

BLACK SLUICE INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

MINUTES

of the proceedings of a meeting of the Executive Committee

held at the offices of the Board on
21st May 2024 at 2pm

Members

Chairperson - * Mr K C Casswell

* Cllr P Bedford

* Mr M Brookes

* Mr J Fowler

* Mr P Holmes

* Mr M Rollinson

* Member Present

In attendance: Mr D Withnall (Chief Executive)
Mr P Nicholson (Projects Director)
Mrs A Chamberlain (Finance & Admin Director)
Mrs G Nichols (Grant in Aid Manager)

2313 Recording the Meeting - Agenda Item 1

Committee members were informed that the meeting would be recorded.

2314 Apologies for absence - Agenda Item 2

There were no apologies for absence. Mrs G Nichols was welcomed to the meeting.

2315 Declarations of Interest - Agenda Item 3

There were no declarations of interest.

2316 Minutes of the Meeting - Agenda Item 4

Minutes of the meeting held on 23rd January 2024, copies of which had been circulated, were considered and it was AGREED that they should be signed as a true record.

2317 Confidential Minutes of the meeting - Agenda Item 5

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2318 Matters Arising - Agenda Item 6

(a) Internet - Minute 2251(b)

It was noted that fibre broadband (900MB upload and download) has been ordered through Quickline and are now awaiting the installation date.

There is a duct from the telegraph pole on the roadside to the flower bed at the front of the office, and they are going to intercept the duct to get it to the building. It is £69 per month (full service for the price of the middle service). Mr M Rollinson noted his concern that calls are made through the broadband, meaning if there was a power cut, calls wouldn't be able to be made. It was noted that the HiHi telephone system is on a separate broadband line, which can be switched over if needed, and that the Board's telephone system has been on broadband for a number of years now.

(b) Electricity - Minute 2251(e)

The Chairperson highlighted that the Board are currently using electricity as a lot of rain is forecast for this evening and so the decision has been taken to pump down the drains in the Board's system to winter levels.

It was also noted that Ofgem have acknowledged that there is an issue with the standing charges, so hopefully there will be some change around this.

(c) Capital Schemes Project - Peat restoration project - Minute 2251(c)

The Projects Director reminded the committee of the funding achieved for the peat project at two sites near Bourne (£172,000), to install two tilting weirs.

The Projects Director noted that he has obtained a quote for the tilting weirs and solar power control, as below:

1 No. AQUIKO Tilting Weir (Bourne Ramper)	£9,380.00
1 No. AQUIKO Tilting Weir (Dyke North Drove)	£19,935.00
2 No. Compact Solar Control (each £15,350.00)	£30,700.00
Site Installation Works contractor	£6,925.00
Carriage	£500.00
Total	£67,440.00

The Projects Director continued that the reason for bringing it to this committee is that he can't source any further quotes due to the difficulty in finding suppliers that do the equipment with the solar power. There will be an additional cost to the above quote for creating the dams. The funding is claimed on invoice and so the full amount achieved of £172,000 will not likely be needed, but all costs will be recovered. The Chairperson confirmed that there is no issue with not getting more than one quote with Defra to be able to claim the funding? It was confirmed there is no issue with that.

Mr P Holmes questioned that the weirs are compatible with the solar control? The Projects Director responded that they are compatible, further noting that he has seen these solar powered weirs twice during their visits to Holland.

Mr P Holmes questioned the benefit of the tilting weirs to the Board? The Projects Director noted that where one of the weirs is being installed, there is currently a dam in place, which is to be replaced by the tilting weir and so it will help control the water level in Bourne Fen.

All AGREED that they are satisfied that no further quotes are required for this project.

(d) Residential development works - Heron Park, Wyberton, Chestnut Homes
Cllr P Bedford questioned if there is any further progress on this? It was confirmed that it is still ongoing.

(e) Television interview - Minute 2257(d)
It was noted that the morning broadcast was edited in a way portraying farmers in a negative light, however, the evening broadcast was changed.

