

BLACK SLUICE INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

MINUTES

of the proceedings of a meeting of the Environment Committee

held at the offices of the Board on
10th May 2017 at 2pm

Members

Chairman - * Mr P Holmes

* Mr W Ash	* Mr J Atkinson
* Mr V Barker	* Cllr C Brotherton
* Mr K Casswell	Mr R Leggott
* Mr P Robinson	* Mr R Welberry
* Mr R Wray	

* Member Present

In attendance: Mr I Warsap (Chief Executive)
Mr P Nicholson (Operations Manager)
Mr Ian Nixon (Scarborough Nixon Associates)
Mrs Sarah Baker (GLNP Partnership)

1109 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE - Agenda Item 1

Apologies were received from Mr R Leggott.

1110 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - Agenda Item 2

There were no declarations of interest.

1111 MINUTES OF THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING - Agenda Item 3

The Minutes of the last meeting of the Environment Committee held on the 4th May 2016, copies of which had been circulated, were considered. It was agreed that they should be signed as a true record. There were no matters arising.

1112 SYNDICATE PROPOSAL UPDATE - Agenda Item 4

The Chief Executive reported that the Angling Syndicate had presented a proposal in April 2016 which was reviewed at last year's Environment Committee meeting, he wanted to update the Committee on the final proposal on page 13. The Chief Executive would like today to gain approval or non-approval from this Committee regarding the Angling Syndicate proposal. He presented some background information regarding pages 22 to 28. He stated although the syndicate initially put forward an attraction to proceed with the proposals, they did not want to push forward any hasty decisions. They approached the Officers requesting that the Board, as owners, register the pond under the Aquatic Animal Health Regulations 2009.

This would mean that if the syndicate were, in a position, whilst stocking other ponds should have a surplus of fish they could take them to the pond. The Board registered the pond and consequently there was quite a large number, close to a 1,000 carp fry placed in the pond at no charge to the Board. The Chief Executive believes Ian Cappitt and Chris Reeds are sincere and they have the right intentions to safeguard the pond.

The Chief Executive added that within the syndicate management plan in 2020/21 on page 18 under actions – it states from the fishery management plan “over the intervening years will align with the BSIDBs conservation management plan and this will continue to be implemented for the benefit of the lake (fisheries, habitats and wildlife)” – the Chief Executive suggested this Committee could introduce a further sentence “if there were surplus fish these could be removed into other rivers”.

Mr Welberry indicated that they will breed quite quickly, in approximately 4/5 years.

Mr Robinson asked what percent survive? The Chairman responded it is dependent on the environment, Mr Welberry responded it will depend on predators ie herons, otters. If the fry have been put in the pond correctly there is very little mortality.

The Chairman stated having been on a recent Water Resources East tour at Willow Tree Fen in the Welland and Deepings area Nick Morris flagged up that this tick's boxes in their IDBs BAP. If this is done properly in the way the syndicate are proposing to do then, it will be entered into the Boards Biodiversity Action Plan. The Chairman reminded Members on page 13 in note 3 that Helen Scarborough should visit on site and complete a full environmental survey.

The Chairman pointed out the access, the syndicate are restricting it to only three anglers at any one time. The Chief Executive responded that within the updated proposal Ian Cappitt and Chris Reeds have spoken to the locals and have negotiated with them regarding access.

Mr Casswell added that the access is a double edge sword, it helps deter people who should not be there. The Chief Executive suggested that access from the Twenty end through private land would be difficult. The Committee could implement this as a condition that the only access is via Tongue End.

The Chairman believes that as time goes on the locals will warm to it and they will realise that someone is policing it. There won't be just anyone accessing the pond as it will be fished fairly frequently therefore occupancy will be the best form of policing the pond.

The Chief Executive asked for approval from this Committee to move forward with these negotiations or not.

The Chairman proposed that we go ahead with this proposal, Mr Welberry seconded the proposal and all AGREED.

1113 TO REVIEW THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE - Agenda Item 5

The Chief Executive presented the Committees terms of reference on page 29.

The Chairman asked members if they were happy with these, all AGREED.

