

BLACK SLUICE INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

MINUTES

of the proceedings of a Meeting of the
Southern Works Committee

held at the Office of the Board on the
5th July 2022 at 16:00

Members

Chairperson - * Mr M Rollinson

Mr W Ash	* Mr J F Atkinson
* Mr V A Barker	* Mr K C Casswell
* Mr J Casswell	* Mr R Dorrington
Mr C Dring	Mr A Mair
* Mr M Mowbray	Cllr S Walsh
Mr C Wray	

(* Member Present)

In attendance: Mr I Warsap (Chief Executive)
Mr D Withnall (Finance Manager)
Mr P Nicholson (Operations Manager)
Mr S Harrison (Works Manager)
Mr K Methley (Pump Engineer)
Mr P Holmes (Vice Chairman & Northern Works Chairman)
Cllr P Bedford (Executive Committee)
Mr J Fowler (Executive Committee)

1997 Recording the Meeting – Agenda Item 1

Members were informed that the meeting would be recorded.

1998 Apologies for absence - Agenda Item 2

Apologies for absence were received from Mr W Ash, Mr C Wray, Cllr S Walsh, Mr C Dring, Mr A Mair and Mr M Brookes.

1999 Declarations of Interest - Agenda Item 3

Declarations of interest were received from:

- Mr J Atkinson in reference to Minute 2002(a) - Dunsby Fen Catchment Works Study
- Mr V Barker in reference to Minute 2004 – Number 03 – Crop Loss

2000 Terms of Reference - Agenda Item 4

All AGREED to recommend the Southern Works Committee's Terms of Reference to the Board for approval.

2001 Minutes of the last meeting - Agenda Item 5

The Minutes of the Southern Works Committee, which was held on 28th September 2021, copies of which had been circulated, were considered. It was AGREED that the Minutes should be signed as a true record.

2002 Matters Arising - Agenda Item 6

(a) Dunsby Fen Catchment Works Study – Minute 1847 – 12(a)(vi)

Mr J Atkinson questioned if there has been any progress with this matter?

The Operations Manager explained that this is still ongoing, the report should be received in August. Once received, the catchment can be reviewed considering any connection between Dunsby and Pinchbeck.

The Chief Executive further noted the suggestion of the syphon under the South Forty Foot Drain (SFFD), noting that they are holding that information until more is known about the possible transfer route for the South Lincs Reservoir and the Boston to Peterborough Wetland Corridor (B2PWC).

(b) Leaveslake Drove

Mr J Atkinson mentioned that on the inspection tour it was noted that the drain running beside Leaveslake Drove is not in good condition, wondering whether it could be lowered into the South Forty Foot Drain?

The Operations Manager noted that the difficulty with lowering the outfall is whether the outfall drain is at a level that allows gravitation, but it is something that can be looked in to.

The Operations Manager further noted that Leaveslake Drove and Lane Dyke culverts were both proposed for Grant in Aid funding but, unfortunately, both culverts have not met the criteria to release the funding.

2003 Discuss the Operations Report and Inspection - Agenda Item 7

The Operations Manager led discussions about the inspection, as follows.

(a) Swaton Catchment Natural Flood Management

An update was given on the three sites being worked on with the Environment Agency for attenuation; the Holland Road Farm site is completed, works on the other two sites (Grove Farm and Manor Farm) have started but had to stop in November 2021 due to awaiting an agreement with the Crown Estate. It is hoped to be completed by March 2023.

It was noted that there have been no major fluvial events since the Holland Road Farm site has been completed, but that the landowner has four outfall drains running into it and it has filled up and proven it works.

(b) Environment Agency Public Sector Cooperation Agreement Revetment Works -Ouse Mere Lode, Billingborough

This year the Environment Agency (EA) had some funding around recovery works available (£400,000). Originally the Board estimated works for 33 sites which totalled nearly £1million. Agreed works were identified to help improve the annual maintenance carried out by the Board on behalf of the EA. There are still further works the Board would like to do and Adrian Clack (EA) has shown a willingness to want to do more through the Public Sector Cooperation Agreement (PSCA).

Mr V Barker noted that he believed willow has been used, noting that it will require maintaining. The Operations Manager confirmed that willow has been used, once the willow gets established it will hopefully prevent failure of the bank and there will be ongoing maintenance to control its growth.

(c) Slip Repairs – FX1661, FX1670 – Billingborough Pump Drain, Billingborough Drove

The committee noted these works.

(d) First crop on site of former Billingborough Silt Lagoon

The former Billingborough Lagoon is now being cropped for the first time.

