

BLACK SLUICE INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

MINUTES

of the proceedings of a meeting of the Executive Committee

held at the offices of the Board on
23rd January 2024 at 9:30am

Members

Chairperson - * Mr K C Casswell

* Cllr P Bedford

* Mr M Brookes

* Mr J Fowler

* Mr P Holmes

Mr M Rollinson

* Member Present

In attendance: Mr D Withnall (Chief Executive)
Mr P Nicholson (Projects Director & Deputy CEO)
Mrs A Chamberlain (Finance & Admin Director)

2246 Recording the Meeting - Agenda Item 1

Committee members were informed that the meeting would be recorded.

The Chairperson and committee noted their condolences on the passing of Mr Michael Scott.

2247 Apologies for absence - Agenda Item 2

Apologies of absence were received from Mr M Rollinson.

2248 Declarations of Interest - Agenda Item 3

There were no declarations of interest.

2249 Minutes of the Meeting - Agenda Item 4

Minutes of the meeting held on 12th December 2023, copies of which had been circulated, were considered and it was AGREED that they should be signed as a true record.

2250 Confidential Minutes of the Meeting - Agenda Item 5

Confidential Minutes of the last meeting held on 12th December 2023, copies of which had been circulated, were considered and it was AGREED that they should be signed as a true record.

2251 Matters Arising - Agenda Item 6

(a) Plant Replacement Budget - New Toyota trucks - Minute 2239(c)

It was confirmed that the four new Toyota trucks are due for delivery tomorrow.

The Maintenance Director's current Mitsubishi truck is going to be kept for the Fitter to use as his van has been written off due to driving through flood water during Storm Henk (insurance have paid out £14,000).

(b) Starlink Internet - Minute 2239(d)

The Chief Executive noted that network issues are still being experienced, with HBP still of the opinion, following more testing, that it is due to the Board's internet. Therefore, once fibre is available, this should hopefully resolve the issue if it is due to internet. Work has been ongoing in the village and so fibre is expected to be available imminently.

(c) Capital Schemes Projects - Peat restoration project - Minute 2239(e)

It was confirmed that the Board has been successful in their bid for the peat project with the two sites at Bourne, achieving funding of £172,000.

(d) Plant Replacement Budget - Minute 2239(f)

It was noted that the counterweight has not yet been fitted that is proposed to be fitted to the JCB JS-145 due to the JCB 150 excavator being out of use due to the snapped dipper. The JCB 150X machine is now repaired and back operational, although is currently being used by another workforce operative as the operator who usually uses it is currently off sick. The Projects Director noted that the repair to the snapped dipper has not yet been paid for as there is still ongoing negotiation around who is responsible for paying it, as the Board believes it should be covered by warranty. The Projects Director is of the opinion that TC Harrison want to resolve it positively with the Board.

It was also noted that Hitachi are coming to appraise the Hitachi machine this week.

(e) Electricity - Minute 2239(b)

Mr J Fowler noted the current incentive for lower rate tariffs for electric vehicles and that he believes that if the Board could prove they use a certain percentage of electricity during the night, then they may also offer a lower tariff as an incentive. Mr P Holmes added that during negotiations it could be relayed that the Board could use a larger percentage of electricity usage during the night if it was incentivised. The Chief Executive noted that the night pumping regime could be used if there was a difference in day and night rates. The issue of high standing charges was noted.

(f) Black Sluice Pumping Station (Boston) - Minute 2239(k)

Mr M Brookes noted the amount of concern that has been directed towards him following Storm Babet and Storm Henk in relation to the decommissioning of the Black Sluice Pumping Station (Boston).

The Chief Executive noted that the Board are supportive of the need for the Black Sluice Pumping Station. It being noted that the Environment Agency's (EA) modelling will not have taken into account the levels experienced

(exceeded highest known levels three times in three years). The Chief Executive noted that they have got the evidence from these storm events.

Discussion then took place around Storm Henk as documented at Minute 2256, below.