1114 TO RECEIVE A REPORT ON ENVIRONMENTAL WORK COMPLETED IN 2016/17 AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROPOSED WORKS FOR 2017/18 - Agenda Item 6

The Chief Executive presented the report on Environmental works on pages 30 to 35 and the recommendations for 2017/18. The Chief Executive stated that the key focus of today's meeting are the proposals at the end of this report for this year.

Completed Works 2016/17

(a) Owl Boxes

The Chief Executive introduced the owl boxes which have been cleared, cleaned and suitably re dressed with detailed photographs on pages 39 to 43.

(b) High Profile Watercourse Assets

The proposed watercourses as detailed on page 30.

(c) Water Vole Monitoring Surveys

The Chief Executive suggested the water vole monitoring surveys be reported later in the meeting and asked Ian Nixon to mention these in his report at agenda item 7.

(d) Control of Mink

The Chief Executive explained that the Board has had a down turn in the number of reported mink sightings. Mr Welberry stated that one had been sighted at Swineshead Bridge last October 2016.

The Chief Executive mentioned at the Southern Works inspection at Gosberton Pumping Station one was sighted.

Mrs Baker stated at the Biodiversity Rivers & Wetland Group meeting also attended by Lincolnshire Rivers Trust and the Calk Stream Project the issues surrounding mink were raised. Chris Manning is looking into a coordinated approach to mink trapping in Lincolnshire. There are plans also for a more coordinated approach at County level to see if something will come of it regionally and then possibly national.

(e) Environmental surveys of larger hedge rows in our bushing programme

The Chief Executive presented the surveys of hedgerows and bushing programme, this has been taken on board by Officers.

(f) RSPB Water Abstraction for Frampton Marsh

The Chief Executive receives an annual request to abstract water which has increased this year to 500,000m³ water per annum from Wyberton Marsh pump drain to assist with water management levels in the Frampton Marsh Nature Reserve.

(g) Big Boston Clean Up

The Chief Executive stated 2/3 workmen were involved with the Big Boston Clean Up.

(h) Fly Swat Team

The Chief Executive stated that the fly swat team remain very strong, very dedicated. The fly swat team offer BSIDB and other IDBs value in relation to the contribution made against what the Board used to spend pulling fly tip out of the Boards watercourses.

Mr Robinson asked if Members see rubbish in the drains who do they contact? The Chief Executive responded contact the Operations Supervisor.

(i) Invasive Species

The Chief Executive informed Members that towards the end of the meeting he has a presentation regarding an invasive Asian hornet and a reporting "app" you can place on a mobile app.

(j) Bat Boxes and Surveys

The Chief Executive stated that Ian Nixon will have further information regarding the bat surveys in his verbal presentation.

(k) Environmental Scheme – Eel Passability at Boards 'Category A' Pumping Stations

The Chief Executive stated he is not aware of how Brexit will affect any European rulings regarding the eel passes. He believes that DEFRA are trying to bring over all the current rulings into all environmental schemes.

Mr Barker asked could there be a repeal of the badgers? And if there is a willingness through ADA; The Chief Executive responded that this can be passed through to ADA.

The Chief Executive stated that the eel passes are in the gravity channels and the Board has introduced some slow closing, none return valves to help the elver travel through. One of these passages is next to the only underwater camera at Chain Bridge, unfortunately there has been no sightings.

Proposed Works 2017/18

(l) Water Vole Surveys

The Chief Executive presented a proposal to seek approval to continue with the water vole surveys through Scarborough Nixon Associates.

Ian Nixon stated that they have picked six sites where water voles are present and these are monitored. One of the proposals he is recommending is a new way of monitoring, he explained by using tethered polystyrene floats in the channel for water voles to use as latrines this form of identification has been used before. These monitor surveys will be performed in Spring and Autumn which reflects the beginning and end of the breeding season.

The latrines are used as a territorial marker so you can work out the number of water voles by the numbers of territories.

The Chief Executive added that this data is now being collated year on year and is core data to refer back to.

The Chief Executive asked the Committee for approval for the continued employment of Scarborough Nixon Associates for vole surveys at an agreed level for mitigating works whilst carrying out the Boards maintenance works.

Members AGREED.

