

BLACK SLUICE INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

MINUTES

of the proceedings of a Meeting of the
Northern Works Committee

held at the Offices of the Board on the
13th April 2023 at 15:30

Members

Chairperson - * Mr P Holmes

Cllr T Ashton	Cllr R Austin
* Cllr P Bedford	* Mr M Brookes
* Mr D Casswell	* Cllr M Cooper
* Mr J Fowler	Cllr M Head
* Mr M Leggott	* Mr R Needham
* Cllr F Pickett	* Mr J E Pocklington
* Mr P Robinson	* Cllr P Skinner
* Mr R Welberry	

(* 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 M Rollinson (Southern Works Chairperson)
Mr J Emerson (Guest)

2122 Recording the Meeting – Agenda Item 1

Members were informed that the meeting would be recorded.

The Chairperson welcomed Mr J Emerson (guest) and thanked the Officer's for organising an interesting and informative inspection.

2123 Apologies for absence - Agenda Item 2

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr R Austin, Cllr M Head and Cllr T Ashton. Cllr T Ashton attended the inspection tour.

2124 Declarations of Interest - Agenda Item 3

(a) North Forty Foot Bank - Land post-lagoon & possible bushing works

Mr J Pocklington declared an interest in 2129(d) regarding land post-lagoon and possible bushing and desilting works.

(b) Open Channel Transfer of raw water to the Lincolnshire Reservoir

Mr D Casswell declared an interest in 2131 regarding the open channel transfer of raw water to the Lincolnshire Reservoir.

2125 Confirmation of Co-opted Members (co-option and removal) - Agenda Item 4

The Chief Executive explained that this item is for the purpose of the co-option of new members and the removal of any existing co-opted members.

The Chairperson invited Mr J Emerson to become a co-opted member, who accepted.

The Chairperson noted that the concept of the co-opted members is about succession planning, with the idea that co-opted members are willing for election onto the Board should the circumstances arise.

2126 Minutes of the last meeting - Agenda Item 5

The Minutes of the Joint Works Committee, which was held on 4th October 2022, copies of which had been circulated, were considered. It was AGREED that the Minutes should be signed as a true record.

2127 Confidential Minutes of the last meeting - Agenda Item 6

The Confidential Minutes of the Joint Works Committee, which was held on 4th October 2022, copies of which had been circulated, were considered. It was AGREED that the Minutes should be signed as a true record.

The Chairperson thanked the Chief Executive for his work and involvement regarding the Lincolnshire Reservoir.

2128 Matters Arising - Agenda Item 7

There were no matters arising.

2129 Discuss the Operations Report and Inspection - Agenda Item 8

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

(a) Ewerby Fen Pumping Station - Replacement control panel

The control panel at this station is proposed for replacement, estimated at £60,000.

(b) Replacement of Fenmore Farm access culvert

Following the failure of this culvert, the Board provided an estimate for replacement of it, the Board has now completed the replacement.

(c) Great Hale Pumping Station Weedscreen Refurbishment

This scheme is to replace the moving parts to include the trolley and control cabling, estimated at £75,000.

(d) North Forty Foot Bank - Land post-lagoon & possible bushing works

The Operations Manager reminded the committee that the landowner has requested that a section of the riparian watercourse adjacent to the lagoon is cleaned out. This was not agreed within the terms of the lagoon. Mr J Pocklington left the meeting whilst this was discussed.

Mr M Leggott felt that the landowner is asking too much, it not being ascertained whether the watercourse has received a lot of silt as a result of the discharge of the water. With regard to the removal of the bushes and hedges, Mr M Leggott also felt this was not down to the Board and expressed concern that if the Board completed it in this circumstance, it would be expected by others elsewhere. Mr M Leggott acknowledged that the landowner has been helpful to the Board with the lagoon, questioning if the Board could meet him 'halfway' and for him to prune the bushes back and for the Board to clean the watercourse out.

Cllr M Cooper noted that it is clear from how established the bushes and trees are that there has been no work done to them for a number of years and so felt it was too much for the landowner to expect it all to be completed by the Board, agreeing with Mr M Leggott's suggestion to go 'halfway'.

Mr J Fowler noted that the Board have saved money by using a smaller area for the lagoon, therefore meaning the landowner has taken on more risk with more silt depth and so the Board potentially owe him the courtesy of clearing the watercourse.

