the proceedings of a meeting of the Environment Committee

held at the office of the Board on  
1<sup>st</sup> March 2022 at 2pm

### **Members**

Chairperson - \* Mr P Holmes

Mr W Ash	*	Mr J Atkinson
* Mr V Barker	*	Mr K C Casswell
Mr M Rollinson		Mr P Robinson
* Mr R Welberry	*	Mr R Needham
* Cllr P Skinner		

\* Member Present

In attendance: Mr I Warsap (Chief Executive)  
Mr P Nicholson (Operations Manager)  
Ms T Smalley (Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust)  
Mr S Harrison (Works Manager)

#### 1931 Recording the meeting - Agenda Item 1

Board Members were informed that the meeting would be recorded.

#### 1932 Apologies for absence - Agenda Item 2

Apologies were received from Mr W Ash, Mr M Rollinson and Mr P Robinson.

The Chairperson welcomed and introduced Tammy Smalley (guest from Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust), Mr R Needham and Cllr P Skinner (new Environment Committee members).

#### 1933 Declarations of interest - Agenda Item 3

There were no declarations of interest.

#### 1934 Minutes of the last meeting - Agenda Item 4

The Minutes of the last meeting of the Environment Committee held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2021, copies of which had been circulated, were considered. It was AGREED that they should be signed as a true record.

#### 1935 Matters arising - Agenda Item 5

There were no matters arising.

1936 To review the Biodiversity Action Plan (Policy No. 11) - Agenda Item 6

The Chairperson presented the Biodiversity Action Plan, noting that it is a fluid document.

The Chief Executive highlighted that it had just been noted that figures relating to the Board's district (4.1, page 9 in the action plan) are now incorrect due to the recent extension of the Board's extended area. Therefore, these changes will be made.

The Chief Executive also highlighted the documents fluidity, encouraging members to ask any questions regarding it and provide feedback at any time.

The Committee RESOLVED to recommend that the Biodiversity Action Plan (Policy No. 11) be approved at the next Board meeting.

1937 To receive a report on environmental work completed in 2021/22 and recommendations for proposed works for 2022/23 - Agenda Item 7

The Operations Manager presented this agenda item, highlighting particular points as follows.

**Completed Works 2021/22**

Owl Boxes

Photos were displayed on screen; it being noted that the squirrel in the barn owl box has been bred in the box.

Mr R Welberry noted the cost of the owl boxes (£245) and that the owner of the pet shop opposite the offices of the Board has expressed that he thinks he would be able to make them cheaper.

RSPB Water Abstraction for Frampton Marsh

The Chief Executive noted that the RSPB Frampton Marsh have noted that the pump used to abstract water from the Wyberton Marsh Drain for water level management at the Frampton Marsh Nature Reserve is failing, they may discuss with the EA about a larger capacity.

Mr K Casswell questioned if water is pumped out of the counter drain for Willow Tree Farm or if it just done through gravity? Ms T Smalley responded that she didn't think it was pumped but will find out and confirm.

Operation Fly Swat

Photos were displayed on screen of some of the cases of fly tipping in 2021. The contribution of £3,454.78 was noted as invaluable for the service provided, it being further added that most of what they collect is collected without requiring assistance from the Board.

Invasive Species

The Operations Manager noted that the Board's plant vehicles are equipped with Tom Toms, which facilitates easy reporting of invasive species, reported to the Lincolnshire Environmental Records annually.

*Yellow Flower* – The Operations Manager reminded the committee of the 3-year trial around the control of yellow flower growing on watercourse banks. Comparative ‘before’ and ‘after’ photos were displayed on screen, however, the Operations Manager noted that the photos are not representative of the results due to the time of year taken. He highlighted that the controls trialled have shown a reduction in the growth of yellow flower, and presented the following estimated costs to complete this trial work as part of the Board’s maintenance:

*Estimated machine cost to the Board to complete 3 x cuts* **c£750,000**

*Not included:*

- *estimated cost of ground nesting bird surveys c£100,000 x 3 = **c£300,000***
- *estimated cost of compensation c£100,000 x 3 = **c£300,000***  
*(50% of 800km @0.25p/m)*

The Operations Manager added that, in some cases, prevention is more cost effective than cure, however, if the growth of yellow flower was to cause a bank slip, for instance, it would cost considerably less to repair the bank slip than it would to control its growth in the first instance.