(m) Winter Bushing and Cleansing

The Chief Executive stated that the Officers will be having a meeting to discuss alternate bank cuts along watercourse routes for cleansing works which should elevate some major/minor bushing issues.

(n) Summer Cutting and Vegetation Clearance

The Chief Executive stated the Summer cutting and vegetation clearance revolve around the Boards BAP and environmental policy with regards to mechanical works within watercourses. The Boards Summer cutting programme will commence on or around the 10th July 2017.

Mr Barker confirmed he was pleased to see that the high profile early cutting has been done at the Risegate.

(o) Owl Boxes

The Chief Executive explained he is seeking approval for the repair/replacement of existing owl boxes, he believes if maintenance of the Boards existing boxes is not carried out they would be overrun by other birds.

Mr Nixon added that the jackdaws build nests of sticks and barn owls prefer to crush down pellets to nest on therefore the sticks are a physical barrier for the barn owls. A jackdaw will put sticks in a box until it is full, whether the barn owl is present or on top of chicks or eggs.

The Chairman added that the Boards area is well covered with owl boxes, he believes that these boxes need maintaining and if the budget is higher than c£1,000 then it is a requirement. He asked members for approval.

Mr Barker asked if other boxes from the Environment Agency could be added into the survey results. The Chairman responded they are not actually the Boards concern. The Chief Executive added as well as barn owl boxes attached to pumping stations the Board has other boxes on poles. He has requested this year Alan Ball review all boxes in the Boards area. He was conscious that the erected boxes on poles could potentially be, on health and safety grounds, difficult to access.

The Chief Executive also added that the new Pumping Station Groundsman, once his role has been developed, may be able to assist by cleansing out boxes at pumping stations in the winter months. Regarding the timing of maintenance on the owl boxes last year they were accessed on the 14

February 2016 and he believed there were three birds sat on eggs at that time. This year they were accessed in January 2017 and there were no birds which meant this is probably an appropriate time to cleanse the boxes.

The Chairman added that the Environmental Committee budget could contribute a portion towards the Pumping Station Groundsman salary.

Mr Nixon was asked if there is anything which can be done to deter jackdaws, he explained that there has not been anything found yet. He could only make the suggestion of a smaller box on the other side of the pumping station and barn owl would tend to go for the smaller boxes.

Cllr C Brotherton asked if the numbers of barn owls were higher? Mr Nixon responded that numbers tended to fluctuate depending on the availability of food. Lincolnshire is a strong hold for barn owls, in Hertfordshire they only have one pair in the whole county.

Members gave approval and AGREED.

(p) Recording by Machine Drivers

The Chief Executive reported this has continued and the new machines have had toms toms fitted.

(q) High Profile Watercourse Assets

The Chief Executive stated this is as detailed in the report.

(r) Water Levels

The Chief Executive reported water levels are controlled over the whole catchment. The SFFD has two level configurations, winter is generally dictated around the first week in November through to Easter. Due to the ongoing South Forty Foot desilting works this year the Officers have requested the EA maintain the lower winter level until a later date of the 7 May 2017 because there has been no rain. The EA are to hold the water at 500/600mm lower at Black Sluice pumping station. Currently there is a dam at Neslam Bridge where water is being held up stream.

Mr Atkinson mentioned that the water is moving in a different direction towards Black Hole Drove. The Operations Manager responded that possibly it is because the water is being held at a higher level.

Mr Barker clarified that the water has been going over the Neslam sluice fairly consistently from the highland carriers and it depends on what is being pumped into the lagoons and if they are draining the lagoons back in to the SFFD this could push water the opposite way. He made the comment that the SFFD looks great. Mr Casswell also expressed that it looks fantastic.

The Operations Manager clarified the depth of water at Neslam bridge is 2 metres, upstream of the dam where we are holding the water. This information has come from the Captain of the barge.

(s) Fens for the Future

The Chief Executive asked Mrs Baker if the GLNP are involved with Fens for the Future. Mrs Baker responded yes. The Chief Executive explained they are looking for a new representative as Martin Redding has left Witham 4th IDB. He used to represent this Board and other IDBs on this committee, the Secretary (Lincolnshire ADA Environment Committee) are looking for a replacement.