The ongoing challenge is to work towards achieving continuation of desilting of the South Forty Foot Drain (SFFD) from the A52 to the A17. The Environment Agency (EA) have an appetite to continue with this work but want to revisit the dredging methodology previously used. The methodology used will be dependent on the results of a topographical survey of the channel, which has not yet been completed.

(e) Sempringham Fen Pumping Station Access Road

The access roadway from Neslam Road to Sempringham Fen Pumping Station along Environment Agency (EA) owned land has been completed, within the £46,000 budget, through a purchase order from the EA, which has made the roadway far safer to drive down.

Mr V Barker referenced a previous issue with grazing the Sempringham drain bank, questioning if this was resolved? The Operations Manager noted that the farmer was written to, as agreed, and the Board have not heard anything more, nor have encountered any further issues.

(f) Sempringham Fen Pumping Station – Proposed Weed Screen Cleaner

An agreement with the Crown Estate to lease the land, to construct a weed dump area and access for the installation of an automated weedscreen cleaner, is still being awaited.

The Finance Manager added that one of the factors holding it up was around the VAT element and confirmed that the Board has only paid the net amount as opposed to the VAT as well. The solicitor has conveyed that everything is now in place to move forward.

(g) Proposed revetment works – Drain 31/3 – North Drove, Quadring Fen FX1209

There is some bank slippage adjacent to where the road is cracked and so highways have been contacted to ensure they are aware that the works of the Board has not caused the road to crack, photos will be taken before and after. The road will require closing for the works and is estimated to cost £24,000.

(h) Slip repair works – Cow Bridge, Beck Bank, Quadring Fen – FX1852

This is a recent slip potentially caused by what appears to be a leak from the adjacent irrigation equipment. Investigations will be carried out and discussions with the landowner will take place to establish the cause. The Chairperson noted that he believes there is currently a short-term tenant on the land.

(i) Desilting of Gosberton Pump Drain & Pumping Station Suction Bay Works

Work has been done under the pumping station to inspect and check over and to ensure that the channel under the station is clear. It is the intention to complete works under all of the pumping stations to complete inspections and replace all nuts and bolts. These inspections being required as the Board does not have an accurate record of when the pumps were last inspected and so the aim is to get round all the pumping stations as quickly as possible, to prevent the nuts and bolts rusting away, as has done previously, and potentially causing damage to the pump shafts and impellers

Mr P Holmes felt it commendable that the Board is learning from the past and rectifying that by putting together a programme of inspections.

The Pump Engineer added that the condition of the structure of the suction bays have generally been good, with nothing alarming or worrying so far.

(j) Gosberton and Dowsby Fen Pumping Station 750Kva Transformer

Following a recent inspection of the nine pumping station transformers, the one at Gosberton Pumping Station, that also powers Dowsby Fen Pumping Station, is at point of failure. The engineers report stated: *'Oil sample report states high levels of dissolved gases including CO2 and Ethane which suggests the paper insulation is breaking down. This means the transformer is at risk of failure and I would recommend looking at replacing the transformer as soon as possible'*.

It is not known how much longer the transformer will last, it is also not known what a failure of the transformer would entail i.e., would it just stop working or could it cause a fire?

The Chairperson suggested that a new transformer be installed and an ongoing programme of review for all the transformers.

The Chief Executive confirmed that it is not known why the Board decided to place the transformers internally and take ownership of them, further questioning whether it would be viable for the electricity supplier to install a transformer to feed the pumping station.

The Pump Engineer noted that he is meeting with Western Power Distribution tomorrow and so can discuss that with them. The Finance Manager noted that he would think, at the time the pumping station was built, there was not enough power available to supply the pumping station.

Mr V Barker noted that the supply running across his land was installed a number of years after the pumping station was built. Mr V Barker added that the worst condition transformers do need changing, but in the Board's own time, noting that each station has the ability to be powered by tractor should it be required. Further referring to Gosberton Pumping Station and that if it gets to a certain level, it will go to Donington Pumping Station. Mr V Barker questioned whether transformers are available from other countries.

The Chairperson confirmed that the Board's Officer's need to source the most cost-effective solution, whether that be for Western Power Distribution to put their own transformer in or the Board purchases and continues with our own transformer.

The Chief Executive further suggested questioning Western Power Distribution about what the transformer failing would entail i.e., would it be likely to catch fire?

The Operations Manager added whether it is an insurable risk, the committee being reminded that currently all the pumping stations are self-insured.

Mr V Barker questioned whether the oil level of the transformer has been checked? The Pump Engineer confirmed that oil checks are done as part of regular maintenance visits.