Mr R Welberry questioned the main cause of concern of yellow flower? It was confirmed that some landowners are concerned about the cross contamination of the yellow flower with crops of oil seed rape.

Mr V Barker noted that a chemical spray would be the most viable option, questioning if there are any chemicals that would kill the yellow flower that is able to be sprayed next to a watercourse?

The Chairperson responded that this has been investigated and there is no chemical (ground mounted or water mounted) available. The Chairperson further expressed his opinion that the trial has proven that it can be controlled, however, if a farmer is concerned about cross contamination with a crop, then it should be the responsibility of the farmer to control the growth of the yellow flower, it being unfeasible for the IDB to control it.

Mr J Atkinson questioned how the costs had been established? Noting that the Board already own the machines and employ the operatives. The Operations Manager acknowledged this but added that the machines do not have a cost when stood in the shed i.e., fuel, mileage. The drivers are paid anyway, but if they are doing work to control the yellow flower it takes them away from the current maintenance workload that needs doing. It would still be an additional cost outside of the budget.

Mr J Atkinson further suggested sowing grass after cut in the second year, as the grass would become more dominant and therefore prevent the growth of the yellow flower, further adding that birds won’t nest in yellow flower.

The Chairperson noted how many years this topic has appeared on the agenda, and that it needs concluding, adding that the Board have trialled to see if it is controllable but that it is just too expensive for the Board to do and so should be up to the farmer.

Mr J Atkinson agreed, adding that it would be beneficial to notify some of the farmers who have an issue with yellow flower.

The Chairperson questioned if the Board has any authority to enforce the maintenance of riparian drains? It was confirmed that the Board can only enforce when there is an obstruction to the conveyance of water.

Mr R Welberry questioned that there is no chemical available? It was confirmed there is no chemical and that also there is no machine available to apply the chemical.

Mr R Needham questioned if the arisings deposited on the drain side effect the growth of yellow flower? Mr J Atkinson noted that he felt it made it worse. The Chief Executive noted that he has never seen any yellow flower grow through the water and that when the excavators lift the arisings from the drain, they shouldn't be pulling it up through the yellow flower and so shouldn't be bringing any yellow flower seed in it.

Mr J Atkinson referred back to his suggestion of spreading grass seed. The Chairperson noted that there is still a cost associated with that. It was suggested that a trial be carried out with the grass seed.

Mr K Casswell suggested it would be beneficial to show the famers what it would cost the Board to control the yellow flower so that they understand how unviable it is.

The Chief Executive also added that other Lincolnshire IDBs are encountering the same problem with yellow flower and also can't find a feasible way to control it.

#### Bat Boxes

Photos were displayed on screen, there being no confirmed sightings of occupancy to date.

#### Badger Setts

Photos were displayed on screen. The Operations Manager explained to the committee that the operations workforce all hold a CL27 Licence that allows for the interference with badgers for the purpose of IDB work. The Operations Manager also noted the potential dangers badger setts can cause to machinery. The Board have a mapping layer to keep a record of all the known badger setts in the catchment.

Mr J Atkinson noted that Dunsby Fen Road is giving way because of a badger sett in the drain bank, questioning who's responsibility this is? It was confirmed that it is the responsibility of the County Council Highways, it being suggested to upload photos to 'Fix my street'.

#### Pollution

Photos were displayed on screen, showing incidents of pollution in watercourses. It was further noted that Environment Agency (EA) follow up incidents and find the source of pollution, adding that it is also not within the Board's remit to tackle the offender, which is also a role of the EA.

### **Proposed works 2022/2023**

#### Water Vole Surveys

A map showing the proposed water vole location surveys was presented on screen. It being noted that the purpose of the surveys is to locate and identify if the Board's works are going to disturb them.

### Winter Bushing and Cleansing

Photos were displayed on screen, with the Operations Manager noting that the works on the North Forty Foot Drain (NFFD) are now nearing completion.