(f) Culvert Collapse - Wykes Lane, Donington
It was noted that this culvert has now been replaced by Lincolnshire County Council.

(g) New organisation structure – Minute 2251(h)
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.

Mrs G Nichols left the meeting for this item.

2319 Report on the 2023/24 Accounts - Agenda Item 7

The Chief Executive explained that he has produced an overall report around the year end accounts and then added the relevant accounts and budgets etc. as attachments.

The Chief Executive highlighted the following points:

Income

Rates & Levies – Account 3672 has been returned from the bailiffs with no prospect of recovering the money, totalling £2996.26 for 2022/23 and 2023/24. Due to not being able to pay, it is felt there is nothing more than can be done to recover the money.

Interest and grants – Interest generated £41,103 more than budgeted.

Other income – overall £13,769 more than budget

- £10,572 is due to an increased Highland Water claim to the Environment Agency (EA) following the wet winter.
- £4,567 consenting and enforcing on behalf of Lincolnshire County Council in the extended area under a Memorandum of Understanding

Expenditure

- Pumping Station Maintenance (excluding electricity) is £81,943 overspent compared to budget.
- Electricity is under budget (£28,661) due to the budgets including an average year based on consumption prices at the time, which have decreased to more reasonable prices.
- Drain maintenance is under budget (£94,803) due to the delay in starting drain maintenance (5 additional weeks have been put into 2024/25 budget).
- Admin & Establishment - £59,909 overspent - £40,532 for emergency working and £10,323 for the depot.

Plant Reserve – incorrect brought forward figure has been used to start the 10-year estimates 2024/25 and so the plant account will need to be revisited.

Development Reserve – All of the Planning & Byelaw Officer's salary plus on costs is now charged to the Development Reserve (as of 01 April 2024).

Wages On cost Reserve – Value of the reserve is currently £181,770, the Chief Executive therefore proposing to reduce the recharge rate from 260% to 250% from 01 April 2024.

The Chief Executive noted the summary and that the grant income and related expenditure has been removed to give a clearer understanding of the Board's finances.

(a) Period 12 Management Accounts

The Chief Executive noted that the value of the Board's two investments as at today's date:

- Board's investment: £423,226
- Bourne Fen investment: £337,438

It was noted that a ratepayer has made a representation about the Board's investment, being of the opinion that it is inappropriate. The ratepayer contacted the Board and the Chief Executive responded. A ratepayer has also notified the NFU and ADA who have also had correspondence with the Board's Officers, but ADA are of the opinion that the Board have not done anything wrong or irresponsible. It is assumed this is the same ratepayer. The very low interest rates on bank accounts at the time the investment was made were noted. It was also added that if the income that has been gained is considered, then nothing has been lost. Mr J Fowler added that they were sensible investments for the circumstances at the time.

(b) 2023/24 Schemes Report

The Projects Director presented the schemes report, highlighting the following points:

- Black Sluice Catchment Strategies - currently at the stage of running the first set of models, trying to establish best value, there is still some outstanding data to be captured.
- Natural Flood Management – the difficulty lies with the completion of the works on the ground due to the reluctance of landowners. It was also noted that Lesley Sharpe, the Board's current lead on this work, has indicated that she intends to retire this year.
- Kirton Marsh Pumping Station electricity supply relocation – due to an increase in the cost to complete this work, the decision has been taken not to do it, and if there is a failure, then it would be the responsibility of the network provider to repair due to it being income supply (below the resilience level).
- Sempringham Pumping Station Refurbishment – quotation from Aquatic Control Engineering was noted (£28,100 for supply of equipment and £25,000 for installation).
- Wyberton Towns Drain Realignment – this is ongoing, with Chestnut Homes questioning what is going on with it, the response being that they have been given three options outlined in a letter to them as previously agreed by this committee.