Mr J Fowler added that if the Board owns and replaces the transformer, which is typically an electric board asset, whether the Board should be getting cheaper electricity, also being suggested to inform Woldmarsh.

Mr K Casswell proposed that the Board's Officer's get some quotes, find out what impact 'failure' of the transformer is likely to have and go from there. It was noted that it will have to be presented to the Board for approval anyway. Mr V Barker seconded, all AGREED.

(k) JCB Hydradig Demonstration

The committee viewed a demonstration of a JCB Hydradig machine on site during the inspection, a machine recently purchased by Welland and Deepings IDB.

The Chairperson suggested that a letter of thanks be sent to Welland and Deepings IDB for doing the machine demonstration for the committee, noting that it will be interesting to see how they get on with it during the season.

The Operations Manager noted the benefit of a neighbouring IDB purchasing a potential new machine and that they will hopefully continue to be honest and open about how they are getting on with it.

Mr K Casswell noted that it may also be worth approach JCB to say the Board are interested in the JCB Hydradig machine but have some concerns with it, that they may be able to adapt.

(l) Water Levels

Mr V Barker noted that when a pump first starts is when it uses lots of power, if the levels were kept lower, then it would decrease the power consumption used in the first instance.

The Operations Manager noted that the Board's Officer's reviewed the levels in January 2021 and now hold water levels higher than has been done previously, as a result of confidence in how to manage the catchments effectively during events, noting that after the initial start, power consumption reduces.

The Operations Manager noted that to reduce costs, pumping has to be reduced and levels managed, which they are. Going forward, if replacing pumps, they would be replaced with equipment that has the ability to control how they are pumping.

Mr V Barker noted that he is referring to the current day and that he is talking about lowering the electrode on the duty pump, pumping for longer so that it wasn't required to start as many times and use power.

The Pump Engineer noted that if pumping for longer and lower, it will take some gravitation away.

The Operations Manager noted that the Officers believe they are operating in the most cost-effective way.

(m) Proposed diversion of Drain 28/30, New House Farm, Morton North Drove (Refused)

The application for the proposed diversion of drain 28/30 was refused by the Board at the meeting on 14th June 2022, the landowner has been notified and have noted that they will look at alternatives.

(n) Dyke Fen Pumping Station – Proposed pump motor refurbishments

As part of ongoing preventative maintenance, the Operations Manager proposed:

- Refurbishment of Dyke Fen Pumping Station electric pump motor in 2022/23, estimated at a cost of £3,000. All AGREED.
- Refurbishment of Dyke Fen Pumping Station pump and electric pump motor refurbishment, estimated at a cost of £25,000. All AGREED.

(o) Loss of land issues, new cut drain, Dyke Fen

An enquiry was raised from the landowner on the south side of the New Dyke discharge drain regarding loss of land. A site meeting was held in November 2021 at which the Operations Manager, landowner and his NFU advisor were present.

The landowner would like the land lost through slippage of the banks to be reinstated. He was advised that the only means of possible compensation is through the Board's Crop Loss Policy (Policy No. 46), in which it states that '*the Board will only pay land loss compensation to the landowner for widths lost greater than 500mm*'.

Mr K Casswell felt there is now a greater issue to resolve, following the site visit, it now being seen that an unconsented fence has been erected within the byelaw distance.

The Chairperson and Mr K Casswell felt there was no case to answer.

It was confirmed that there is no previous measurement from top of the bank to top of the bank to compare with current measurements.

The Finance Manager added that the Board cannot be responsible for natural erosion of a bank and the danger of setting a precedence.

It was confirmed that the landowner will be written to regarding the breach of byelaw no. 10 (the 9-metre byelaw) (erection of fence). It was suggested that the landowner be informed that the Board are not willing to pay compensation because it is natural erosion of the bank, as opposed to as a result of the Board's work. All AGREED.

Mr P Holmes suggested that the byelaw breach be dealt with first.

(p) Proposed culvert works and WPD underground cable replacement -
Twenty

This culvert was initially put in to carry an underground cable, Western Power Distribution (WPD) have gained consent to re-route the cable, as the culvert has become damaged. Once WPD have carried out this work, the Board will then remove the culvert (no longer required by landowner). WPD are yet to complete the work, but if the culvert fails further to the point of blocking the watercourse the Board will remove it.

(q) Proposed project with the Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust – Bourne North Fen

Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust have purchased 50 hectares at the confluence of the River Bourne Eau and Glen to create a water storage and transfer reservoir.

(r) 10 Year Capital Schemes Budget

The committee noted the 10 year capital schemes budget.