Mr M Rollinson questioned the cost involved with the work the landowner has requested be completed? The Operations Manager noted that they would use the flail on the excavator to flail back the bushes and then use the same machine to complete the cleaning out of the watercourse, it equating to around two days work.

Mr D Casswell added that if the Board has saved c£7,000 due to having a smaller lagoon area he felt the Board should complete this work.

The Chairperson gave his opinion, noting the saving the Board has made by using a smaller site, suggesting that it might have been that there has been more silt in suspension because it was a smaller site and therefore hasn't had a chance to settle down, therefore meaning that more silt may have come out and deposited in the watercourse. The Chairperson continued that his suggestion would be to propose to the landowner that the cost of the flailing is split equally between the Board and himself and the Board fund the desilting of the watercourse entirely.

Mr K Casswell noted that the hedge hasn't become that established in a short period of time.

The Chairperson added that the landowner also lost a year of cropping because he had planned for the whole site to be used as the lagoon, which was then reduced.

The Finance Manager informed the committee that this is a grant funded scheme and so is not a cost to the Board, further noting that there are sufficient remaining funds within the scheme to complete this work.

Cllr P Bedford questioned if the permission of the owner (bungalow next door) of the hedge has been sought?

The Chief Executive noted that it would be a condition that the landowner obtains permission from the hedge owner (owner of the bungalow).

It was further confirmed that the spoil will be left on the landowner's land for his disposal.

Mr M Leggott questioned whether this site would be used again in the future? The Chairperson responded that it won't be used again for many years.

The Operations Manager continued that it would be prudent to write this into any future site contracts which use existing watercourses; to agree it is in an agreed condition before and in the same agreed condition afterwards.

The Finance Manager added that if the Board were desilting any other watercourse, it would be de-bushed as part of that process anyway.

The Chairperson added that it perhaps should have been debushed and desilted before the lagoon work started, due to it being the outfall.

The Operations Manager explained that the water that is put into the lagoon is held in the lagoon until the silt falls out of the water (this can be as little as 24 hours). Therefore, the water within the lagoon is only in there as long as it needs to be, the Operations Manager therefore challenged the stance of the landowner that the process has caused a build up of silt in the outfall drain, as it is water and not silt.

The Chairperson acknowledged this but felt it would be goodwill to complete the works as suggested in this instance.

The Chief Executive concluded that, subject to the landowner gaining permission from the hedge / bush's owner (property owner), the Board will complete the flailing works at 50% cost to the Board and 50% paid by the landowner, and the Board will complete the desilting of the watercourse at no cost to the landowner. The landowner will be responsible for spreading the arisings on his land. All AGREED.

Mr J Pocklington was invited back to the meeting. The Chairperson informed him of the proposal, as above, to which he was satisfied and happy to accept. The Operations Manager noted he will liaise with Mr J Pocklington to progress this.

(e) Residential development works – Heron Park, Wyberton

The Operations Manager referred to the footpath viewed on the inspection tour within the Heron Park, Wyberton development that is falling into the drain.

The Operations Manager continued that they have had no further correspondence from the developer since the last meeting and so are of the understanding that it will be removed due to it not being fit for purpose and Lincolnshire County Council refusing to adopt it because of this.

The Chairperson noted his concern that if it is not removed, and just left, it will fall into the drain which the Board will then need to remove.

Mr K Casswell noted that they (developer) will have to remove it because if somebody fell off the footpath, they would be liable. The Chief Executive added that their positioning of the security fence suggests that they know this.

The Operations Manager next referred to the wooden fences on the opposite side of the watercourse to the footpath, noting that it is in the way of access for the Board's machinery. It has not been consented and so the Board can remove it due to it being an obstruction. The Chairperson noted that there needs to be dialogue with the developer before the Board need to gain entry and simply remove them. The Chief Executive confirmed that the Board will write to the developers about the unconsented fencing and gates and will ask for it to be removed immediately.

Mr K Casswell suggested that Boston Borough Council planning department should also be involved to show the consequences of their planning permissions. Cllr P Skinner noted his support to the Board and will bring it to the attention of the planning department.

Mr M Leggott referred to the byelaws, questioning whether block paving is specifically listed? Suggesting it perhaps should be. The Chairperson felt it was covered under 'permanent structure'.

The Operations Manager noted that there have been instances where the site is half developed and the byelaw distance is still being discussed.

Cllr P Skinner noted that he will contact the Chair of Flood and Water Management Scrutiny Committee because they did a substantial piece of work on SuDS and felt that the 9-metre byelaw should be incorporated within that document.