- Allan House Pumping Station scheme – the order has been placed with the contractor to complete this work and are currently awaiting the go ahead from the Environment Agency to commence works.

This scheme work should be completed by the end of the financial year.

(c) Draft 2023/24 Unaudited Financial Statements

The committee noted the draft 2023/24 unaudited financial statements.

(d) Annual Governance and Accountability Return for the year ended 31st March 2024

The committee noted the Annual Governance and Accountability Return for the year ended 31st March 2024.

2320 2023/24 Annual Internal Audit Report - Agenda Item 8

The committee congratulated the Board's Officers on the achievement of 'Substantial Assurance' again.

2321 Report on Finance & Rating - Agenda Item 9

(a) Updated 2024/25 10 Year Schemes Budget

The Chief Executive explained that the items shown in red in the schemes budget are the budgets brought forward minus what has been spent, noting that there is up to £6.5million worth of scheme works, which should be completed within the financial year, however, it is unlikely that that amount of work will be completed in that timescale. Mrs G Nichols noted that the four pumping station schemes at c£1million each, noting that that figure was an estimate only and that the detailed design is being developed currently, therefore more accurate costings and programme timelines will be known following the development of the design. It was further noted that completing the work within the financial year is also relative as to when it can commence.

Mr P Holmes confirmed that it will be an outside contractor completing this work on the pumping stations and whether it will be on a one-by-one basis, or all completed simultaneously? It was confirmed that discussion is currently ongoing with contractor Balfour Beatty who are hopefully going to deliver the works through the SCAPE framework, it is believed they will complete all of the pumping stations at the same time.

It was noted that two of the pumping station funding figures are included in red and other two in black due to two of them having previously included in the budget and two not.

Mrs G Nichols noted that she has been requested to apply for the funding out of the £75million IDB Storm Recovery and Asset Improvement Fund 2024. The Environment Agency IDB Storm Recovery and Asset Improvement Fund 2024 Briefing Note (20 May 2024) was circulated amongst the committee. It was explained that £25 million is going to be for recovery (the Board has submitted an expression of interest for £1,635,986) and £50 million is for asset improvement, with eligible work expected to include (from briefing note):

- *Assets – modern replacement of life-expired equipment / systems / watercourses, to make them more efficient, effective, sustainable, and / or environmentally friendly.*

- *Increased main river maintenance operations (through PSCAs with the EA)*
- *Assistance with costs for migration of the Drainage Rating System (DRS) to a new operating platform.*

This funding is Defra money and so there must be benefit to agriculture, the Chief Executive therefore was not sure that the four pumping station schemes would be eligible for this.

Mrs G Nichols noted the following within the briefing note about the Storm Recovery and Asset Improvement Fund; *'The fund will only be available for 2024/25 and all works must be completed by 31 March 2025.'* Mrs G Nichols noted that a scheme can not be put together and delivered safely in this timescale. It was noted that if there was no timescale on this fund, it would be likely to be able to claim funding for replacing Swineshead Pumping Station, however, a project of that size could not be completed in that timescale. Mrs G Nichols noted that she also believes that because it is Defra funding, it will be a payment on invoice system. Mr M Rollinson suggested that the local MPs or ADA should be contacted about the fact that it is impossible to deliver a project with the funding in that timescale. The Chief Executive noted that ADA have acknowledged the challenging timescale for the asset improvement. The Chief Executive added that the only other work he can think to suggest would be desilting the SFFD to the A17, but that still may be a challenge to complete by the end of the financial year.

(b) Updated 2024/25 10 Year Plant Replacement Budget

The Chief Executive noted that at the end of the financial year, the plant reserve was negative £47,572. It has therefore been reviewed and the following changes made:

- Life of Hitachi extended to nine years
- Life of Twigas extended to nine years (lead time for Hooby is 12 months anyway so not actually been extended as such)
- Life of unimog extended to nine years

Reference was made to the teleporter and that it hasn't done that many hours.