(g) Annual value of rating account 30-3030-5 - Minute 2239(l)

The Chief Executive noted that he has received more correspondence from this rate payer and has informed him that the Board consider the matter resolved and will therefore not be responding to any further correspondence.

(h) New organisation structure - Minute 2239(m)

It was agreed and thereby RESOLVED to exclude the public from the next part of the meeting due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, in accordance with section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960.

(i) New flail for Aebi - Minute 2243(b)(i)

Mr P Holmes questioned if there is any progress regarding a new flail for the Aebi? The Projects Director noted that he is dubious to purchase any of the flails previously presented to the committee, as it is not guaranteed to be of any more benefit than the current one. Adding that he has not found any further alternatives yet.

(j) Workforce Standby Christmas 2023 - Minute 2245(d)

The Chief Executive noted that no members of the workforce were willing to go on standby over the Christmas period due to not feeling the payment for doing so was enough. They felt it deserved a day's pay to be on standby. Therefore, there was nobody on standby over the Christmas period, the concern being around if they had all had an alcoholic drink or unavailable to attend if required. The Chief Executive suggested that the workforce no longer have a full shutdown over Christmas. The committee felt this was not necessary and for the ground conditions and expected weather to be assessed on an annual basis prior to the Christmas break and if standby is required then it will have to be incentivised.

2252 Period 09 Management Accounts - Agenda Item 7

The Finance & Admin Director highlighted the following points in the Period 09 Management Accounts:

- £9,394 in Drainage Rates outstanding which is 0.65%. There are ten accounts, totalling £5,177 plus costs, which have been referred to Rossendales for recovery action, the remaining are being followed up internally. Mr P Holmes questioned if the ten accounts outstanding are the same as previous years? The Finance & Admin Director noted that a couple are people that have taken on land and have not been in contact, most likely not aware of what drainage rates are, but the majority are repeat offenders.
- Budget for electricity YTD is £473,217. Spend to date is £361,252 but it is estimated that the first two weeks of January is £106,000 due to Storm Henk.
- The Quarter 3 Forecast will be completed this week and presented at the Board meeting.

The Chief Executive presented the 2024/25 budget and ten-year estimates, starting by explaining that there are three options included within the report:

- Option 1 - planned to release some of the money saved in the electric budget but was abandoned as not viable.
- Option 2 - this is a programme of works that is both proactive and reactive, with compromising and prioritisation.
- Option 3 – this is a completely proactive programme of work but would require a budget of £7.4million over ten years.

The Chief Executive therefore suggested option 2, noting the below.

Rates & Levies

It was noted that the 'increase due to development' figures for each council are not yet confirmed. The Finance & Admin Director is currently progressing it. There has not been a great deal of development and so won't be large increases.

Interest and Investment Income

The Chief Executive noted that he expects the Bank of England Base Rate to decrease and so this will affect the interest rate on the Loughborough Building Society, Vernon Building Society and Natwest accounts.

Grants & Local Levy

It was noted that the Projects Director and GiA Manager have submitted grant in aid bids and early indication are they will be successful in achieving funding for the following pumping stations:

- Allan House £1,082,000
- South Kyme £1,065,000 (£1m for works and £65,000 for specification)
- Ewerby £1,065,000 (£1m for works and £65,000 for specification)
- Damford £1,065,000 (£1m for works and £65,000 for specification)
- Trinity College £1,065,000 (£1m for works and £65,000 for specification)

Total grant and local levy money expected in 2024/25: £5,594,000 (should be spent by 31 March 2025).

The Projects Director noted that the works will predominantly be consultant and contractor lead.

The Projects Director added that when gaining this funding, the whole site must be reviewed for the duration of the benefit period and so control panel and pump refurbishment will be considered. Further adding that consideration has to be given to the Lincolnshire Reservoir proposals and the potential that this scheme could have an effect on some of the sub catchments of the Board, so that any scheme funding is not spent in an area that may be effected by it.

The Chairperson questioned why they have suddenly provided all this funding? The Chief Executive noted that the evidence from the storms has helped, along with the Projects Director now able to focus on this type of work alongside the GiA Manager. It was also felt that continual meetings with EA representatives are beneficial. The Chairperson commended the Projects Director and GiA Manager.