(t) South Lincolnshire Fens Partnership

The Chief Executive explained these are associated with the Fens for the Future and are an important link with the WRE project. The Chief Executive then gave an overview of the WRE project and its plans for the future.

(u) Water Framework Directive

The Chief Executive stated Water Framework Directive is an important continuous approach to water management.

(v) The Wash and North Norfolk Coast European Marine Site

The Chief Executive reported that this body is changing their name and this will re-focus what they are trying to do in and around the Wash and North Norfolk coastline.

(w) BAP Targets and Future Works

The Chief Executive stated these targets are within the Boards BAP focusing on environmental work. He explained there is a very good working relationship with Scarborough Nixon Associates and the work they do for the Board is always quoted for. If this Committee required Officers could try and obtain competitive quotes but there is a lot to say about the quality of reports that Scarborough Nixon bring back to the Board. A lot of it is the trust of the working relationship the Officers have built now over a number of years and they are expertise in their fields. The Chief Executive suggested that all the work, that is not carried out in the office, should be carried out by Scarborough Nixon for the Board.

If this Committee recommend that other quotations are sort, the Officers could do this but it would delay things with Scarborough Nixon there is continuity.

Mr Ash asked what sum of monies; the Chief Executive responded that it is a maximum of £5,000/£6,000 contract per year.

The Chief Executive stated the Boards Biodiversity Action Plan was last reviewed in May 2014 and is due to be reviewed in 2019. Any actions that can be undertaken or addressed will then be updated into the Action Plan.

(i) 100 metres of Reed Bed

The Chief Executive pointed out that an area will need to be decided upon in order to plant 100 metres of reed bed, this will be carried out by our workmen. He asked Members to give some thought to a location for this section to be planted.

Mr Barker stated that at Works Committees the Members were presented with drains the Board would like to give up, if any of these drains would be suitable for the 100/200 metres of reed beds planted. The Chief Executive responded yes the Officers could focus on these drains and identify a section before discussing it with the riparian landowner. They would be cut less frequently, from the environmental budget, but using reed planting this would enhance the section. The Chairman concluded that this would probably be the most likely area which could be identified.

The Members approved a section of 100/200 metres of reed beds to be planted, on all probability, on one of the lengths of drain which will be given up. All AGREED.

(ii) Survey and Map

The Chief Executive stated a GIS layer of historically established hedgerows within the Boards catchment, this will be completed within the office using the information from the tom toms. The Chief Executive added that the Officers want to log these for environmental impact assessment, also for Board machine access and place this data on to the mapping system. Members AGREED.

(iii) Establish Greater Water Parsnip

The Chief Executive stated following a visit to Willow Tree Fen, last year one of the wardens mentioned they have been thinking of introducing (with permission) the Great Water Parsnip to Tongue End pond. This could be a way of the Board reducing costs by allowing the wardens to re plant as they have the required licences to pick and replant. The Chief Executive believes he would be able to approach the South Lincolnshire Partnership and look at their wardens to transplant to Tongue End pond. Members AGREED.

(iv) Farmland Bird Survey

The Chief Executive stated that in 2010 a detailed farm land bird survey was carried out at Wyberton Marsh area.

It would be very advantageous to have another survey to summarise that data and compare it, clearly that will be a job for Scarborough Nixon. The Chief Executive requested approval to obtain a quotation to carry out a farmland bird survey in the Wyberton Marsh area. Also Mr Barker has given some detailed information regarding historical bird surveys from 1994 to 2016 obviously you can track peaks and flows for comparison. Mr Robinson also added that the RSPB have completed several bird surveys which has been plotted on the maps. The Chief Executive felt that all this data can be logged using the partnership approach to undertake a full study along the similar lines of the 2010 survey.

The Chairman concluded that the more surveyed information you can obtain is for the better it helps to understand trends and the way forward. Mr Wray stated that Viking Link are performing surveys for invertebrates, nesting birds and the results of these can also be helpful, they can be contacted.

The Chairman asked if a full bird survey could be carried out at Tongue End especially because the Board should have a full survey now before the syndicate take over because if something went in to decline the data can be referred back to in the survey report. The Chief Executive stated he would obtain a quotation and come back to the Chairman.