(c) Updated 10-year estimates to reflect Scheme updates and 2023/24 year end position

The Chief Executive noted that he has updated the Period 06 estimate figures to actual figures, with the aim being to get the reserves twice the amount of the electricity in a wet year.

2322 Review and approve Bourne Fen Farm Accounts - Agenda Item 10

The Chief Executive noted that the account is still in a surplus and that the alleviation rate has stayed the same.

2323 To consider the continuation of the Board's current Health & Safety Consultants - Agenda Item 11

The Chief Executive noted that this has already been considered by the Audit & Risk committee who were in favour of the proposal.

Further explaining that Cope Safety Management previously controlled all the Board's Health and Safety, however, since the formation of the Health and Safety Committee in August, the Board are now taking responsibility for it. It is therefore suggested that the Cope Safety Management contract is renewed on an audit / assurance basis. Mr J Fowler questioned how the price compares? It was noted that there has been a slight increase since the last contract was agreed five years ago. All AGREED.

2324 Pumping Stations Structural Review - Agenda Item 12

It was confirmed that the current situation is that no employees are to enter Swineshead Pumping Station whilst it is running due to the structural uncertainty of it.

Mrs G Nichols explained that herself, the Projects Director and the Pump Engineer have been visually inspecting the pumping stations and those that raise concerns have then had further inspections carried out by structural engineers. Currently, Swineshead Pumping Station, Bicker Eau Pumping Station and Holland Fen Pumping Station have required further surveying. Although all three require some work, Swineshead Pumping Station is in the worst condition.

Swineshead Pumping Station has failed structurally, with the only realistic option being to replace the pumping station. Mrs G Nichols noted that the figure of £20million is an estimate only based on other IDBs pumping station replacements. Mrs G Nichols also noted that the benefits stated within the report are taken from a very early piece of work, acknowledging the fact that the Grant in Aid funding system does not consider any houses built 2012 onwards.

Mrs G Nichols further added that the EA are currently alluding that the values for agricultural land may increase in advance of the next six-year programme.

Mrs G Nichols summarised that if the figures within the agenda go forward, with a £1.6million funding gap, that gap will likely be able to be funded through local levy. It was noted that there is no inflation built into these figures.

Mr P Holmes questioned whether there are any further pumping stations the same design as Swineshead? It was confirmed that Swineshead is the only pumping station with that structural design. Mr P Holmes further noted other IDB's replacing pumping stations, specifically Wrangle Pumping Station, and that he can't believe Wrangle has more residential benefit than Swineshead, so therefore Swineshead should also achieve funding.

The Chairperson noted his concern, questioning what will happen if funding can't be achieved and it collapsed? Mrs G Nichols responded that she doesn't know. The Chairperson expanded his concern about a lot of the IDB and EA pumping stations and assets that are all now reaching 60-70years old. It was noted that the Fens 2100+ project is exploring this, it being further noted that agricultural land needs to be valued with the same weight that property is.

Mrs G Nichols added that the corrosion is all in the 'wet dry' zone, if it is design with a narrow zone, it concentrates the corrosion. Mrs G Nichols noted that the deadline for the Swineshead catchment was last week and so it has been submitted.

Further noting that she has also put in a submission for replacement pumps at Donington North Ings and Chain Bridge Pumping Stations (on a like for like basis) due to them going to have to work harder and to therefore provide some resilience. It was noted that the visual inspections have not flagged any major concerns at Chain Bridge or Donington North Ings. The timeline for the replacement of Swineshead Pumping Station being noted – construction 2028/2029.

The Projects Director noted that the Board's study is not at a stage yet to give the results we need as to know what will be required from a replacement, noting that Swineshead is currently being modelled with everything east of the South Forty Foot Drain (SFFD) (15 catchments). Reference was also made to the impacts of the Lincs Reservoir.

Mr M Rollinson noted his concern for Donington Wykes Pumping Station as booster to Donington North Ings and having a very narrow 'wet dry' zone. The Projects Director noted that it did not flag any major concerns on the visual inspection.