1. Capital Asset improvements

(a) 2022/23 Defra/EA Funded Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) Grant in Aid (GiA) Schemes

(i) Remote monitoring, telemetry H&S scheme

This scheme involved the telemetry upgrade, and the installation of metric gauge boards and CCTV at all the Board's pumping stations. The additional contingency available for this scheme has been claimed to enable all this work and some further work on control equipment and everything has now been installed and is operational.

(ii) Swaton Natural Flood Management (NFM) schemes

An update was given on the three sites being worked on with the Environment Agency for attenuation; the Holland Road Farm site is completed, works on the other two sites (Grove Farm and Manor Farm) have started but had to stop in November 2021 due to awaiting an agreement with the Crown Estate. It is hoped to be completed by March 2023.

It was noted that there have been no major fluvial events since the Holland Road Farm site has been completed, but that the landowner has four outfall drains running into it and it has filled up and proven it works.

(iii) Sempringham Fen Pumping Station Refurbishment

An agreement with the Crown Estate to lease the land, to construct a weed dump area and access for the installation of an automated weedscreen cleaner, is still being awaited.

The Finance Manager added that one of the factors holding it up was around the VAT element and confirmed that the Board has only paid the net amount as opposed to the VAT as well. The solicitor has conveyed that everything is now in place to move forward.

(iv) SFF Upper catchment Natural Flood Management (NFM)

The completed studies showed that Morton, Aslackby, Billingborough and Helpringham catchments holds the best opportunities for NFM implementation. No works have been started on site yet, landowner engagement has been positive, but are not willing to commence works until crops have been harvested.

(v) Lane Dyke culvert replacement

Lane Dyke culvert was proposed for Grant in Aid funding but, unfortunately, has not met the criteria to release the funding.

(vi) Black Sluice Catchment Strategy

A grant for £250,000 has been applied for, to bring all of the catchment studies together and complete any outstanding catchment surveys, with an aim to complete the whole of the Board's area. This will enable a review of how the catchment is managed and identify opportunities for change i.e., merging of catchments.

(b) 2022/23 Board funded capital schemes

(i) Graft Drain

The intention for the remaining unspent budget was for the scheme to recommence over the year end period utilising the remaining 2021/22 budget of £33,922 and the £60,000 from the 2022/23 budget. This did not happen due to works being completed for the Environment Agency during this period, which also recovered some of the unbudgeted costs. This unspent budget has been re-allocated to other higher priority schemes in 2022/23. It is still intended to complete the Graft Drain project, but a budget has not currently been identified.

(ii) Major Slip repairs

Following two wet winters c45 bank slips have been identified, of which work on repairing these slips has commenced. It is believed there is c£100,000 work to complete.

(iii) Jetting to Major Pipelines – Estimate £20,000

A meeting is being held with the contractor tomorrow to discuss the completion of the Donington and Kirton catchments and also to form a tender package for next year's work.

(iv) Dyke Fen Pumping Station refurbish 1 pump motor – Estimate £3,000

One of the electric motors that drives the pump will be removed for refurbishment.

(v) Dunsby Fen Pumping Station refurbish 1 pump motor – Estimate £3,000

One of the electric motors that drives the pump will be removed for refurbishment.

(vi) Gosberton Fen Pumping Station refurbish 1 pump motor - Estimate £4,000

One of the electric motors that drives the pump has been removed and is currently being refurbished.

(vii) Alternative Programme Access works

These works are to enable ongoing new maintenance methods providing access for alternate bank cuts, through flailing, bushing, and placement of side entry access culverts.

(c) 2023/24 Defra/EA FCERM GiA Schemes

(i) Natural Flood Management (NFM) Studies – £150,000

An application has been made for £150,000 funding for continuing with the NFM studies and doing the works.

(ii) Central Catchment Amalgamation Study - £100,000

This study is to develop the findings from the Catchment Strategy and understand the potential for changing the existing water level management in individual catchments, by amalgamation of adjoining catchments.

(d) 2023/24 Board funded capital schemes

(i) Quadrang North Fen roadside revetment – Estimate £24,000

There is some bank slippage adjacent to where the road is cracked and so highways have been contacted to ensure they are aware that the works of the Board has not caused the road to crack, photos will be taken before and after. The road will require closing for the works and is estimated to cost £24,000.

(ii) Dyke Fen Pumping Station pump and pump motor refurbishment – Estimate £25,000

As part of ongoing preventative maintenance, all AGREED works as per Minute 2003(n).

2. Emergency Response Plan

The committee were reminded that during an event, when the South Forty Foot Drain (SFFD) becomes 'full' (+2.7ODN at Black Hole Drove), the Officers of the Board have to consider switching pumps off.

