

# **BLACK SLUICE INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD**

## **MINUTES**

of the proceedings of a meeting of the Executive Committee

held remotely on  
20<sup>th</sup> January 2021 at 2pm

### **Members**

Chairman - \* 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 (Acting 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.

#### 1704 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE - Agenda Item 2

There were no apologies of absence.

#### 1705 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - Agenda Item 3

There were no declarations of interest.

#### 1706 MINUTES OF THE MEETING - Agenda Item 4

Minutes of the meeting held on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2020, copies of which had been circulated, were considered and it was AGREED that they should be signed as a true record with the following amendment:

- Minute 1648 – spelling of 'Retrospectively' to be corrected in title.

#### 1707 CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF THE MEETING - Agenda Item 5

Confidential Minutes of the last meeting held on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2020, copies of which had been circulated, were considered and it was AGREED that they should be signed as a true record.

#### 1708 MATTERS ARISING - Agenda Item 6

##### (a) STRUCTURAL SURVEYS - Minute 1644(b)

The Acting Chief Executive noted that the structural surveys are due to be completed on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2021.

The Operations Manager noted that when they initially attended, they noted they would like to see it at high water levels and so will contact them to see if they would like to come any earlier while the levels are high. However, they would not actually be able to complete any investigative work while the levels are so high.

(b) NATURAL FLOOD MANAGEMENT – Minute 1646(a)(ii)

The Operations Manager noted that there are three sites at Swaton and confirmation from planning is still being awaited at two of the sites.

(c) DESILTING NORTH FORTY FOOT & SOUTH FORTY FOOT DRAIN – Minute 1646(a)(iii)

The Operations Manager confirmed that the desilting of the North Forty Foot has been pushed back to commence in the last week of March 2021.

Mr P Holmes questioned how the River Steeping is progressing? The Operations Manager noted that Royal Smals are on programme with the works originally programmed, but they have now been given extra work to complete whilst there.

The Chairman noted that he believed there had been some issues in relation to lack of knowledge at the EA around getting the water out of the River Steeping.

(d) PUMPING STATION AUTOMATION & GAUGE BOARDS – Minute 1646(a)(iv)

The Acting Chief Executive informed the committee that Quadring and Holland Fen automation was used during the event at the weekend to set emergency profiles, instead of physically attending to switch pumps off, which worked well.

The Chairman noted that there is some water coming back through the flap valve at Quadring Pumping Station. It was confirmed it is on the list to investigate once the levels have reduced. The Operations Manager further added that once the water levels have returned to 'normal' a debriefing will be held to identify things such as this.

Mr M Rollinson added that he has noticed that the red lights on top of the pumping stations are not working. The Operations Manager noted that the red lights are no longer used as they are no longer required with the use of telemetry.

(e) ARRANGEMENTS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS - Minute 1650

It was confirmed that the next Board meeting will have to be held remotely as we will still be in a national lockdown.

The Acting Chief Executive noted that both Works Inspections have been scheduled for April, but he still believes it won't be the 'usual', suggesting the possibility of socially distanced walking, travelling in separate vehicles and a BBQ for lunch. It was also confirmed that even if an inspection is not viable, the meetings will still be held, remotely if necessary.

(f) DUNSBY PUMPING STATION – Minute 1653(a)

The Acting Chief Executive noted the issues that are identified in the later report, the pump went back in on 7<sup>th</sup> January 2021 and is now operating as it should.

(g) INSULATION RESISTANCE TESTS AT PUMPING STATIONS – Minute 1653(f)

The Acting Chief Executive explained that three of the motors that required attention have now been completed, with the Pump Engineer estimating another four requiring work in 2021/22 at cost of c£2,000 - £3,000 or £10,000 worst case scenario if it requires rewinding.

(h) CONFIDENTIAL – BOARD MEMBERS INVOLVEMENT – Minute 1620

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.

1709 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING - Agenda Item 7

Minutes of the meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> December 2020, copies of which had been circulated, were considered and it was AGREED that they should be signed as a true record.

1710 CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING - Agenda Item 8

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.

1711 MATTERS ARISING - Agenda Item 9

(a) BYELAW APPLICATION – FX1707 – DRAINSIDE SOUTH, KIRTON – Minute 1703(a)

The Acting Chief Executive noted that a planning application has been submitted to Boston Borough Council in which they are trying to get the byelaw relaxed to 3.25 metres.

(b) CONFIDENTIAL – SUSPENSION OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER – Minute 1702

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.