The Chairperson referenced the photographs, questioning if the slipway had to be made for the machine to enter the water? It was noted that the slipway was already there, installed in 1996. It was noted that the dredger did bring some stone out from it, the lagoon has been checked over for stone, and will be checked again when spread.

Mr V Barker referred to a previous complaint from one of the adjacent residents about the maintenance of the bushes / vegetation, noting this work should have satisfied them, but it will be their responsibility to keep it maintained.

It was noted that there is drone footage of 'before' and 'after' the NFFD works, should anybody be interested.

### Owl Boxes

The Operations Manager confirmed that the proposed budget of £2,000 for the owl boxes for 2022/23 is for the repair and replacement of three existing boxes and to clean out the existing nesting boxes.

### Recording by Machine Drivers

The Operations Manager noted that the nine machines are fitted with Tom-Tom units to enable recordings of environmental sightings. The proposed budget of £1,500 is for repairs and updates to this system.

### High Profile Watercourse Banks

A map identifying the high profile watercourses was displayed on screen. These watercourses are deemed as important enough to require enhanced maintenance.

### Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS)

Attention was drawn to mink; it being noted that other IDBs are actively trapping mink and it is something the Board should also be doing.

The Works Manager explained that the Board has now got involved with the Waterlife Recovery East Project, alongside other IDBs, to help address the issue with mink. South Holland IDB have reported the capture of 90 mink to date this year.

The Works Manager continued that four mink rafts have been constructed, in addition to 2 remote control traps. These send a radio signal when triggered to the phone app, alerting that it has been triggered, so that somebody is able to go and check the trap. The non-remote-controlled traps must be checked every day, compared to the remote units only having to be checked once a month. The remote units are £95 per unit, inclusive of two years monitoring.

The first trap will be put near Frampton Marsh Nature Reserve this week and will be disguised using reeds.

Ms T Smalley noted that they have been trialling the remote mink traps for over a year, a project funded by Viking Link and run by Lincs Pest. A gentleman named Tony Martin was also noted, who is collecting the carcasses of the mink, to take DNA samples from, as it is believed there are only a few families of mink all related.

The proposed budget of £1,700 is for the remote units and to build the rafts. The committee felt the remote units were invaluable for saving time having to check the rafts every day.

Mr R Needham questioned if there would be an opportunity for others to join this? The Works Manager confirmed that others could join, as many volunteers as possible being encouraged, and it could all be linked up to the same system. Mr R Needham felt there would be a good uptake from landowners and farmers. It was suggested it be included in the rating brochure.

#### Pollinator Project

Organised by the Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust, the Board have identified two sites, one at Gosberton Risegate and the other at Kirton Marsh pump drain to introduce pollinator species. Photos of the proposed sites were displayed on screen.

The Works Manager noted that the project is still in early stages, adding that the five plugs that have been taken have grown well.

#### Environment Budget 2022/23

The committee AGREED the budget as below:

<i>Water Vole Surveys</i>	<i>£1,750.00</i>
<i>Winter Bushing &amp; Cleansing</i>	<i>£2,000.00</i>
<i>Barn Owl Box Replacements</i>	<i>£2,000.00</i>
<i>Tom Tom Repairs/Updates</i>	<i>£1,500.00</i>
<i>High Profile Watercourse Banks</i>	<i>£3,500.00</i>
<i>Mink Control</i>	<i>£1,700.00</i>
<i>Operation Fly swat partner</i>	<i>£3,454.78</i>
<i>Big Boston Clean Up</i>	<i>£2,750.00</i>
<i>Grass Snake Sites</i>	<i>£250.00</i>
<i>Wild Meadow Maintenance</i>	<i>£250.00</i>
<i>Pollinator Project</i>	<i>£250.00</i>
<i>WNNMP</i>	<i>£398.00</i>
<i>GLNP</i>	<i>£265.23</i>
<b><i>Total</i></b>	<b><i>£20,068.01</i></b>

#### 1938 To receive a report on Barn Owl Nesting Boxes for 2021 - Agenda Item 8

The Chairperson presented the Barn Owl report for 2021, further noting that he has recently spoken to Alan Ball who has advised that 2022 is looking positive for Barn Owls so far.