3. Crop Loss

The Chief Executive highlighted the sentence with paragraph three of the Board's Crop Loss Compensation policy (no. 46), '*compensation will not be payable for access through grassland*'.

The Chief Executive referred to crops such as hay and silage, which have been viewed as 'grassland', questioning whether the policy needs to be reviewed to include paying compensation for crops such as these.

Mr K Caswell felt it should be included as it has quite a high value.

Discussion took place around this type of crop and how many variants there are, Mr J Fowler suggested the terminology 'harvested grass crop'.

Further discussion took place around whether damage is done to such a crop when travelling over it, it being confirmed that where material is deposited on the crop, compensation is paid, this matter being about whether compensation should be paid for grassland when travelled over with Board machinery.

Mr P Holmes noted that grassland is similar to wheat; if travelled on during its earlier stages it wouldn't cause damage, whereas if travelled on at a later stage, it would cause damage.

The Operations Manager suggested the phrase 'unless agreed damage caused', but the Finance Manager felt this was too wide ranging.

It was noted that there will be very few cases of damage to grassland type crops in August when the Board begin cutting.

All AGREED that the only change required is within section four of the policy, '*Other maintenance works (de-silting / bushing)*', with the addition of harvest grass as follows. '*Where notice of entry has not been served and a field has been cultivated, drilled, planted or sprayed, compensation will be calculated at the rate of £1,495 per hectare for cereals **and harvested grass**, and £1,720 per hectare for oil seed rape.*'

2005 Report on Rainfall - Agenda Item 9

The rainfall figures at Black Hole Drove and Swineshead were circulated. The Committee RESOLVED that this report be noted.

2006 Any Other Business - Agenda Item 10

(a) Southern Works Co-opted Member Suggestion

Mr V Barker suggested that Elaine Richardson be invited on the Southern Works Inspection Tour, noting she is a working farmer and a female, to try and address the male dominated Board. It was felt she be invited to the next Southern Works Inspection Tour.

(b) Complaint - Drainage and maintenance issues - land south of the Risegate Eau, Gosberton Fen

Mr V Barker stated that, as a rate payer, he has a complaint to make in relation to drain 176 to 177.

Mr V Barker referred to Minute 1549 (Board 21 November 2019) and Minute 1591 (Southern Works Committee 4 March 2020) regarding drainage and maintenance issues of land south of the Risegate Eau, Gosberton Fen. It was suggested increasing the maintenance, which has been done, but has not resolved the issue.

Mr V Barker next referred to the survey that is still yet to be completed, noting that he has asked the Operations Manager numerous times and keeps getting told that it will be completed.

Mr V Barker explained the history of the issue; he contacted the Board in 1988 in which it was discussed, and consideration given to putting a pump in. Mr V Barker noted he believed it was possible to resolve the issue, without a pump. The matter was also on the agenda of the Board inspection in 1999, however the meeting didn't go ahead because of emergency event. Mr V Barker then contacted a drainage engineer who provided a report in April 2000, of which a copy was given to the Board.

Mr V Barker noted he has photos showing the drain full of water, land that can't be let because of the flooding issue.

Mr V Barker next referred to the Board's Risk Management Strategy, particularly Risk 1.4 and one of the method's of managing it, '*All watercourses are desilted on a regular basis*'. Mr V Barker noted that it has not been cleansed for the last 44 years and is also not sure if it has ever been cleansed since the new culvert was installed c60 years ago.

Mr V Barker offered what he felt would be a viable solution; noting that there is around 300 metres where the drain has gone narrow. Mr V Barker referenced the 'Berky' machine that was used years ago, with rakes that pulled the bottom and bank out to keep the width, which the newer machines don't do. Mr V Barker felt that some silt needs removing from the bottom and possibly the sides.

Mr V Barker noted that it has brought him no joy in bringing up this matter but will be making an official complaint if he has not received a positive response by the next Board meeting. He noted that he will also involve the ombudsman, auditor, MPs and NFU legal committee, but doesn't want to go down that route.

The Operations Manager responded, explaining that the person completing the survey is also completing the catchment survey studies and has got an order to complete this survey as soon as the catchment studies are completed. The survey will then show any benefit from making changes to the drain. The Operations Manager noted that it is low lying land, noting that the only way the conveyance will be improved will be to lower the outfall. The survey will give an accurate picture of the scenario, with short term fix in the meantime until the survey is complete, being to increase maintenance to reduce vegetation and this allow conveyance.

Mr V Barker stated that it is trying to get water to flow down a 'narrow crack' as the drain has lost its shape.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 17:45.