The Chief Executive noted the only concern that this takes the Board over the £6.5million limit for the current external audit procedure. However, it has to be over this amount for three years before a more detailed full audit would be required. The Chief Executive noted the cost of the Board's current audit is £2,800 compared to another IDB having just paid over £100,000 for a full audit. Representations have been put forward to increase the £6.5million to £10million or to exempt IDBs as a local authority from such limits.

Rental Income

The Chief Executive noted that he has been to Bourne Slipes to view the Board's grazing land of which the current lessor has given notice of intention not to continue renting it. It is full of weeds and thistles and is not sure it is grazeable. The committee felt that it was not worth trying to find a new tenant and to flail it annually.

Board Funded Schemes

Following option 2 of a reactive/proactive maintenance programme, a requirement of £5.4million over the ten years is required (an increase of 54% based on the original figures presented to the committee in December 2023). The Chief Executive noted that this is a viable option, with the caveat that if more expenditure is required for electricity than planned, then the Board Funded Schemes would have to be reviewed and re-prioritised.

The committee's attention was drawn to the planned works and accompanying budgets, with the below highlighted:

- Large Slip Repairs £159,000
The Projects Director noted that this budget has been increased because of the increase in slips following the storm events.
- Pumping Station Level Controllers £30,000
This is new work introduced, due to some of the water level readers being under water in the recent storm events. This then affects the way the pumps can be controlled and what levels it reacts to. This work will review how the Board measures the water levels going forward, perhaps moving the readers to a different location to avoid this issue. There are multiple sites affected.

Pumping Station Maintenance

The excessive pumping required during Storm Babet and Storm Henk was noted, with c£41,000 in the five days following Storm Babet and c£106,000 in the two weeks following Storm Henk.

The element causing the most concern is the increase of 133% in standing charges, it now being £160,763 per annum. An ADA National response has been submitted to Ofgem and Defra.

Summer Cutting

Following the suggestion at the Board meeting in November 2023 regarding an increase in early season cutting, two Twigas have been included in the budget to commence the first week of April through to the first week in July, to then commence the normal programme of works from 01 August.

Winter Drain Maintenance

Desilting is expected to be delayed to the resources required for Storm Babet and Storm Henk (5 weeks in April 2024 included).

Bushing

The increase in this budget is a result of the Pay Award and increased employment costs, with bushing being very labour intensive.

Environmental

Currently included is the budget from last year (£21,000) but this will be reviewed and increased due to the potential recruitment of an Environmental and GIS Officer.

Environment Agency Precept

It has been confirmed that the EA Precept for IDBs will remain the same.

Development Reserve

Board's Officer's are still looking for schemes that will qualify for expenditure from this reserve. Currently, a £5,000 administration charge is applied to this account. Mr J Fowler suggested this be increased to the Planning & Byelaw Officer's full salary. All AGREED that the Planning & Byelaw Officer's full salary be charged to the Development Reserve from 01 April 2024.

10 Year Plant Replacement

Reference was made to the Hitachi appraisal taking place this week, noting that they will give a percentage of how worn-out various elements of the machine are. The current operator has indicated that he believes it may require some new tracks.

Mr P Holmes felt that the operator's opinion on the machine should be considered, noting that if they like the machine and are happy working on it, they are more likely to look after it and therefore prolong its work life.

It was noted that Hitachi have indicated that following the placement of an order in the first week of April 2024, they would guarantee the arrival of the machine for the following financial year.

The following documents were noted in conjunction with the above:

- Budget with Ten-Year Estimates (Options 1,2,3)
- 10 Year Capital Schemes (Options 1,2,3)
- 2024/25 Summary budget by month
- 2024/25 Detailed budget by month
- 2024/25 Wages On-cost Reserve Budget
- 10 Year Plant Replacement Budget
- 2023/24 Cumulative Solar Panel Report
- Electricity analysis October 2023

The Chief Executive suggested Option 2 within the report, which is a rate increase of 7.47% for 2024/25. The committee RESOLVED to recommend this to the Board for approval. It was felt only option 2 is required to be presented to the Board.