#### 1939 To receive a report on the 2021 butterfly records from Windmill Lodge Butterfly Conservation and Wildlife area, Amber Hill - Agenda Item 9

The Chairperson presented the 2022 butterfly records from Windmill Lodge Butterfly conservation and wildlife area at Amber Hill, the committee noting how commendable the achievements of this area are.

The Chairperson added that another butterfly conservation and wildlife area has been established at Kirton Marsh.

1940 To receive a report on the Limits of Acceptable Change Study around the Wash and North Norfolk coast - Agenda Item 10

The Chairperson presented this report, there being no further comments or questions.

1941 To receive a report from Tammy Smalley on Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust (LWT) and Greater Lincolnshire Nature Partnership (GLNP) updates - Agenda Item 11

Ms T Smalley gave an update on the Greater Lincolnshire Nature Partnership (GLNP) and Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust (LWT) as follows.

The work of the GLNP is determined by the partners. Having secured a significant increase in funding, Natural England (NE) are undertaking a large scale recruitment process, meaning that the Board will have a named catchment advisor at NE. In addition, they are also starting to update all of their national habitat inventories, starting with ancient woodland, to which they have given the GLNP a budget to undertake the ancient woodland inventory within Greater Lincolnshire. The other element is the remote water vole project.

Due to circumstances, the LWT are recruiting for 9 roles, currently in the process of appointing for these roles. One of the grants achieved is the Biffa award, along with additional funding from Anglian Water, which has enabled the purchase of Bourne North Fen, which is now completed. A paper has previously been submitted to the Board regarding supporting with the engineering work that will take place on site next calendar year. A specification will be developed, liaising with the Board, over the next calendar year. It will not be a nature reserve in its purest sense, it will be about the eco system services the site can produce, in order to try and help people understand the value that nature can deliver.

Ms T Smalley next referred to the ELMs trial, one of which is in South Lincolnshire, which has particularly involved the Board's catchment. The South Lincolnshire trial is coming to an end, a natural capital assessment at landscape scale has been undertaken and are currently looking into private investment and buying credits in eco system services which could be stacked against agri-environment.

Ms T Smalley next referred to the Natural Environment Investment Readiness Fund (NERF), of which the full £100,000 grant was achieved to undertake the green investment in Greater Lincolnshire project. There is a conference being held on the 16<sup>th</sup> March 2022 at Woodhall Spa which would be of interest to both the Board and private landowners, looking at biodiversity net gain and what landowners could potentially offer for people such as building developers who will likely not be able to meet all of the biodiversity net gains on site. A register is therefore to be composed to compile a list of those landowners who could potentially deliver.

Mr V Barker left the meeting.

Mr R Needham questioned how the two elements i.e., the person / company needing to provide the biodiversity net gain and the landowner who could deliver it? Ms T Smalley noted that there is a suite of guidance and a standardised way of ecologically assessing land (UK HABS assessment), therefore the landowner will know what credits they have to sell. The developer will have to have the same assessment, mitigate, and compensate for any biodiversity lost and deliver 10% above.

Discussion next turned to offsetting carbon footprints, with Ms T Smalley recommending AHDB as a tool to calculate a farm's carbon footprint.

The Chief Executive noted that ADA National have identified the Board as 'carbon leading experts' in the IDB industry because of our solar panels and electric pumps because of this the Board has been sent a trial carbon emissions spreadsheet that was completed and submitted yesterday, which in turn will go out to the other IDBs.

Ms T Smalley next gave an update on Willow Tree Fen, noting that the middle track has been taken out and are currently in discussions with the county council about the access road. Further noting, that the cranes are back.

Ms T Smalley next referred to the Nature for Climate Peatland Discovery Grant of £800,000 to assess the state of peat across Lincolnshire, Cambridgeshire, Norfolk and Suffolk. Work will be starting imminently to look at the potential around how to restore peatlands – they are far more effective at capturing carbon than woodlands.

Ms T Smalley noted that she is the appointed Marks and Spencer's biodiversity advisor and so can offer farm assessment advice.