Mr M Rollinson noted that a big part of the problem is that the developer can walk away, and the new property owners have no idea that the Board are going to gain access with heavy machinery.

The Chief Executive noted that this was also discussed at the Structures Committee meeting and an action arose from that to contact Lincs ADA, adding that it needs getting to high level planners and needs to have the same respect and discipline that other utilities such as a gas pipe / electric cable would.

The Chairperson noted that if the Board took a 'zero tolerance' approach the developers would soon get the understanding and would also be able to bid to purchase the building land in accordance with how many houses can be fit on the land taking into consideration the 9-metre byelaw.

Mr M Leggott noted that he was horrified to see what had been done by the developers at this site and expressed his concern for future maintenance, expressing again that he feels every possible obstruction i.e., block paving etc. should be listed in the byelaws to make it exceptionally clear. The Chief Executive noted that they will review it.

Mr R Needham felt that the planning department should not be giving planning permission unless the 9-metre byelaw is adhered to.

Cllr P Bedford noted that the planning department does ask for comment from the Board on every planning application received and so the Board needs to ensure that the comments back are of a stronger nature.

The Operations Manager added that the Board do respond to the planning applications, but that the Board's 9 metre byelaw is still not recognised in the way that other utilities are. The Board requires unrestricted access to be able to maintain the watercourse.

The Chairperson questioned if it requires explaining in the byelaws why it is so important to have the 9-metre unrestricted access.

The Finance Manager explained that the byelaws are sealed and approved by the Defra Minister and so can't simply just be changed by the Board. The Finance Manager continued that Board's Policy No. 9, Relaxation of Board's Byelaw No 10 (the 9-metre byelaw), could be withdrawn if the Board chose to.

Mr M Leggott felt it was perhaps an issue to be looked at by ADA and the only thing within the 9-metre byelaw should be grass.

Mr J Fowler suggested that the Board should be investigating, through legal means, how it can be included in the property deeds so that new property owners are aware.

(f) Proposed piping of Drain 6/29 – Greencore, Marsh Lane

The Operations Manager reflected on a conversation on site during the inspection tour and that the committee see the proposal to pipe the dyke as acceptable, subject to the correct number of chambers and all the lateral connections being identified and fitted into the new system.

The Operations Manager continued that the Board has been asked to provide a tender price for the works. If the Board is not successful, then the work will still be carried out to Board specification. The Chairperson suggested that if the Board are not the successful tender, that one of the operations team carries out inspections whilst the work is being completed and not wait until it has been completed.

Mr D Casswell questioned if the size of the pipe will have capacity for increased water flow following more development etc.? The Operations Manager confirmed this will be considered.

Mr M Leggott echoed the Chairperson's suggestion of doing regular inspections whilst the work is undertaken.

(g) Q1 Development - Wyberton Towns Drain

The Operations Manager noted that it was expected that the realignment of the Wyberton Towns Drain would take place this year.

The developer is in receipt of an estimate from the Board to complete both the bushing work and to realign the c100m of drain over to the new proposed position.

In addition to this work, it is also proposed that the Board would complete the realignment of c70m of drain downstream (Board funded through the Development Reserve). Unfortunately, the developer has not been in contact to progress this further yet. With regard to the bushing work, this now would not be able to be completed until around October, unless the developer proposed an environmental and nesting bird survey for works to be completed before this.

(h) Kirton Marsh Pumping Station - Electrical supply change

This was discussed at Minute 2130 1(d)(ii).

(i) Outer Dowsing Wind Farm Project

The Operations Manager noted that this doesn't affect the Board too greatly, but are involved, alongside other IDBs, around an agreement as to how they will pass Board maintained watercourses. The preferred option is underneath the bed which they are currently moving forward with.

2130 Receive the Engineer's Report - Agenda Item 9

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 is now completed, all pumping stations now have remote telemetry control, enabling the change to water levels remotely, and CCTV, enabling the identification of problems without having to physically send a person.

(ii) North Forty Foot Cleansing / Revetment

This scheme is in its final stages, the remaining element being the installation of a liner in the pipe that goes from the North Forty Foot, under the road and through the garden of the property adjacent to Langrick Road. The Works Manager confirmed that he is just waiting for confirmation of a delivery date for the pipe liner, as it is imported from Germany.

Lincolnshire County Council are responsible for the 25 metre section of pipeline underneath the highway and will be made aware of the contribution required (£22,000).