Members AGREED to the farmland bird survey at Wyberton Marsh.

(v) Invertebrate Survey at Tongue End

The Chief Executive stated discussion had taken place previously about an invertebrate survey at Tongue End pond to be able to state in the Biodiversity Action Plan that these have been reviewed. Members AGREED.

(vi) Incorporate Windmill Lodge – (www.homeforbutterflies.com)

The Chief Executive explained this is the “home for butterflies” at Amber Hill, we recently carried out some desilting work. This will be added to the Biodiversity Action Plan and how the works benefited this site.

(vii) Risegate Bank

The Chief Executive added that Mr Barker has given some information regarding a seed mix for the Risegate bank where the Board has had little success. Specialist seeds has been tried on three different banks which has had very little success. Mr Barker responded regarding a seeding mixture, wildflower or a pollen & nectar mix which comes from Frontier which will grow on silt land. Mr Barker also has an idea for a pond on the Risegate Eau, a place along a straight drain where a wide cut in to the bank where reeds, some yellow irises, snow drops could be introduced. The Chairman responded that in answer to Mr Barker questions, the wildflowers struggle because the land is too fertile to accept wildflowers. It will need re-establishing again every three years. Mr Barker agreed.

The Chief Executive believed that bulb type planting might be an option ie iris, snow drops along the bottom on the water line. Mr Barker requested if they could meet with Operations Manager and come back with a section position; The Chief Executive responded this can be arranged yes.

The Operations Manager was going to suggest, there is a future scheme to realign the Towns Drain there maybe the potential to look at some environmental enhancement because he is not confident it will stand up on its own, therefore the introduction of reed beds could be a benefit.

The Chief Executive commented that he is always happy to receive new ideas for environmental scenarios and approvals for the planned biodiversity actions.

The Chief Executive asked Mrs S Baker from the GLNP if there was anything she could think of for the Board to contribute towards. Mrs Baker responded she would need to have a chat with the team and come back to the Board.

1115 TO RECEIVE A VERBAL PRESENTATION BY SCARBOROUGH NIXON ASSOCIATES - Agenda Item 7

Mr I Nixon from Scarborough Nixon Associates reported they had carried out the Bat Surveys at the pumping stations and reported some success this time;

Bicker Eau Pumping Station – 1 daubenton
Dowsby Lode Pumping Station – 1 common pipistrelle
Holland Fen Pumping Station – 22 daubentons

The Chief Executive asked where were the daubentons coming from; Mr Nixon responded from the pumping station outlet side opposite side to the weedscreen.

Mr Nixon continued stating the Lincolnshire Bat Group has been doing studies on daubentons, over the last 3/4 years. All this research will be reported back and also sent to the GLNP for their database.

He added that these are a protected species, therefore if the Board were to be carrying out works at the pumping stations then they will require to obtain exact details. Unfortunately, none of the bat boxes erected have been used, but this is not unusual as it often takes 2/3 years for the box to become established.

Mr Nixon stated that they have set cameras to take pictures of otters, but unfortunately they have not found any. Mr Nixon asked if any Members had an idea where they should set up a camera or if any of the workmen drivers have noticed a site. The Chief Executive asked that the Officers disseminate this request to Members and workmen in order that Scarborough Nixon can be made aware of any sightings within the Boards catchment.

The Chief Executive asked if Scarborough Nixon are aware of any local otter locations or are they just passing through the catchment, Mr Nixon responded they concentrated on pumping stations as this is where in the past they have found evidence and it is good protection for the camera. He asked if any Members have sighted otters to let them know in order to set up a camera.

The Chief Executive asked are you aware of any local otter population. Mr Nixon responded we have found otter spraints at various pumping stations and placed a camera near them but unfortunately there has been no photographic evidence.

Mr Nixon added that he believed there were sightings at Great Hale but again we did not find anything. The Chief Executive clarified that if we have any sightings in the Boards area they could be passing through; Mr Nixon stated the Board should have otters they are around, we have worked with South Holland IDB and found them there.