2254 Review Bourne Fen Farm Rate Alleviation - Agenda Item 9

It was noted that this hasn't been reviewed lately, but should really be reviewed annually.

Due to the cash balance in the reserve, all AGREED to maintain the rate alleviation at 2.4p in the £ for 2024/25.

2255 Receive a report on excavator security - Agenda Item 10

The committee noted the report on excavator security, all AGREED to continue with current measures and not to increase as more damage would likely be done trying to remove the extra measures.

2256 Receive a report on Storm Henk (January 2024) - Agenda Item 11

This item was discussed during matters arising (Minute 2251(f)).

Reference was made to the overtopping during Storm Henk, with the Environment Agency (EA) now looking at a mean crest level across a wider area as opposed to peaks and troughs.

Mr P Holmes added that the Board should be compensated for having to move the water twice. The Chief Executive felt that there would be a Bellwin style mechanism to claim funding in the future.

Mr P Holmes noted that the Board only have to work with the EA, whereas other IDBs have other IDBs pumping into their catchments.

It was further added that if the Board had continued pumping into the SFFD, it would have been likely that Dunsby and / or Quadring could have breached.

The Projects Director also noted the importance of desilting the South Forty Foot Drain (SFFD) and that desilting needs to continue up to the A17 and then restart with a periodic programme of continuous desilting.

The Chief Executive explained that Storm Henk predominantly affected the south of the catchment (more rain at Black Hole Drove than Cooks Lock or Chain Bridge). The Board had only just re-established winter operating levels following Storm Babet, with land still saturated.

The Chief Executive displayed a timeline of events, showing the different levels on the telemetry. It being noted that the previous highest known level was 3.05m on 24th December 2021, it reaching 3.28m on 3rd January 2024.

- 06:35 on 02/01/2024 SFFD @ BHD 2.3m. Emergency Response Plan enacted.
- 17:24 on 02/01/2024 SFFD @ BHD 2.7m. Started switching pumps to emergency profiles.
- 23:49 on 02/01/2024 Overtopping first spotted at Dunsby on our CCTV (video displayed on screen). It was noted that it was known this was a low spot as it overtopped in a previous event at a level of 3.05m. The EA were informed of this low spot in January 2022.
- 00:05 on 03/01/2024 SFFD @ BHD 3.28m.
- 20:27 on 05/01/2024 SFFD @ BHD 2.3m. All pumps switched back on.
- 15:00 on 06/01/2024 SFFD @ BHD 2.3m with all pumps switched back on. Emergency stood down at ERT meeting.

It was noted how quickly, almost immediately, the SFFD reacted to the rainfall in this event due to the ground being so saturated (shown on trace displayed on screen).

The Chief Executive displayed the telemetry trace of Dowsby Lode Pumping Station and Bicker Fen as examples of emergency profile pumping.

Further photos and videos were shared, including Gosberton, Dunsby overtopping, Quadring overtopping and water running around Ewerby, Trinity College and South Kyme Pumping Stations.

It was observed in one of the photos that the pumping station windows are open, it being explained that this is to try and cool the panels down. The Pump Engineer is looking into an immediate solution (fans), but in the long term it will be with the replacement of the control panels.

The Board's Site Engineer is surveying Dunsby, Quadring and Rookfield Farm to establish levels to share with the EA.

The Chief Executive further noted that the electrics for the control of the automatic weedscreen cleaner at Dyke Fen Pumping Station were submerged in water. The electrics will be replaced, with options being explored to make it more resilient – raising it by a metre, waterproof box etc.

Discussion next turned to the Board's mobile 8" pump, it being noted that it failed on numerous occasions during the event, resulting in the Board borrowing South Holland IDB's pump. A photo was displayed on screen of the pump in use with a ramp so that the pump could continue to be used across a vehicle right of way. This ramp was made by Welland & Deepings IDB and enquiries have been made if they could produce one for the Board. Cllr P Bedford noted that quotes should also be sought from fabrication companies for comparison purposes. It also being added that it would be useful to be able to use it with both the 8" and 6" pumps.