(iii) Black Sluice Catchment Strategy

The consultants are on programme, with the next update meeting scheduled for this month.

There are also representatives of the Environment Agency (EA) and Anglian Water (Mott McDonald) that have been involved in this because of the potential impact of other schemes such as the Lincolnshire Reservoir and Lower Witham Strategy. It was noted that if the Board tried to secure funding from the Lower Witham Strategy, it would mean the Board competing against the EA for the same pot of funding and therefore wouldn't be a win/win situation. There is £110 million of funding allocated for all the Lower Witham projects. The Lower Witham Strategy has split the geographical area into compartments and within the compartments that cover the Board's catchment, there are six pumping stations that have the opportunity to gain from the strategy. Mr K Casswell added that the EA has shared that the banks are not in good condition.

(b) Information on site inspection at Trinity College, Damford, Ewerby & South Kyme

The Operations Manager explained that he has now taken it to other Officers within the Environment Agency (EA) to hopefully progress it, further explaining that the Partnership and Strategic Overview Officer at the EA (person who assess the Board's bids for funding) is also now the lead on the Lower Witham Strategy, who wasn't aware of the situation with these pumping stations until now. The four pumping stations are some of the six pumping stations within the relevant geographical compartment of the Lower Witham Strategy. The Operations Manager added that he is hopeful that it will now be moved forward, following previous difficulties around it not being a priority because it has been a dry time and therefore not caused any problems.

(c) 2022/23 Board funded capital schemes

(i) Major Slip repairs

Eight of the major slips have now been repaired on a priority basis, however, there have been some more slips since those last reported, which will continue to be repaired based on priority. The methodology used to repair the slip varies dependant on various factors such as the size of watercourse, soil type and historic knowledge known of the area. However, sometimes the banks will still slip over the revetment, in which case alternatives are considered, such as laying the bank back flatter which reduces the pressure.

It was also noted that the Board have recently obtained some free soil from a development site in Holbeach which is being used for slip repairs.

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

This is an ongoing process, with outstanding jetting to complete in Donington and Kirton. The remaining areas are proving inaccessible for the jetting machine, but the landowners and residents have been made aware and are willing to work with the Board to gain access.

(iii) Alternative Access Programme - Estimate £20,000

The Alternative Access Programme for summer maintenance works is still being developed, there are some areas where removal of established bushes is required or the installation of access culverts into side entry drains.

(d) 2023/24 Board funded capital schemes

(i) Great Hale Fen Pumping Station Pump Refurbishment - £75,000 (estimate)

The scheme involves the replacement of the trolley and control section.

It was confirmed that all the trolleys are now the same make (Bosker) and that the only spare parts around are for the old trolley.

(ii) Kirton Marsh Electricity Supply Change - £10,000

The incoming supply is currently located below the floor level of the pumping station and is due to be relocated, just waiting for National Grid to provide a date to complete this work.

- (iii) Trinity College Pumping Station under pump inspections – Estimate £5,000

The Operations Manager noted that it is good practice to get under the pumping stations to complete visual inspections. Whilst conducting these inspections, the siltation within the channel is removed.

For some of the pumping stations, there are no records of when the pumps were last inspected underneath, which has resulted in some of the parts rusting away and so it is an important procedure to complete as soon as possible.

Mr R Needham questioned if there is going to be a programme to complete these inspections every so many years? The Operations Manager confirmed that, going forward, there are two/three pumping stations scheduled each year. Further noting that it is trying to be programmed to coincide with damming off the drain for desilting with the underneath inspections.

2. Proposed Works 2024/25

(a) 2023/24 Defra/EA Funded Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) Grant in Aid (GiA) Schemes

- (i) Bicker Fen & Ewerby Fen Catchment Works Study - £20,000 Estimate

As these schemes develop, there may be some change to how the money is drawn down and used.

- (ii) Wyberton Marsh Pumping Station New Transformer - Estimate £50,000

A site meeting is scheduled for a couple of weeks' time. A business case will be prepared to apply for FCERM GiA funding for this work.

Mr M Rollinson referred to the 9 of the transformers that have been identified as end of life, questioning which is scheduled next for replacement? It was confirmed that eight of the nine pumping stations are programmed for replacement over the next three to four years. Black Hole Drove has already been done as it was struck by lightning and so was replaced through the insurance in 2010.

Mr K Casswell questioned if it is 100% grant funded or if the Board will need to make a contribution? The Operations Manager confirmed it will be fully funded by grant. It being further confirmed that the estimate is for the cost of the transformer and not for any of the civils work.