Cllr Brotherton, stated that he has had a sighting reported to him, it may be an idea to look along the North Forty Foot bank; Mr Nixon responded they roam a long way and will make a holt a long way from water there has been a report of them being found 1.5kilm from the water.

The Chairman asked if another otter holt was put up would it make it more friendly. Mr Nixon responded we are aware of otters in the area, it may be worthwhile putting up another otter holt and we could advise where to put it.

The Chief Executive stated we would love to see otters in our catchment, could we offer any kind of security, permanent casing for cameras, could we put cameras in remote locations in a secure case on a post? Mr Nixon responded that they can be identified by the public easier and removed. Perhaps under bridges on private land, the Chief Executive if there were any interested parties on private land who had visual sightings to relay to Scarborough Nixon Associates.

Mr Nixon mentioned the water vole surveys completed, he presented the report and the Chief Executive interjected that if Members required a copy sending please let the Office know. Mr Nixon stated that the survey had been completed on six sites, some of which were different from last year as they were not providing the data required. Mr Nixon presented the results summary table of populations interestingly around Kirton Skeldyke.

The Chairman was confused at the locations of the dyke in question, he concluded he would contact Helen Scarborough regarding the dyke location on the map because it no longer exists.

Mr Nixon presented an area and regional graph, from the National Water Vole Database and Mapping Project Metadata these views show where the water voles have been recorded.

Mrs Sarah Baker stated the records held by the record centre for Lincolnshire previously detailed South Holland as having no water voles. This was because there were none being recorded therefore by simply providing logging machines to operatives at South Holland IDB data is now being recorded.

1116 TO RECEIVE A REPORT ON ANGLIAN WATER'S POLLUTION WATCH PROMOTION - Agenda Item 8

The Chief Executive presented slides detailing a new project strategy, Anglian Water are trying to move forward regarding pollution watch particularly relating to discharge into watercourses. The simplistic approach is to SPOT IT – REPORT IT – STOP IT there is a new hotline no 03457 145 145. All this information will be placed on the Boards website. Anglian Water are focusing on effluent discharge, which is common on the lower end of the NFFD near the pumping station in particular where there are Anglian Water discharge washout bays where the Board has had problems previously.

(a) Asian Hornet

The Chief Executive stated DEFRA are so concerned about this invasive species that they have introduced an app which you can download to your phone at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-app-to-report-asian-hornet-sightings> .

1117 TO RECEIVE A REPORT ON BARN OWL NESTING BOXES FOR 2016/17 - Agenda Item 9

The Chief Executive stated that he had already discussed this in the minute 1114(o) above.

1118 TO RECEIVE MINUTES OF THE ADA LINCOLNSHIRE BRANCH ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE - Agenda Item 10

The Chief Executive stated that the ADA Lincolnshire Environmental Committee minutes are for information. He added as Environment Committee Members you are welcome to attend these ADA Lincolnshire Branch Environmental meetings, if any Member would like to attend can you please let the office staff know. The dates are generally three meetings a year. One is in the Boston area, either at BSIDB or Witham 4th office. One in the Manby area either the old EA offices or Lindsey Marsh IDB office and one at Horncastle Banovallum House.

1119 ANY OTHER BUSINESS - Agenda Item 11

(a) Lincolnshire ADA Biodiversity Manual

The Chief Executive informed Members that a copy of this has been handed out for Members to take away and review and Members may find significant scenarios within this document for discussion.

Mrs Baker highlighted that there is a more up to date copy of the ADA biodiversity manual which has some additional sections in it. The Chief Executive responded to Members that this is a first draft.

(b) Water Vole Legislation

Mr Nixon informed the Committee that there is new legislation regarding water voles. As the Board has built up a reputation it would be detrimental to fall short of the rules. This incorporates the methods with which you are carrying out maintenance works, these need to be looked at in more detail just to make sure you are legally compliant this will be looked at quite severally. Mr Nixon has spoken to Chris Manning at Lindsey Marsh IDB and the methods they use could be disseminated to the BSIDB and he would encourage us to contact him. The Chief Executive asked would you need to be involved; Mr Nixon responded yes he would be involved.

There being no further business the meeting ended at 16:23.