Cllr P Bedford questioned whether a relief channel would be used or whether a new pumping station would be built alongside it? It was noted that this detail is not yet known.

The Projects Director noted that he has contacted a supplier of high-level pumps and to deliver 7 cumec pump capacity, it would be c£70,000 hire per week, excluding fuel, mobilisation, or demobilisation.

Mr J Fowler noted the previous negative / nil value of agricultural land in the eyes of Defra due to subsidies previously paid on land, questioning whether this is anticipated to change? Mrs G Nichols noted that there is lobbying from ADA and Fens 2100+ with more traction than has been seen previously. It was noted that when the Minister visited Boston, he was made aware that this is an issue. Mrs G Nichols added that the understanding around it not just being about flood risk management, but it being a system that is called upon daily, is starting to change.

The Projects Director also noted that they have recently visually inspected Black Hole Drove Pumping Station at which the piles don't look in good condition and so a structural engineer will also be surveying this site.

The Chief Executive noted that the Fens 2100+ team are getting involved in the Black Sluice Catchment Study and are extending it to include their assets. However, Fens 2100+ is looking at the future, whereas these issues are developing now.

2325 Any Other Business - Agenda Item 13

(a) ADA Pay & Conditions Committee Chairperson

Mr P Holmes explained to the committee that he has been approached by the current chair of the ADA Pay & Conditions Committee Chairperson (Mr P Richardson) to be his successor. However, this is not possible due to personal commitments and the Board already providing the committee secretary, therefore meaning the Board cannot also Chair. Mr P Holmes questioned if the committee is fit for purpose and for this committee to consider the Board's future involvement in it.

The Chairperson noted that the Board's involved do work together positively, noting that Welland and Deepings IDB opted to no longer be part of the committee and have had to set up their own Pay and Conditions Committee.

The Chairperson further noted that he usually attends these meetings, adding that the next meeting is September 2024, and he would rather somebody else attend in his place due to his upcoming retirement.

Mr P Holmes suggested it be somebody from the Audit & Risk Committee, and if it needed to be somebody on the Executive Committee as well, it would have to be the Chair of the Audit & Risk Committee. It was suggested that Mr M Leggott would make a good Chairperson of the Audit & Risk Committee.

It was noted that nominations can form part of the Executive Committee in September.

(b) Brewin Dolphin Annual Review

The Chief Executive noted that he had a meeting with James Scott of Brewin Dolphin yesterday regarding the annual review of investments. It was noted that the current signatories are himself and the Chairperson. In light of the Chairperson's forthcoming retirement, it was proposed that the two signatories be the Chief Executive and Projects Director, with the new Chairperson being added following the election, all AGREED.

(c) Drainage Rate System

The Chief Executive noted the update from ADA regarding the Drainage Rate System going forward, confirming that the committee are happy to migrate the current system to Microsoft 365, through South Holland IDB, who set up the original system. There will be an initial fee to migrate the system.

(d) Section 23 Culverting Application & Byelaw No.10 – Drain 36/7 Stump Cross Hill / London Road, Sleaford

The Board has recently received an application to pipe (70-80 metres) a section of Drain No. 36/7 off Stump Cross Hill/London Road, Sleaford from Bellway Homes Ltd.

The Projects Director noted that there is an existing deed that states that the Board are responsible for 500 metres of maintenance on behalf of the Chartdale Homes Ltd development.

Piping such a length would remove the requirement for annual maintenance of that section, and the developer has been informed that they will be the owners of the pipe and therefore responsible for maintenance for the lifetime of the development. This will be included as a condition on any consent granted. A commuted sum agreement will be proposed. Mr M Rollinson felt that the logical thing to do would be to pipe the whole length. The Projects Director to enquire as to why they are not piping the whole length, the committee happy for the Projects Director to negotiate a commuted sum agreement.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 16:11.