## 1712 PERIOD 09 MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS - Agenda Item 10

The Finance Manager highlighted the following:

- Electricity for December estimated at £55,400 due to the snow melt at beginning of December and the South Forty Foot levels not recovering fully, therefore requiring pumping through the whole month and the excessive levels experienced over the Christmas period.
- Admin salaries estimated to be c£26,000 overspent at the end of the year due to combination of the acting up pay, the high water events for December.
- There are some labour and plant costs within Admin and Establishment which have been incorrectly costed to the depot, which are currently being investigated, most likely to end up in the Plant Account or Drain Maintenance.
- The plant account surplus is currently £293,586, aiming to generate £190,000.
- The Board has been informed that the B&M invoice outstanding from February 2020 has been approved for payment so will hopefully be paid before year end.

Questions were invited.

The Chairman added how well the Brewin Dolphin investment has recovered.

## 1713 CHRISTMAS 2020 INCIDENT & UPDATE ON PUMPING STATIONS - Agenda Item 11

The Chairman began by noting the rate of which the water hit every single system, including those of neighbouring IDBs, he believes that cropping practices may be having an impact.

The Acting Chief Executive referred to the graph of the South Forty Foot Drain levels, highlighting number 4 – the nav lock opening, noting that there was a delay in it opening after the sluice, with his belief at the time of the event being that it wasn't discharging as much water as it potentially could have been.

The Acting Chief Executive next presented a graph of the South Forty Foot Drain levels for the current event. The Acting Chief Executive noted there is no ridge in the graph as there is no delay between the sluice and nav lock opening in this event. It was further noted that in this event the hydraulic doors of the sluice had been disconnected.

The Acting Chief Executive next showed a comparison of the two graphs with the same scale to show that, even with the delay in the nav lock opening in the first event, they are still discharging about the same amount of water.

It was confirmed that the green line is Chain Bridge. Mr P Holmes questioned if the black line (Black Hole Drove) is more important? The black traces of the two events were compared and concluded that again, they were similar. It was confirmed that the trace is jagged because the two pumps were pumping.

Mr J Fowler made reference to the graph, noting that he believes a lot more water was discharged with the nav lock on free float as opposed to on hydraulics.

The Acting Chief Executive continued by informing the committee that in the first event (December 2020) pumps at 8 stations were turned off and in the second event, pumps at 12 stations were turned off.

Twelve hour shifts were split between the Acting Chief Executive and Operations Manager throughout the events, with a view to training up the Works and Engineering Manager.

The Operations Manager and Pump Engineer attended a meeting with the EA, the notes from which were circulated via email prior to this meeting. The Acting Chief Executive noted that whilst some of things within may be disputable, it can generally be seen that it has been taken seriously and learnt from.

The Operations Manager continued by giving an update on the meeting held with the EA. The first question asked of the EA was why was the nav lock not opening when it could be? The EA responded that there were concerns over potentially damaging the asset. The Operations Manager also asked the EA if and when the crest levels of the South Forty Foot banks would be received? There was confusion amongst themselves from the EA, who believed they had already been sent, this information should therefore be forthcoming. The EA questioned what action is taken during the event, to which the Operations Manager explained is documented within the emergency plan but is adapted and changed as required in each event. The Operations Manager further added that the EA Duty Officer is not always directly employed by the EA and so because of this they have formed a fourteen scenario contingency plan, however, none of these scenarios recognised a contingency plan for not having pumps at Black Sluice Pumping Station (Boston). The Operations Manager has therefore still got to have further conversation with Adrian Clack at the EA regarding this contingency plan and the suggested use of Van Heck. The Operations Manager finally noted that actions taken from both the EA and the Board is to maintain better communication before, during and after an event.

Mr M Rollinson referred to the report on the incident in the agenda, noting that the thing that stood out to him the most was that a Board Member confirmed the Nav Lock was not open. Mr M Rollinson felt this was quite old fashioned, questioning whether it would be possible to have some form of remote reporting on this, given its importance to the catchment.

Mr J Fowler also noted that when he attended the site, the Sluice had already been running for a couple of hours and there wasn't even any personnel on site, questioning if it might be possible to be connected to the CCTV.

Mr M Brookes added that the documentation around operating the nav lock has still not been received, agreeing that CCTV or telemetry should be available so that officers know it is open when it should be.

The Operations Manager also added that, during an emergency, the EA Duty Officer isn't going to have time to go through a fourteen scenario document to aid with making a decision. The EA also noted that they are looking into ways of passing information to the Duty Officer and looking at trigger levels and the type of flows that means there is going to be an event. It was also noted that the EA are weakening their asset by having high levels in their main river, but the Board is also weakening it's assets by maintaining high levels within our catchments.

Mr M Rollinson further noted that amount of water entering the South Forty Foot Drain coming from the highland carriers.

The Acting Chief Executive also noted another outcome from the incident around communication with the Executive Committee members and Board members. It was explained that all members of the Emergency Response Team are invited into an operations Whats App group, which Executive members could be part of if they wanted, with the added suggestion of a daily update email to Board members.