The Chief Executive explained that representatives from Perkins (engine of pump), Xylem (control panel of pump) and Godwin have been to site to the Board's pump since the storm event. They have provided more training and vital information about how to run the pump, that was not known before. They also discussed a telemetry option that can be retrofitted to the pump which would send alerts of any issues (£1000). They are also looking into fuel tank options. The Godwin representative is going to attend next time it is used to monitor it (pump down at Swineshead Pumping Station for installation of dam). There was also some concern about the engine fumes going back through and that being the cause of the issues and so the Xylem representative is arranging for the exhaust flap to be rebalanced and an extra counterweight to be put on the back of it. The Chief Executive noted that SLD Pumps, who the Board purchase the pump from, have not engaged with the Board about its issues.

The committee noted how complicated the pump is and that in these emergency situations the Board don't want to be worrying about its reliability to continue running.

Mr P Holmes noted that the issues experienced with tractors most commonly are the EGR and AdBlue, noting that he has had AdBlue deleted from tractors which run without issue.

Mr P Holmes further noted the importance of using it in a non-emergency situation and ensuring the workforce have had training on using it in a non-emergency scenario.

It was noted that the pump borrowed from South Holland IDB is the same as the Board's but older and so doesn't have the AdBlue and it runs well.

It was suggested that deleting the AdBlue function off the pump would be supported by the committee.

It was noted that the Board will receive a similar update on the Storm Henk at the Board meeting in February.

The Executive Committee noted their thanks and appreciation to all Board employees' efforts during Storm Henk and also thanks to South Holland IDB for the hire of the pump and Welland & Deepings IDB for the ramp used with the pump. The Chief Executive noted he will send an email on the committee's behalf to all employees and the IDBs noted.

2257 Any Other Business - Agenda Item 12

(a) South Forty Foot Water Bank Project

It was noted that the Water Farming Reservoir Group (funded by Anglian Water) has requested that the Board send out a letter to a number of ratepayers on Board headed paper regarding the project. The project is about the storage of water in riparian and IDB watercourses.

The committee were of the opinion that this should not come from the Board, as although the Board have an interest in the project, they are not leading or endorsing it.

It was noted that Ian Warsap (SLWP Consultant) is employed by the group but does not represent the Board on this.

All AGREED that the Board will send out the letters on behalf of the Water Farming Reservoir Group, but not on Board headed paper and with a covering letter to explain the Board are not endorsing it and at a cost to the Water Farming Reservoir Group.

(b) Boston Borough Council Head of Planning

Cllr P Bedford noted that the current Head of Planning at Boston Borough Council, Mike Gildersleeves, is leaving.

(c) Residential development works - Heron Park, Wyberton, Chestnut Homes

Cllr P Bedford questioned if there is any further progress on this? The Projects Director noted that he has had no further correspondence from Chestnut Homes.

(d) Television interview

The Chief Executive noted that Peter Bateson (CEO Witham 4th IDB) and Anne Dorrian (Boston Borough Council Leader) have been interviewed for Look North about IDB funding, which will be aired Wednesday 24th January 2024.

(e) Lincolnshire Reservoir update at Board meeting

The Chief Executive questioned if the committee would like the SLWP Consultant to attend the Board meeting in February to give an update on the Lincolnshire Reservoir? The committee felt this would be beneficial if there is an update to give.

(f) Culvert Collapse - Wykes Lane, Donington

Mr J Fowler referred to the culvert collapse and road closure at Wykes Lane, Donington. The Chief Executive responded that they have been in touch with senior managers at Lincolnshire County Council who have accepted that it is their responsibility. The Board have maintained the conveyance of water, which is the Board's only responsibility.

(g) Swineshead Pumping Station Access Gates

Mr P Holmes questioned if that gates at Swineshead Pumping Station have now been locked to restrict access? It was confirmed it is to be locked this week and the grazier has been notified.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 11:41.