Ms T Smalley next referred to seed planting and plant propagation with the University of Lincoln. Ms T Smalley referred to plant plugs, noting that they have local provenance plants and so could potentially help supply.

The Chairperson thanked Ms T Smalley for the update.

1942 To receive the minutes from the ADA Lincolnshire Branch Environment Committee: - Agenda Item 12

The Chairperson presented the minutes form the ADA Lincolnshire Branch Environment Committee Meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> December 2020 and 16<sup>th</sup> December 2021.

1943 The Wash and North Norfolk Marine Partnership Project Update - Agenda Item 13

The Chairperson presented update on the Wash and North Norfolk Marine Partnership Project, there being no further comments or questions.

1944 Any other business - Agenda Item 14

(a) Resident's concern for loss of habitat - Holland Road Farm, Threekingham

The Operations Manager noted that the site was identified for desilting and bank works, with the correct notification given. There were well established bushes and small trees along the bank, for approximately 300 metres, which were removed. A local resident raised concern with the Board about these works, in respect of the possible disturbance of a badger sett after desilting, reprofiling and works to remove self-set trees and bushes on watercourse 36-1 south of Holland Road Farm between Threekingham and Swaton.

Following discussion with the lady who had raised the complaint and email correspondence, the Operations Manager, Works Manager and Works Supervisor visited site, on Monday 7<sup>th</sup> February, and met with, her partner and the gamekeeper and discussed the works (NB: unplanned meeting).



There was discussion about the Natural Flood Management (NFM) scheme that the Board are delivering on behalf of the Environment Agency, and the NFM schemes currently being developed in the Upper Catchment, which then led on to the possibility of mitigation for this site as a way of replacing the loss of habitat, the question being raised if a hedge be planted along the top of the bank?

The reason for the removal of the vegetation on the banks and the Board's access for maintenance wherever possible to both sides for biodiversity was explained to the concerned resident. It also being explained that no mitigation is completed by the Board for these types of works. Ms T Smalley (Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust) also provided a response to the resident to support the works of the Board and echo why the work is necessary.

The Operations Manager added that he has spoken with the landowner, and he does not agree with any proposals to provide any mitigation on any Crown Estate (CE) land he currently tenants.

Mr R Welberry questioned how the bushes / trees became that established in the first instance?

The Operations Manager noted that previously, the 'easiest' route was taken with the Board's machinery, however, following the adoption of the alternate bank cutting programme, this is no longer the case, hence it now being removed.

The Chairperson believed the Board had operated within the appropriate guidelines to carry out the work and didn't believe it necessary to plant a new hedge etc. Also noting not to set a precedence.

The Chief Executive referred back to the resident's concern regarding the badger sett, noting that it is believed the badgers are still there, as new diggings have been sighted. A camera has been set up opposite the set to capture sightings of the badgers.

The Environment committee were happy that work was carried out as it should be and that no mitigation, such as hedge planting, is necessary.

(b) Use of bio-hydraulic oil in Board's plant

The Operations Manager referred to the Board's 3 flail mowers – Twiga's. These machines currently run on bio-hydraulic oil, which is environmentally friendly. This oil is not changed, it lasts the machine its lifetime.

The Operations Manager noted that problems have been experienced with these machines, in particular, the 17 plate machine, which is currently at Irelands Farm Machinery (IFM), with a fault where it slows down when travelling down the road for no apparent reason. IFM cannot diagnose the cause of this fault. However, it has been suggested that it may be a result of the bio-hydraulic oil, breaking down and effectively 'clogging' the system. It therefore being suggested by IFM to try the mineral oil (£450 per barrel changed every 1,000 hours).

The Operations Manager therefore noted the potential need to try the mineral oil, but the disadvantage of it not being environmentally friendly. However, he did note that, arguably, if the mineral oil works, it may prevent repairs and parts being required, therefore hopefully reducing the cost and environmental impact of those repairs and parts.

Cllr P Skinner noted that there can sometimes be a growth in bio-oil.

Members of the committee felt that the bio-oil was going against the principles of oil by not changing it.

The Operations Manager noted that Witham Oil are due to collect a bio-oil sample tomorrow to analyse.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 16:20.