The Chairperson noted previous discussion about placing them outside in case of explosion? The Pump Engineer noted that Wyberton is going to be placed outside.

(b) 2024/25 Board funded capital schemes

(i) Jetting to Major Pipelines – Estimate £75,000

The Officer's are in the process of putting together the tender for jetting works as per the map displayed on screen, predominately in the Kirton area.

(c) Pumping Station Schemes

(i) Kirton Marsh Pumping Station under pump inspections - £11,000 Estimate

As discussed at item 1(d)(iii), Kirton Marsh is proposed for under pump inspection next year.

The Chairperson referred to the photo displayed on screen of the last time the silt was removed under the pump in 1997, questioning if it is expected to have that amount of silt built up again?

The Operations Manager expected similar amounts of around three feet.

The Chairperson noted that it must make the pumps more efficient.

(ii) Kirton Marsh refurbishment 1 pump and 1 motor - Estimate £30,000

Whilst the under pump inspection is taking place, it is proposed that the pump and motor are refurbished.

(iii) Ewerby Fen Pumping Station replace control panel – Estimate £60,000

The control panel is due for replacement, it not being cost effective to refurbish.

3. Emergency Response Plan

The Operations Manager noted that this hasn't changed, reminding the committee that it is classified as an emergency when the level in the South Forty Foot Drain (SFFD) reaches 2.30m ODN, the Board's Officer's will begin to turn off pumps at 2.70m ODN.

Mr K Casswell added that this is a voluntary procedure to reduce the risk of the SFFD banks breaching, which the Environment Agency (EA) welcome.

4. Crop Loss

The Operations Manager noted that he has included the Crop Loss Compensation policy to remind the committee what the Board will pay for various crops and how to claim.

2131 To receive an update on the Open Channel Transfer of raw water to the Lincolnshire Reservoir - Agenda Item 10

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.

Mr R Welberry left the meeting during this item.

2132 Report on Rainfall - Agenda Item 11

The rainfall figures at Swineshead were circulated. The Committee RESOLVED that this report be noted.

2133 Any Other Business - Agenda Item 12

(a) Cattle at Swineshead Pumping Station

Following the visit today, the Chairperson requested that the operations team produce a solution to prevent the cattle going across it, noting that it needs the support of the Board. The Pump Engineer noted that there are gates already there, it is just a case of making the decision to lock them.

(b) Landowner notification of entry to fields

Mr M Leggott noted that in November 2022, the Board completed flailing along the banks of the North Forty Foot Drain. Nobody contacted Mr M Leggott and the machinery went through his fields around his farmyard, leaving deep ruts. If somebody had simply telephoned, he would have opened the gates and given access through the yard. Mr M Leggott suggested it would be beneficial for the machine operatives to have a list of landowner contact numbers to be able to ring. The Chairperson noted that he has experienced the same problem and agreed with the suggestion.

The Operations Manager felt that the onus shouldn't be on the machine operator to do that. Mr M Leggott suggested it be the job a foreman to ring ahead. The Chairperson clarified that they are not blaming anybody specifically, but that somebody should be contacting the landowner in advance to see if there is an alternative route. The Finance Manager noted that the Board previously used a text message system and will review to get a new system in place.

(c) Cleansing arisings

Mr R Needham noted that the Board have been cleansing at Great Hale and Little Hale Fen, noting that some of the waste has been banded and some not, questioning if there is a policy around that? The Works Manager noted it was around the sheer amount being taken out, noting that one of the bund's was dug slightly deeper than it should have been which is why it looks like it is not to full capacity.

(d) North Forty Foot Drain Desilting

Mr M Leggott referred to the desilting of the North Forty Foot Drain (NFFD) and where there were houses obstructing, the spoil was brought away to a cradge, questioning if the Board have been granted a licence to be able to continue moving waste in the future? The Operations Manager confirmed that if the Board remove silt from the drain, it can be moved one move with the machine. If it is then put on a trailer and transported from one field to another, it is classed as waste transfer and would require testing. Further noting that the earliest they will be back completing work on the NFFD will be towards the end of this year. Mr M Leggott questioned the delay? The Operations Manager noted it is just around timescales and other projects. Mr M Leggott felt he could have been asked and would have agreed to have the spoil tested to enable movement. The Operations Manager noted that he is conscious that he doesn't want soil movement to be done 'under the radar', the Board can't be questionable around their work.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 17:44.