Mr P Holmes noted that he asked the Acting Chief Executive whether Mr J Fowler could be involved with it, after him expressing an interest. Noting that a simple precis at the beginning and the end of the day would be helpful for others to know what it is going on. Mr J Fowler agreed that this would be beneficial, enabling him to see what stage of the event it is and how the system is coping.

Cllr P Bedford added that Ed Johnson sends an email to Witham 4<sup>th</sup> IDB Board Members.

All AGREED for all Executive Members to get a twice daily precis during events so that they are aware of the up to date situation.

1714 CONFIDENTIAL - EA PRECEPT NEGOTIATIONS - Agenda Item 12

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.

1715 2021/22 BUDGET & TEN YEAR ESTIMATES - Agenda Item 13

The Acting Chief Executive presented the 2021/22 Budget, highlighting particular points to the committee as follows.

Administration and Establishment – There is an overall increase of 5.92% (£32,000 increase for the year). £24,000 of this is within administration salaries, assuming that Mr I Warsap is back by 1<sup>st</sup> April.

(a) BUDGET WITH 10 YEAR ESTIMATES

The Rates and Levies has an increase of 2.49% as agreed at the Executive Committee meeting held on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2020. This is still to be updated as per the values at the 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020 (transfers from agricultural to Special Levy) following the Acting Chief Executive's site visits.

An extra line has been included; the reserve % of expenditure without the grants included.

(b) 2021/22 SUMMARY BUDGET BY MONTH

There were no further comments or questions.

(c) 2021/22 DETAILED BUDGET BY MONTH

Drain Maintenance has been calculated for the revised programme presented at the last Board Meeting, which is a 14% increase in summer cutting expenditure, which equates to a 5.89% overall increase, included within the 2021/22 budget.

(d) 10 YEAR CAPITAL SCHEMES

Over the next 4 years, there is £2.643 million pounds worth of Grant in Aid monies looking to be sourced. This therefore means that to get the required benefits, either from the Board or other partnership sources, up to £265,000, which isn't in the budget.

(e) 2021/22 WAGES ON-COST RESERVE BUDGET

There were no further comments or questions.

(f) 10 YEAR PLANT REPLACEMENT BUDGET

It was explained that contingency is being reviewed in relation to the failure of single pump pumping stations during events. During the Christmas 2020 event, the Board had two 6" pumps and two 8" pumps, which made up approximately 75% of the capacity of Dunsby Pumping Station. The Board tried to hire another 8" pump, but none were available and so one had to be borrowed from South Holland IDB.

Currently included within the budget is £145,000 for a 12" pump as worst case scenario, with a 8" pump probably being more suited for the Board's use.

Mr P Holmes noted the preference of a silent pack pump, noting that surely most of them would be working in remote locations, therefore noting if the silencer is necessary in light of the cost it adds.

The Operations Manager responded that without the silence pack, it would less versatile and possibly not able to be used in every circumstance, such as using it to pump down for routine maintenance work.

The Chairman suggested he would like to get the purchase of one of these pumps in motion before the Board meeting, acknowledging that it is over the Executive's Committee's authorisation allowance.

Mr M Rollinson noted if there would be a possibility of purchasing one with a neighbouring IDB, acknowledging that both IDBs could need it at the same time.

The Chairman highlighted the age of some of the single pump pumping stations and how much work they are having to do. The Operations Manager added that it will provide a good level of contingency.

Mr P Holmes noted that although it is a big expenditure item at the beginning, over its lifetime and the contingency it will provide, it is quite negligible.

Mr J Fowler noted that he had seen a generator and electric pump being used, questioning if the generator could be used to run the pumping station? The Operations Manager noted that this could be investigated but questioned if it 'ticks as many boxes' in comparison to usability of a pump.

All AGREED that the 8" hush pack pump, at a cost of approximately £60,000, be provisionally ordered, pending confirmation from the Board at the next meeting to be held on 10<sup>th</sup> February. If the Board do not agree to the purchase, then the order can be cancelled.

1716 MAINTENANCE OF THE ACCESS TO GREAT HALE PUMPING STATION - Agenda Item 14

The Chairman presented this item.

All AGREED to pay an annual contribution of £150 towards maintenance of the access road to Great Hale Pumping Station.

1717 REVIEW POLICY No. 20 – OFFICER CAR LOAN - Agenda Item 15

The Acting Chief Executive noted that this has been brought to the meeting to make the committee aware of an unexpected result of the policy. The policy was originally intended for salaried Officers and those in receipt of Essential User Allowance.

The Workforce used to be paid weekly and receive travel time, but are now salaried and receive Essential User Allowance, therefore meaning that the Workforce are now eligible to use the policy. One member of the Workforce is using the policy.

1718 ANY OTHER BUSINESS - Agenda Item 16

There was no additional business.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 16:03.